

# Agenda

<b>Meeting name</b>	<b>Meeting of the Scrutiny Committee</b>
<b>Date</b>	<b>Thursday, 21 March 2024</b>
<b>Start time</b>	<b>6.30 pm</b>
<b>Venue</b>	<b>Parkside, Station Approach, Burton Street, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire. LE13 1GH</b>
<b>Other information</b>	<b>This meeting is open to the public</b>

Members of the Scrutiny Committee are summoned to the above meeting to consider the following items of business.

**Edd de Coverly**  
**Chief Executive**

## Membership

<b>Councillors</b>	M. Brown (Chair)	A. Thwaites (Vice-Chair)
	S. Atherton	R. Child
	H. Cliff	C. Evans
	M. Gordon	S. Lumley
	R. Sharp	T. Webster

**Quorum:** 5 Councillors

<b>Meeting enquiries</b>	Democratic Services
<b>Email</b>	democracy@melton.gov.uk
<b>Agenda despatched</b>	Wednesday, 13 March 2024

No.	Item	Page No.
1.	<b>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</b>	
2.	<b>MINUTES</b> To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 25 January 2024.	1 - 8
3.	<b>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b> Members to declare any interest as appropriate in respect of items to be considered at this meeting.	9 - 10
4.	<b>REVIEW OF THE FORWARD PLAN</b> To consider the attached Forward Plan and identify any relevant items for inclusion in the Scrutiny Work Programme, or to request further information.	11 - 28
5.	<b>REVIEW OF THE SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24</b> Members are to review and comment upon the attached Scrutiny Work Programme 2023/24.	29 - 34
6.	<b>THE LEADER'S ANNUAL PRESENTATION</b> The Leader is to provide his annual presentation to the Scrutiny Committee.	
7.	<b>COMPLAINTS UPDATE</b> The Committee is to receive the Complaints Update.	35 - 46
8.	<b>URGENT BUSINESS</b> To consider any other items that the Chair considers urgent.	

# Minutes

<b>Meeting name</b>	<b>Scrutiny Committee</b>
<b>Date</b>	<b>Thursday, 25 January 2024</b>
<b>Start time</b>	<b>6.30 pm</b>
<b>Venue</b>	<b>Parkside, Station Approach, Burton Street, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire. LE13 1GH</b>

## Present:

**Chair** Councillor M. Brown (Chair)

**Councillors**

A. Thwaites (Vice-Chair)	S. Atherton
R. Child	H. Cliff
M. Gordon	S. Lumley
R. Sharp	T. Webster

**Observers**

Portfolio Holder for Governance, Environment and Regulatory Services (Deputy Leader), Councillor M. Glancy  
 Portfolio Holder for Town Centre, Growth and Prosperity, Councillor S. Butcher  
 Portfolio Holder for Corporate Finance, Property and Resources, Councillor S. Cox  
 Portfolio Holder for Customers, Communities and Neighbourhoods, Councillor P. Cumbers  
 Councillor J. Mason  
 Councillor D. Pritchett

**Officers**

Chief Executive  
 Director for Housing and Communities (Deputy Chief Executive)  
 Director for Corporate Services (Section 151 Officer)  
 Director for Growth and Regeneration (via remote link)  
 Assistant Director for Resources (Deputy Section 151 Officer)  
 Assistant Director for Governance and Democracy (Monitoring Officer)  
 Senior Corporate Policy Officer  
 Senior Democratic Services & Scrutiny Officer  
 Democratic Services Officer (CB)

Minute No.	Minute
31	<p><b>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</b> Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Evans.</p>
32	<p><b>MINUTES</b> The Minutes of the meeting held on 23 November were approved.</p>
33	<p><b>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b> Councillor M Gordon declared an interest as a Council tenant and the Monitoring Officer confirmed this would preclude her from taking part in any debate relating to Council rents. She also declared she is a member of Waterfield Leisure Centre.</p>
34	<p><b>REVIEW OF THE FORWARD PLAN</b> The Chairman introduced the Cabinet Forward Plan and invited Members to comment.</p>
35	<p><b>REVIEW OF THE SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24</b> The Chairman introduced the Scrutiny Work Programme 2023/24 and invited Members to comment upon the document. He also reminded Members of the Housing Support Review Workshop on 14 February 2024.</p>
36	<p><b>NEW CORPORATE STRATEGY: VISION 2036 AND CORPORATE DELIVERY PLAN</b> The Chief Executive, Edd de Coverly, introduced the report with a presentation.</p> <p>In relation to the business case being developed with the Integrated Care Board for the GP Practice to be located at Parkside, Members asked where the funding was coming from. In response, they were advised the total cost is expected to be £150k, with the Council contributing £75k, which is to be funded by the Asset Development Programme which is part funded by the Business Rates Pool.</p> <p>It was asked why there is no budget allocated for the Town Centre Co-ordinator role. Members were advised it is currently a concept that is being considered so no budget has been allocated at this point.</p> <p>A comment was made regarding Statement 3 on whether the MMDR should be recognised as an enabler of sustainable homes. It was felt that a reference to this should remain within the Strategy.</p> <p>The question was asked about the MMDR South and whether if no funding is found is there an alternative plan. Members were informed that if this scheme does not go ahead, then the local plan would have to be redeveloped.</p> <p>It was asked if the Statement 4 related to Council homes or all home types. It was confirmed that it does relate to all housing.</p>

Members wanted to know how the Council are going to measure what has been delivered. The Council has a corporate performance framework that has measurable targets and which will be reported quarterly to Cabinet in 2024/25 and increase over the current 6 monthly reporting.

The query was raised regarding the Right to Buy process, as it was felt the Council sells these properties too cheaply. It was explained the policy is a National Scheme and the Council have no control over the discounts given however, any receipts from this process are used to purchase more affordable homes.

A comment was made in relation to Statement 8 and the phrase 'net zero', and whether it was a phrase that was understood by the public.

Members wanted to know how we are going to engage with young people and what approaches are we making. It was recognised that this is a challenge and officers are developing a young person's strategy in partnership with stakeholders.

The comment was made that the consultation that was carried out over the Christmas and New Year, was perhaps not the best time. It could be why there was a low engagement rate. A further comment was made in relation to the consultation, in that the questions would lead to people commenting on things they want, as opposed to identifying what activities should be a priority. It was acknowledged that consultations through surveys will always have limitations, and that within the corporate delivery plan, there were commitments to improve engagement and some additional resource allocated in the budget.

The comment was made that there is a mismatch between improving engagement and then a reference to reducing the amount of polling stations. It was explained that the polling station review is a statutory process, against set criteria and that whilst ensuring efficiency is important, access to the democracy process is of paramount importance. It was confirmed that the reference in the strategy would be updated to reflect this. The comment regarding polling stations is a reference to the upcoming polling station review and boundary changes.

Members would like the Council to campaign for an increase in the uptake of postal votes. In response, Members were informed that the Council already does this but would continue to promote it and welcomed any further suggestions for how this could be done.

A query was raised what the practical implication is of having young people discharged from care as being a protected characteristic. It was explained that the rationale is that people from that background are at a significant disadvantage and by giving them this status, the Council would give due consideration to that group of people when developing a policy or strategy.

Members wanted the Council to ensure consideration of value for money in everything it does and the reference to this in the strategy was welcomed.

The comment was made, even though transport links are important, the Council should not project the impression that it has more power than it does over this area, though it was recognised the Council had an important role in lobbying partners.

The Chair thanked the officers for the reports and presentation.

**RESOLVED**

**That Members' comments are presented to Cabinet at the next Cabinet meeting.**

37

**GENERAL FUND REVENUE BUDGET 2024/25 AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2025/26 TO 2027/28**

The Director for Corporate Services (Section 151 Officer), Dawn Garton, introduced the report with a presentation.

A concern was raised that as there is a lot of information in the paper for Members to consider, the job of Scrutiny is difficult. Members recognised the link between the Corporate Strategy and Budget, but it would be better if they were done separately. It was explained that it was time to renew the Corporate Strategy and that it usually wouldn't be presented every year. In addition, Officers take Members through the budget process throughout the year and that it is discussed at the State of Melton Debate and there is the Budget Scrutiny Workshop in December as well. Members were also provided the opportunity to raise any further queries with the Director for Corporate Services outside of the meeting.

Members Allowances was raised. It was explained that there is due to be an independent review in 2024/25 but that the annual uplift had been provided for in the budget.

The backlog of service charging at Pheonix House and the concern over whether the occupiers know it is coming was raised. It was explained that Officers have discussed the issue with occupiers and that they are aware of the process. The building has been surveyed and the charges will be divided accurately. Officers confirmed that there will be an accrual at year end, and it will go in the current year accounts. It was also highlighted that the Council will also be considering the new Asset Management Plan which demonstrates the significant progress that the Corporate Asset team has made over the last year.

A concern was raised in relation to the increasing charges at Thorpe Road Cemetery, as well as the repairs that need doing and the remaining number of plots. It was clarified that work preparing to increase capacity at the current cemetery has progressed, but the work has not yet been undertaken. It was noted that the Special Expenses Budget is a small budget and that the increase in fees is necessary to help mitigate the rising costs.

Concern was raised over the spend on consultants around projects. The Chief Executive clarified there was not significant use of consultants but confirmed that there will be occasions where using external technical expertise is necessary, especially in areas the Council doesn't have in-house expertise.

Members raised the issues of the car parking assessment and whether external resources were required for that. It was explained that this was a legacy commitment and that there is no proposed budget allocated to the task. What there is, is a commitment to review options for new car parking technology which does not require additional resources.

A Member raised concern that there is a lot of red on the risk register. In response it was explained that finance is a high risk, especially post covid, with rising inflation, reduced income and decreasing government grants but that the Council's finances are under control and there had not been a deterioration from previous years. That said, Members were informed that local government finances as a whole remain fragile and that the SLT maintain constant oversight on the financial position and that the Council can in no way be complacent. It was also highlighted that while the current budget was not proposing any significant cuts, there was no guarantee that this may not be required in 12 months' time.

Parking charges on evenings and Sundays was raised and the concern that this would conflict with the objective of getting more people into the town centre. It was explained that fees and charges were due to be approved under delegation and that no other car parking charges had been increased.

Members gave thanks to Officers on the work done during the budget setting process.

### **RESOLVED**

**That Members' comments are presented to Cabinet at the next Cabinet meeting.**

38

### **CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2023-2028 - GENERAL FUND AND CAPITAL STRATEGY 2024/25**

The Director for Corporate Services (Section 151 Officer), Dawn Garton introduced the report with a presentation.

Concern was raised that the underspend was misleading and could it be phased across the different years instead. In response, it was explained that the underspend relates to the Levelling Up Fund monies and at the point the budget was set last year it wasn't possible to meaningfully profile. As the plans develop this will become easier and can be looked at when the budget is carried forward.

**RESOLVED**

**That Members' comments are presented to Cabinet at the next Cabinet meeting.**

39

**REVENUE BUDGET PROPOSALS 2024/25 - HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA)**

The Director for Corporate Services (Section 151 Officer), Dawn Garton introduced the report with a presentation.

The comment was made that it is good to see current tenant rent arrears coming down but there are costs to consider, e.g. staffing cost, and legal capacity. It was explained that the expertise is employed on a temporary basis in order to work through the backlog but that the expertise is the correct expertise. It was confirmed that there is an exit plan and that there will be a continued resource of 1 full time officer. The issue of rent arrears does remain a high-risk area for the Council and remains under review.

A concern was raised on 'no win, no fee' claims. In response, it was explained that it is important for the Council to know the stock and its condition and be able to evidence proactive action to any issues or repairs, so that claims can be defended, and the work can be evidenced. The Council has a solicitor responsible for defending those claims.

Members were surprised at the £340k overspend on gas costs. It was explained that not recognising this earlier was an administrative error which has had to be corrected. Colleagues across the Council are looking at understanding some of these increases with expectation of meeting the relevant account manager.

Concern was raised that there had been a lot of fires within the housing stock. It was explained that the Council had worked with its insurer, and it was established that none of the fires have been the fault of the Council. They have either been accidental or a result of a failure of technology. It was recommended, by the insurer, that the Council should continue educating their residents in order to minimise the fire risk.

As the discussion was regarding the rent increase, Cllr Gordon left the meeting at 8:23pm and did not return.

The rent increase was discussed and it was commented that this could add to the pressure of arrears. It was explained that as the Council's costs had increased, the rise has become a necessity but that the council will continue to support tenants and identify quickly if tenants are struggling to pay their rent so that they can be supported. Examples of support were provided.

Members queried whether expenses per property are logged and whether trends are assessed and acted upon. It was explained that capital improvements and revenue repairs per property are logged. It was explained that the Council are due



to implement a recharge policy whereby it will charge tenants where they have intentionally caused damage. It was also explained that sometimes works for specific property types are undertaken in response to particular issues (for example, non-traditional homes).

It was noted that the replacement of kitchens and bathrooms will peak in 2025/26. In response it was stated that this would have been profiled on age and condition of stock.

**RESOLVED**

**That Members' comments are presented to Cabinet at the next Cabinet meeting**

40	<b>URGENT BUSINESS</b> There was no urgent business.
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The meeting closed at: 8.34 pm

Chair

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## MEMBER INTERESTS

### Do I have an interest?

#### 1 DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS (DPIs)

A “Disclosable Pecuniary Interest” is any interest described as such in the Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012 and includes an interest of yourself, or of your Spouse/Partner (if you are aware of your Partner's interest) that falls within the following categories: Employment, Trade, Profession, Sponsorship, Contracts, Land/Property, Licences, Tenancies and Securities.

A Disclosable Pecuniary Interest is a Registerable Interest. Failure to register a DPI is a criminal offence so register entries should be kept up-to-date.

#### 2 OTHER REGISTERABLE INTERESTS (ORIs)

An “Other Registerable Interest” is a personal interest in any business of your authority which relates to or is likely to affect:

- a) any body of which you are in general control or management and to which you are nominated or appointed by your authority; or
- b) any body
  - (i) exercising functions of a public nature
  - (ii) any body directed to charitable purposes or
  - (iii) one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union)

#### 3 NON-REGISTRABLE INTERESTS (NRIs)

“Non-Registrable Interests” are those that you are not required to register but need to be disclosed when a matter arises at a meeting which directly relates to your financial interest or wellbeing or a financial interest or wellbeing of a relative or close associate that is not a DPI.

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**In each case above, you should make your declaration at the beginning of the meeting or as soon as you become aware. In any other circumstances, where Members require further advice they should contact the Monitoring Officer or Deputy Monitoring Officer in advance of the meeting.**

# Declarations and Participation in Meetings

## 1 DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS (DPIs)

- 1.1 Where a matter arises at a meeting which **directly relates** to one of your Disclosable Pecuniary Interests which include both the interests of yourself and your partner then:
- a) you must disclose the interest;
  - b) not participate in any discussion or vote on the matter; and
  - c) must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a Dispensation.

## 2 OTHER REGISTERABLE INTERESTS (ORIs)

- 2.1 Where a matter arises at a meeting which **directly relates** to the financial interest or wellbeing of one of your Other Registerable Interests i.e. relating to a body you may be involved in:
- a) you must disclose the interest
  - b) may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting but otherwise must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter; and
  - c) must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a Dispensation.

## 3 NON-REGISTRABLE INTERESTS (NRIs)

- 3.1 Where a matter arises at a meeting, which is not registrable but may become relevant when a particular item arises i.e. interests which relate to you and /or other people you are connected with (e.g. friends, relative or close associates) then:
- a) you must disclose the interest;
  - b) may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting but otherwise must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter; and
  - c) must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a Dispensation.

## 4 BIAS

- 4.1 Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias. If you have been involved in an issue in such a manner or to such an extent that the public are likely to perceive you to be biased in your judgement of the public interest (bias):
- a) you should not take part in the decision-making process
  - b) you should state that your position in this matter prohibits you from taking part
  - c) you should leave the room.

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**In each case above, you should make your declaration at the beginning of the meeting or as soon as you become aware. In any other circumstances, where Members require further advice they should contact the Monitoring Officer or Deputy Monitoring Officer in advance of the meeting.**

## MELTON BOROUGH COUNCIL Forward Plan

### FOR THE PERIOD February 2024 - May 2024

#### What is the Plan?

It is a list of the Key Decisions to be taken by the Cabinet during the period referred to above. The Council has a statutory duty to prepare this document, in accordance with the Local Government Act 2000 (as amended). The Plan is published 28 clear days before a meeting of Cabinet is to be held. The Plan is available to view at the Council's main offices in Melton, or on the Council's website, <http://www.melton.gov.uk>.

#### What is a Key Decision?

Definition of a key decision as detailed in the Council's Constitution is one which is likely to result in the Council:

- Incurring expenditure of £50,000 or more, or;
- Making savings or generate income of £50,000 or more, and/or
- Has a significant impact on two or more wards in the Borough and on communities living or working in those areas.

#### Who makes Key Decisions?

Under the Council's Constitution, Key Decisions are made by:

- Cabinet
- The Leader and Portfolio Holders
- Individual officers acting under delegated powers

#### Are only Key Decisions published on the Plan?

The Council has a statutory obligation to publish Key Decisions in the Plan. However, the Council has voluntarily decided to list non-key Cabinet decisions as well. To clarify matters, Key Decisions will be identified on the Plan with a Yes, non-key decisions with a No.

#### What does the List tell me?

The List gives information about:

- Upcoming Key and Non-Key Decisions (identified by Yes or No next to them)
- Whether the decision will be made in public or private.
- When decisions are likely to be made.
- Who will make these decisions.
- Who you can contact for further information.

### **Who are the members of the Cabinet?**

The members of the Cabinet and their areas of responsibility are:

- Leader of the Council, Housing and Landlord Services
- Governance, Environment and Regulatory Services (and Deputy Leader)
- Customers, Communities and Neighbourhoods
- Town Centre, Growth and Prosperity
- Corporate Finance, Property and Resources

### **What is the role of Scrutiny?**

The Council's Scrutiny Committee's role is to contribute to the development of Council policies, scrutinise decisions of the Cabinet and hold them to account and to consider any matter affecting Melton Borough or its citizens. Dates of these meetings can be found on the Council's website.

### **Who do I contact, and how?**

Each entry on the Plan indicates the names of the people to contact about that item. They can be contacted via the switchboard on 01664 502502

### **Request to view Background Papers**

Should you wish to request copies or extracts of any documents listed under the column entitled 'Background Papers', for items which are considered to be Key Decisions, please contact Democratic Services at, Melton Borough Council, [democracy@melton.gov.uk](mailto:democracy@melton.gov.uk) Please note that copies or extracts of documents which contain information of a confidential or exempt nature cannot be disclosed to the public.

### **Submission of Additional Documents**

Additional documents which are deemed relevant to a particular Key Decision item may be submitted to the Cabinet for consideration. Copies of such documents may also be requested under the same process for requesting to view Background Papers.

### **Confidential and Exempt Information**

This list may also include items to be considered which contain confidential or exempt information, but will not disclose any detail of a confidential or exempt nature. Such items will be identified with '(Exempt)' in the report title.

Report Title	Background Papers	Decision Maker	Date of Decision	Key Decision?	Portfolio Holder/ Contact Officer	Decision to be taken in public or private session?
<p><u>Award of Contract – Lift Refurbishment at Granby House</u></p> <p>To award a contract for the passenger lift refurbishment at Granby House.</p>		Portfolio Holder for Corporate Finance, Property & Resources	Not before 29th Feb 2024	Yes	Portfolio Holder for Corporate Finance, Property & Resources  Michelle Howard, Director for Housing and Communities (Deputy Chief Executive)	Open
<p><u>Sale of Cattle Market North</u></p> <p>The sale of Council land at the North End of the Cattle market, which comprises an approximate area of 1.69 acres, allocated for housing.</p>		Director for Growth and Regeneration	Not before 29th Feb 2024	Yes	Portfolio Holder for Corporate Finance, Property & Resources  Jiten Ravat, Corporate Property and Assets Manager	Open

<u>Report Title</u> and Expected Decision	Background Papers	Decision Maker	Date of Decision	Key Decision?	Report Available/ Portfolio Holder/ Contact Officer	Decision to be taken in public or private session?
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<p><u>Procurement of Evidence Base for the Local Plan Review</u></p> <p>The evidence that will be procured is as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Retail Study</li> <li>- Employment Study</li> <li>- Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (Stages 1 and 2)</li> <li>- Climate Change Study</li> <li>- Open Space Assessment Report</li> <li>- Local Housing, Economics and Affordable Housing Need Assessments (these could be 2 studies)</li> <li>- Gypsy and Traveller &amp; Travelling Showpeople Assessment</li> <li>- Sustainability Assessment (and Habitats Regulations Assessment)</li> <li>- Green Infrastructure Strategy</li> <li>- Integrated Water Management Study</li> </ul>		Director for Growth and Regeneration	Not before 29th Feb 2024	Yes	<p>Portfolio Holder for Governance, Environment &amp; Regulatory Services (&amp; Deputy Leader)</p> <p>Sarah Legge, Assistant Director for Planning</p>	Open
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<p><u>Lease Renewal at 66/68 Snow Hill, Melton Mowbray</u></p> <p>To arrange a lease renewal at 66/68 Snow Hill, Melton Mowbray</p>		<p>Director for Growth and Regeneration</p>	<p>Not before 29th Feb 2024</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Portfolio Holder for Corporate Finance, Property &amp; Resources</p> <p>Jiten Ravat, Corporate Property and Assets Manager</p>	<p>Fully exempt 3</p>
<p><u>Housing Management Policies</u></p> <p>To approve the following operational housing management policies:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Garages Allocations &amp; Arrears Policy</li> <li>2. Scooter Pod Allocations &amp; Arrears Policy</li> <li>3. Recharge Policy</li> </ol>		<p>Leader of the Council &amp; Portfolio Holder for Housing &amp; Landlord Services</p>	<p>Not before 29th Feb 2024</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Leader of the Council &amp; Portfolio Holder for Housing &amp; Landlord Services</p> <p>Doug Stother, Tenancy Services Manager</p>	<p>Open</p>

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<p><u>Purchase of Wood Chipper and Two Vans</u>  Procurement process for a wood chipper and two vans</p>		<p>Director for Housing and Communities</p>	<p>Not before 29th Feb 2024</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Portfolio Holder for Governance, Environment &amp; Regulatory Services (&amp; Deputy Leader)  Paul Evans, Interim Head of Neighbourhoods</p>	<p>Open</p>
<p><u>Award of Contract for the Stockyard Operation</u>  To appoint a contractor in relation to the Stockyard operation.</p>		<p>Director for Growth and Regeneration</p>	<p>Not before 29th Feb 2024</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Leader of the Council &amp; Portfolio Holder for Housing &amp; Landlord Services  Lee Byrne, Assistant Director – Regeneration and UKSPF Delivery</p>	<p>Open</p>

<b>Report Title and Expected Decision</b>	<b>Background Papers</b>	<b>Decision Maker</b>	<b>Date of Decision</b>	<b>Key Decision?</b>	<b>Report Available/ Portfolio Holder/ Contact Officer</b>	<b>Decision to be taken in public or private session?</b>
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<p><u>Award of Contract for the Construction of the Stockyard Development</u></p> <p>To appoint a contractor for the construction of the Stockyard development.</p>		Director for Growth and Regeneration	Not before 29th Feb 2024	Yes	<p>Leader of the Council &amp; Portfolio Holder for Housing &amp; Landlord Services</p> <p>Lee Byrne, Assistant Director – Regeneration and UKSPF Delivery</p>	Open
<p><u>Approval of UKSPF Grants</u></p> <p>Approval of grants in line with grants guidance note and UKSPF guidelines and criteria for the financial year 2023/24.</p>		Director for Growth and Regeneration	Not before 29th Feb 2024	Yes	<p>Leader of the Council &amp; Portfolio Holder for Housing &amp; Landlord Services</p> <p>Lee Byrne, Assistant Director – Regeneration and UKSPF Delivery</p>	Open

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<p><u>Change of Establishment - Levelling Up Project Manager for 2 Year Fixed Term</u></p> <p>To recruit a fixed term position to support delivery of the Levelling Up Fund and other capital programmes on behalf of Melton Borough Council.</p>		<p>Director for Growth and Regeneration</p>	<p>Not before 29th Feb 2024</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Councillor Pip Allnatt</p> <p>Lee Byrne, Assistant Director – Regeneration and UKSPF Delivery</p>	<p>Open</p>
<p><u>Service Level Agreement for Grant Funding to the Business Improvement District</u></p> <p>To award the Business Improvement District capital and revenue from the United Kingdom Shared Prosperity Fund over the period 2023/24 and 2024/25.</p> <p>To provide direct support to retail through a Business Improvement Grant scheme to enable pop-up shops and increase occupancy.</p>		<p>Director for Growth and Regeneration</p>	<p>Not before 29th Feb 2024</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Portfolio Holder for Town Centre, Growth &amp; Prosperity</p> <p>Gordon Watts, Senior Projects Delivery Officer</p>	<p>Open</p>

<p align="center"><b>Report Title and Expected Decision</b></p>	<p align="center"><b>Background Papers</b></p>	<p align="center"><b>Decision Maker</b></p>	<p align="center"><b>Date of Decision</b></p>	<p align="center"><b>Key Decision?</b></p>	<p align="center"><b>Report Available/ Portfolio Holder/ Contact Officer</b></p>	<p align="center"><b>Decision to be taken in public or private session?</b></p>
<p><u>Award of Contract - Aids and Adaptations Property Extensions</u></p> <p>To award a contract for Aids and Adaptations Property Extensions</p>		<p>Leader of the Council &amp; Portfolio Holder for Housing &amp; Landlord Services</p>	<p>Not before 29th Feb 2024</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Leader of the Council &amp; Portfolio Holder for Housing &amp; Landlord Services</p> <p>Christopher Flannery, Housing Asset Manager</p>	<p>Open</p>
<p><u>Housing Consumer Regulation - Consultation Response</u></p> <p>The Regulator for Social Housing (RSH) has launched a 12 week consultation period regarding proposed new Housing Consumer Regulation Standards and an associated Code of Practice.</p>		<p>Leader of the Council &amp; Portfolio Holder for Housing &amp; Landlord Services</p>	<p>Not before 29th Feb 2024</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Leader of the Council &amp; Portfolio Holder for Housing &amp; Landlord Services</p> <p>Alison Bennett, Assistant Director for Housing Management</p>	<p>Open</p>

<b>Report Title and Expected Decision</b>	<b>Background Papers</b>	<b>Decision Maker</b>	<b>Date of Decision</b>	<b>Key Decision?</b>	<b>Report Available/ Portfolio Holder/ Contact Officer</b>	<b>Decision to be taken in public or private session?</b>
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<u>Refugee Resettlement Arrangements</u>		Director for Housing and Communities	Not before 29th Feb 2024	Yes	Portfolio Holder for Customers, Communities & Neighbourhoods  Rachel Chubb, Strategic Lead for Housing Options and Homelessness	Open
<u>Payment of Community Grants</u>		Leader of the Council & Portfolio Holder for Housing & Landlord Services	Not before 29th Feb 2024	Yes	Leader of the Council & Portfolio Holder for Housing & Landlord Services  Ryan Ebdale, Community Policy Officer	Open
<u>Grant agreement with Sport England (Swimming Pool Support Fund)</u>  Authority to sign a grant agreement with Sport England for 120k through the Swimming Pool Support Fund (SPSF)		Director for Housing and Communities	Not before 4th Mar 2024	Yes	Portfolio Holder for Customers, Communities & Neighbourhoods  Jake Betts, Leisure and Culture Manager	Open

Report Title and Expected Decision	Background Papers	Decision Maker	Date of Decision	Key Decision?	Report Available/ Portfolio Holder/ Contact Officer	Decision to be taken in public or private session?
<u>Lightbulb Partnership</u>		Director for Housing and Communities	Not before 6th Mar 2024	Yes	Portfolio Holder for Customers, Communities & Neighbourhoods  Michelle Howard, Director for Housing and Communities (Deputy Chief Executive)	Open
<u>Reirement of HRA capital budget</u> To reallocate funds within the HRA capital programme to manage budget variations.		Director for Housing and Communities	Not before 6th Mar 2024	Yes	Leader of the Council & Portfolio Holder for Housing & Landlord Services  Christopher Flannery, Housing Asset Manager	Open

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<u>Report Title</u> and Expected Decision	Background Papers	Decision Maker	Date of Decision	Key Decision?	Report Available/ Portfolio Holder/ Contact Officer	Decision to be taken in public or private session?
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<u>Planning Guidance, Children's Homes</u>		Cabinet	6 Mar 2024	No	Portfolio Holder for Governance, Environment & Regulatory Services (& Deputy Leader)  Sarah Legge, Assistant Director for Planning	Open
<p><u>Intensive Housing Management Service Review Part 2</u></p> <p>Further to the decision by Cabinet in October, the second stage of consultation with tenants has commenced, offering choices for the service in the future.</p> <p>A further round of open meetings has been scheduled for tenants and the process has been agreed for the removal of the charge in November for those tenants who wish to leave the service.</p>		Cabinet	6 Mar 2024	No	Leader of the Council & Portfolio Holder for Housing & Landlord Services  Alison Bennett, Assistant Director for Housing Management	Open

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<b>Report Title and Expected Decision</b>	<b>Background Papers</b>	<b>Decision Maker</b>	<b>Date of Decision</b>	<b>Key Decision?</b>	<b>Report Available/ Portfolio Holder/ Contact Officer</b>	<b>Decision to be taken in public or private session?</b>
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<p><u>Quarter 3 Treasury Management Report</u></p> <p>An update on Treasury Management performance for 2023/24.</p>		Cabinet	6 Mar 2024	No	<p>Portfolio Holder for Corporate Finance, Property &amp; Resources</p> <p>David Scott, Assistant Director for Resources (Deputy s151 Officer)</p>	Open
<p><u>Risk Management Update</u></p> <p>To provide an update on the risk management arrangements and outline the current significant risks that have been captured on the recent review of the Council's Strategic Risk Register by the Senior Leadership Team.</p>		Cabinet	6 Mar 2024	No	<p>Portfolio Holder for Governance, Environment &amp; Regulatory Services (&amp; Deputy Leader)</p> <p>David Scott, Assistant Director for Resources (Deputy s151 Officer)</p>	Open

<p align="center"><b><u>Report Title</u></b> <b>and Expected Decision</b></p>	<p align="center"><b>Background Papers</b></p>	<p align="center"><b>Decision Maker</b></p>	<p align="center"><b>Date of Decision</b></p>	<p align="center"><b>Key Decision?</b></p>	<p align="center"><b>Report Available/ Portfolio Holder/ Contact Officer</b></p>	<p align="center"><b>Decision to be taken in public or private session?</b></p>
<p><u>Revenue &amp; Capital Carry Forwards 2023-24</u></p> <p>To approve the revenue carry forwards for the General Fund, Special Expenses and Housing Revenue Account and to approve the capital carry forwards for the General Fund, and Housing Revenue Account.</p>		<p>Portfolio Holder for Corporate Finance, Property &amp; Resources</p>	<p>22 Mar 2024</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Portfolio Holder for Corporate Finance, Property &amp; Resources</p> <p>David Scott, Assistant Director for Resources (Deputy s151 Officer)</p>	<p>Open</p>
<p><u>10-Year Increase in a HRA Capital Budget</u></p> <p>Authority to increase a HRA Capital Budget</p>		<p>Director for Housing and Communities</p>	<p>22 Mar 2024</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Leader of the Council &amp; Portfolio Holder for Housing &amp; Landlord Services</p> <p>Christopher Flannery, Housing Asset Manager</p>	<p>Open</p>

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<p><u>Procurement Framework to contract for Solar PV Panels &amp; Swimming Pool Covers at Waterfield Leisure Centre</u></p> <p>To go through a Procurement Framework to contract 120k for Solar PV Panels &amp; Swimming Pool Covers at Waterfield Leisure Centre</p>		<p>Director for Housing and Communities</p>	<p>Not before 27th Mar 2024</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Portfolio Holder for Customers, Communities &amp; Neighbourhoods</p> <p>Jake Betts, Leisure and Culture Manager</p>	<p>Open</p>
<p><u>Biannual Ombudsman Report</u></p> <p>To provide an update on the outcomes of complaints submitted to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) and the Housing Ombudsman (HO).</p>		<p>Cabinet</p>	<p>17 Apr 2024</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>Portfolio Holder for Governance, Environment &amp; Regulatory Services (&amp; Deputy Leader)</p> <p>Clive Tobin, Assistant Director for Governance and Democracy (Monitoring Officer)</p>	<p>Open</p>

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<p><u>Gretton Court - Resilience (Catering)</u></p> <p>This is a review of the service provided to our tenants at Gretton which is looking to build resilience to the risks that are currently identified.</p>		Cabinet	17 Apr 2024	No	<p>Leader of the Council &amp; Portfolio Holder for Housing &amp; Landlord Services</p> <p>Doug Stother, Tenancy Services Manager</p>	Fully exempt 3
<p><u>UK Shared Prosperity Fund Update</u></p>		Cabinet	17 Apr 2024	No	<p>Leader of the Council &amp; Portfolio Holder for Housing &amp; Landlord Services</p> <p>Lee Byrne, Assistant Director – Regeneration and UKSPF Delivery</p>	Open

Report Title and Expected Decision	Background Papers	Decision Maker	Date of Decision	Key Decision?	Report Available/ Portfolio Holder/ Contact Officer	Decision to be taken in public or private session?
<u>Acquisition of Affordable Homes to spend Right to Buy receipts 2024-25</u>  To provide oversight on homes to be delivered in 2024-25 with delegated authority in accordance with the budget for right to buy receipts		Cabinet	17 Apr 2024	Yes	Leader of the Council & Portfolio Holder for Housing & Landlord Services  Tahir Majid, Housing Development Manager	Fully exempt 3
<u>Leveling Up Fund Update</u>		Cabinet	17 Apr 2024	Yes	Leader of the Council & Portfolio Holder for Housing & Landlord Services  Lee Byrne, Assistant Director – Regeneration and UKSPF Delivery	Open

<p align="center"><b>Report Title and Expected Decision</b></p>	<p align="center"><b>Background Papers</b></p>	<p align="center"><b>Decision Maker</b></p>	<p align="center"><b>Date of Decision</b></p>	<p align="center"><b>Key Decision?</b></p>	<p align="center"><b>Report Available/ Portfolio Holder/ Contact Officer</b></p>	<p align="center"><b>Decision to be taken in public or private session?</b></p>
<p><u>Homeless Strategy 2024-2029</u></p> <p>Homeless strategy outlining our key priorities to resolve homeless across the borough between 2024 and 2029</p>		Cabinet	17 Apr 2024	Yes	<p>Portfolio Holder for Customers, Communities &amp; Neighbourhoods</p> <p>Rachel Chubb, Strategic Lead for Housing Options and Homelessness</p>	Open
<p><u>Agency Services Cleaning Contract</u></p>		Cabinet	17 Apr 2024	Yes	<p>Leader of the Council &amp; Portfolio Holder for Housing &amp; Landlord Services</p> <p>Alison Bennett, Assistant Director for Housing Management</p>	Fully exempt 3

## MELTON BOROUGH COUNCIL SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24

### SCRUTINY REVIEWS

These are dealt with through a combination of specific evidence gathering meetings that will be arranged as and when required and other activities, such as visits. There should only be a maximum of three reviews considered annually and review topics may be changed throughout the year as topical issues arise. Once considered, these issues will be subject to further development and scoping.

Should there not be sufficient capacity to cover items which are brought to the attention of Scrutiny they could instead be addressed through a “one-off” item at a scheduled meeting of the Committee.

Topics	Officer and Member Lead	Date	Notes	Requested by (Member)/ Date agreed for addition by Scrutiny Chairman	Portfolio Holder/Chief Officer consulted on date of report
Budget Scrutiny	Director for Corporate Services  Assistant Director for Resources  Scrutiny Lead: TBC	12 December 2023	<del>A Budget Scrutiny Workshop is proposed to give Members an opportunity to view key changes to the budget prior to the publication of the budget papers at January's formal Budget Scrutiny Committee meeting. The Workshop gives Members an opportunity to raise concerns with any proposals before they are finalised.</del>  This workshop has taken place.	Requested by the Director for Corporate Services and Assistant Director for Resources.  Agreed by Chairman on 22 August 2023.	N/A – There will be no final report but comments will be fed into budget papers.
Future Leisure Provision	Director for Growth and Regeneration  Scrutiny Lead: TBC	TBC	Workshop session proposed.	SLT suggested this should be a workshop instead of a Policy Development Group.	N/A – There will be no final report but comments will be fed into existing plans and work streams.
Housing Support Review	Director for Housing and Communities	14 February 2024	<del>A workshop to examine the issue of Housing Support.</del>  <del>There will be a presentation and the following documents to consider:</del> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><del>• The findings of the Housing Support review;</del></li> <li><del>• Quality impact assessment;</del></li> <li><del>• Revised support proposals.</del></li> </ul> This workshop has taken place.	Requested by the Director for Housing and Communities on 21 December 2023.  Agreed by Chairman on 4 January 2024.	N/A – There will be no final report but comments will be fed into existing plans and work streams.

**ONE OFF ITEMS/FORWARD PLAN(PRE-DECISION)/ANNUAL ITEM**

These are dealt with at scheduled meetings of the Committee. The following are suggestions for when particular items may be scheduled.

Suggested Topics	FORMAT	Portfolio Holder/Officer	Meeting Date	Notes	Requested by (Member)/ Date agreed for addition by Scrutiny Chairman	Portfolio Holder/Chief Officer consulted on date of report
(1) Review of Complaints Procedure	One-off	Portfolio Holder for Customers, Communities and Neighbourhoods  Director for Housing and Communities	21 March 2024	Members to review the Complaints Procedure in terms of process, customer journey, and how the Council investigates and resolve complaints.	Scrutiny Committee, 23 November 2023	Yes
(2) Leader's Annual Presentation	Annual	Leader of the Council  Chief Executive	21 March 2024	Leader to provide update on 23/24 priorities and outline objectives for 24/25.	Scrutiny Committee, 23 November 2023	Yes
(3) Regulatory change in housing review	One-off	Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Landlord Services  Director for Housing and Communities	25 April 2024	This slot is on hold for a potential review on the effects of the regulatory change in housing upon Melton.	Scrutiny Workshop, 15 June 2023	Yes
(4) Review of Waste Contract	One-off	Portfolio Holder for Governance, Environment and Regulatory Services  Director for Housing and Communities	25 April 2024	Review of Biffa Waste Contract Delivery and Performance, including Street Cleansing.	Scrutiny Committee, 23 November 2023	Yes
(5) Social Housing Allocation	One-off	Portfolio Holder for Housing and Landlord Services  Director for Housing and Communities	21 March 2024	Bidding Process and Housing Allocations Policy/Arrangements. Members to review in order to have clarity on the policy, process, allocations arrangements in action and customer journey (including for specific user groups).	Scrutiny Committee, 23 November 2023	Yes
(6) Annual Scrutiny Report	Annual Item	Scrutiny Officer  Chairman of Scrutiny Committee	25 April 2024	Report detailing the work of the Scrutiny Committee over the previous 12 months.	N/A	Yes



**PENDING ITEMS** These items are awaiting further discussion or additional research before being added to the work programme

Topics (One-off or Review Item?)	Officer and Member Lead	Date	Notes	Requested by (Member)/ Date agreed for addition by Scrutiny Chairman
(1) Portfolio Holder for Governance, Environment and Regulatory Services Annual Presentation	Monitoring Officer  Portfolio Holder for Governance, Environment and Regulatory Services	TBC	-	Scrutiny Work Programme Workshop, 15 June 2023
(2) Portfolio Holder for Customers, Communities and Neighbourhoods Annual Presentation	Director for Housing and Communities  Portfolio Holder for Customers, Communities and Neighbourhoods	TBC	-	Scrutiny Work Programme Workshop, 15 June 2023
(3) Portfolio Holder for Town Centre, Growth and Prosperity Annual Presentation	Director for Growth and Regeneration  Portfolio Holder for Town Centre, Growth and Prosperity	TBC	-	Scrutiny Work Programme Workshop, 15 June 2023
(4) Portfolio Holder for Corporate Finance, Property and Resources Annual Presentation	Director for Corporate Services  Portfolio Holder for Corporate Finance, Property and Resources	TBC	-	Scrutiny Work Programme Workshop, 15 June 2023
(5) Connected with our Rural Communities	Director for Housing and Communities  Director for Growth and Regeneration  Scrutiny Lead: TBC	TBC	Workshop session proposed.  It is recommended that the Leicestershire and Rutland Association of Local Councils is invited.	Scrutiny Work Programme Workshop, 15 June 2023
(6) Offer to Young People	Director for Housing and Communities  Director for Growth and Regeneration  Scrutiny Lead: TBC	TBC	Workshop session proposed.  Workshop could be a prelude to a Youth Strategy.	Scrutiny Work Programme Workshop, 15 June 2023
(7) Supporting an aging population	Director for Housing and Communities	TBC	Workshop session proposed.	Scrutiny Work Programme Workshop, 15 June 2023

	Scrutiny Lead: TBC			
(8) Lightbulb	Portfolio Holder for Customers, Communities and Neighbourhoods  Director for Housing and Communities	2024/25	Scrutiny committee involvement in the development of the five-year business plan will be advantageous for the whole partnership. It will also enable the committee to provide feedback to cabinet on the opportunities and constraints for Lightbulb as a service (e.g. eligible spend guided by legislative framework and ringfence, leading to underspend).  <i>This is a partnership piece of work.</i>	Scrutiny Work Programme Workshop, 15 June 2023
(9) Homelessness Strategy	Portfolio Holder for Customers, Communities and Neighbourhoods  Director for Housing and Committees	2024/25	Scrutiny Committee review of the draft homelessness strategy will add value and will enable feedback and / or recommendations to cabinet for consideration. In this context, the Committee would be well placed to fulfil a consultative function.	Scrutiny Work Programme Workshop, 15 June 2023

## **ADVICE ON WORK PROGRAMME**

### What is a Work Programme?

The Scrutiny Work Programme outlines the areas of work which are expected to be scrutinised over the coming months/year by or on behalf of the Council's Scrutiny Committee and any Working Groups convened for review work. Topics added to the work programme should have expected outcomes to add value to the services delivered by the Council and its partners and/or improve the quality of lives of Melton's residents. It is recognised that there is a need for flexibility in the work programme so as to allow relevant issues to be dealt with as and when they arise.

### Sources of Work Programme Ideas

Numerous sources of information can help to inform topic selection, including:

- Concerns that have been raised by the public relating to Council delivered services
- Issues of community concern – not necessarily services delivered by the Council
- Issues that have been flagged up by reviews, audits or inspections (past and present).
- Issues relating to Councils outcomes, objectives and priorities
- Consultations and interviews
- Underperformance
- "Stakeholders" concerns – raised by the Council's partners or the users of services
- Partnership objectives
- Cabinet Members, Chief Executive or Directors presentations about the pertinent issues that are emerging and any opportunities or threats on the horizon
- Central government priority changes
- Improvement Plans
- Forward Plan
- Budgetary analysis.

Scrutiny is also encouraged to think about external Scrutiny and the monitoring of other public bodies, and how its activities will engage partner organisations, the media and the public.

### Selecting a Work Programme Topic

The Scrutiny Committee should use effective processes to select topics that will contribute towards the best possible work programme for Scrutiny. This means looking at the sources of information that may help and using them to choose the right topics.

This involves:

- Drawing out and discussing what matters most to Councillors and to the community at large
- Finding out about any research that has been completed or that is planned
- Prioritising topics
- Considering what added value is expected as a result of Scrutiny involvement
- Considering whether the topic is already being reviewed elsewhere

It is also important to note that Scrutiny has limited time and resources and therefore workplans need to be manageable. It is not possible to include every topic suggested by Members, Directors or the Public in the work programme. In addition, Officer capacity may be diverted from projects if a review is added to the workplan without considering the impact on Officer resource and this should be a consideration in adding to work programme. Successful Scrutiny is about looking at the right topic in the right way and Members will need to be selective whilst also being able to demonstrate clear arguments in favour of including or excluding topics.

### Risks

A common pitfall for Scrutiny can be the inclusion of topics on the work programme that are unmanageable, of limited interest to the community, purely for informational purposes, have few outcomes and fail to 'add value' to the work of the Council or the wellbeing of the community. As such the selection and prioritisation of topics is critical to the effectiveness of Scrutiny as such processes can ensure clearer focus, particularly in poor or weak areas of performance or major issues of concern to the wider community.

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### Complaints Update

<b>Report Author:</b>	<b>Martin Guest</b> , Policy and Communications Manager 01664 502413413 mguest@melton.gov.uk
<b>Chief Officer Responsible:</b>	<b>Michelle Howard</b> , Director for Housing and Communities (Deputy Chief Executive) 01664 504322 mhoward@melton.gov.uk
<b>Lead Member/Relevant Portfolio Holder</b>	<b>Councillor Margaret Glancy</b> - Portfolio Holder for Governance, Environment and Regulatory Services (Deputy Leader)

<b>Corporate Priority:</b>	High quality homes and landlord services Ensuring the right conditions to support delivery Connected and led by our communities
<b>Relevant Ward Member(s):</b>	All
<b>Date of consultation with Ward Member(s):</b>	N/A
<b>Exempt Information:</b>	No

#### 1 Summary

- 1.1 As part of its remit, the scrutiny committee has the opportunity to scrutinise a range of services and functions and as part of a recent review of the committee workplan, a review of the complaints policy and its implementation was proposed.
- 1.2 This report gives an overview of the complaints and feedback received by the Council along with the policy which guides how the Council responds to complaints.
- 1.3 The report also sets out future improvements to systems and processes that will further enhance how the Council responds to complaints and feedback from residents, tracks the implementation of associated actions and strengthens capacity for insight and analysis.
- 1.4 This report also covers activity, performance, and trends between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 up to the end of December 2023.

## 2 Recommendation

### That Scrutiny Committee:

2.1 Considers the report and provide comments for consideration by Cabinet.

## 3 Reason for Recommendations

3.1 To enable the Scrutiny Committee to scrutinise matters relating to complaints and customer feedback and provide feedback for consideration by Cabinet.

## 4 Background

### 4.1 Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy

4.2 The Council has a Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy which supports a clear and effective way in which to respond to customer dissatisfaction and to resolve issues when they occur. The policy was reviewed in 2023 and will be refreshed again in 2024. The current version is published to the Council's website. It can be found here: [Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy](#).

4.2.1 The Council recognises that complaints are a valuable opportunity to gain feedback, learn and improve services, and encourages feedback so that positive action can be taken.

4.2.2 The Council aims to properly investigate issues raised, enabling a positive response to complaints. We encourage complaints from our tenants and residents and view them as opportunities to learn and to improve the quality of our services.

4.3 The Council's Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy covers the following key areas:

- Introduction, aims and objectives
- How to make a complaint
- How the Council deals with complaints and service requests including
  - Complaint investigation stages, timescales and escalations
  - Complaints involving external contractors or partner agencies
  - Resolving complaints including remedies and compensation
- Ombudsmen
- Dealing with unreasonably persistent complaints

4.4 The policy is applicable to all council services and as such is compliant with the requirements of the respective Ombudsman services which act as an escalation point for independent review of complaints in some circumstances.

4.5 The relevant Ombudsman services are the Housing Ombudsman (HO) and the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO).

4.6 The HO has jurisdiction over complaints about social housing, including the Councils' role as a landlord. Whereas the LGSCO covers all other services including complaints about most council housing services other than social housing.

4.7 The Council's Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy was overhauled in 2023 in response to specific changes required by the HO. The Council took the decision to retain a

single corporate policy and took action to ensure that requirements of the HO's Complaints Handling Code were embedded.

- 4.7.1 Local Authority Landlords must ensure that their approach, policies, and processes are compliant with the HO Complaints Handling Code to ensure their complaint handling remains in line with its requirements.
- 4.7.2 There is also a requirement to publish an annual review of complaints handling (Housing Complaints) via a self-assessment. The most recent self-assessment was completed in December 2023 and can be found [here](#).
- 4.7.3 The HO Complaints Handling Code acts as a guide for residents setting out what they can and should expect from their landlord when they complain. The Code also requires the Council to provide residents with information about how to make a complaint and how to progress it through the landlord's internal complaints procedure.

## 5 Main Considerations

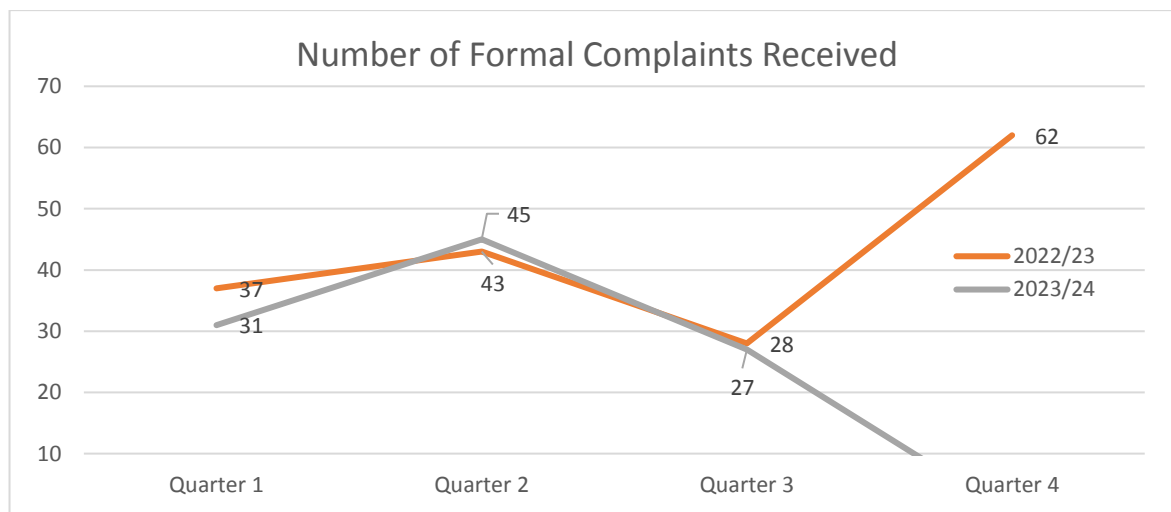
5.1 This report provides an update on key areas shown below:

- Performance and Trends emerging in 2023/2024
- Changes to the external governance/regulatory requirements
- 'Make it Right' campaign for social housing tenants
- Looking to the future - system/process changes planned

### 5.2 Performance/Trends emerging in 2023/2024

### 5.3 Overall Complaints

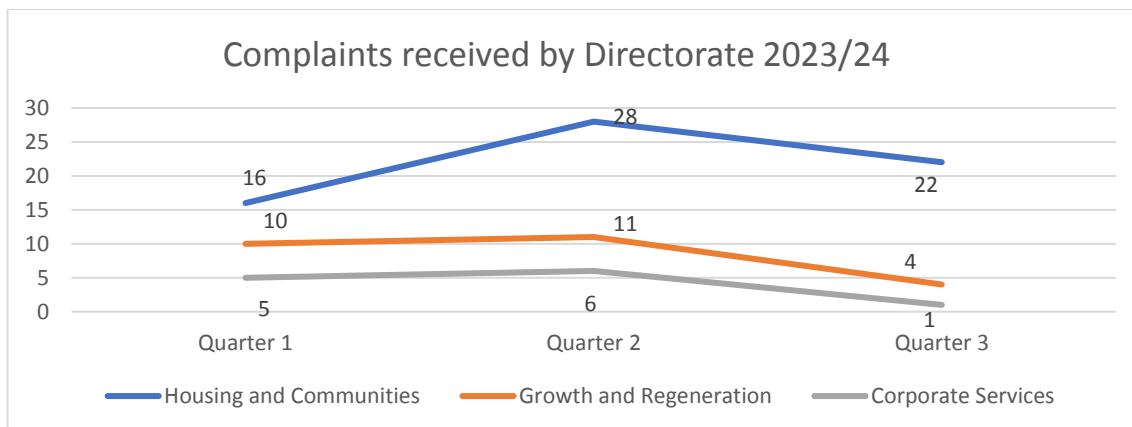
So far in 2023/24, the Council has received 103 formal complaints from customers. The number of formal complaints received so far this year is five lower than the 108 received during the same period last year.



### 5.4 Complaints by Directorate

Of the 103 formal complaints received from customers this year, the vast majority relate to the Housing and Communities directorate and of those, relate predominantly to the Councils housing / landlord function. This is not unexpected and is important that council tenants are aware of how to raise a complaint and that they are empowered to do so.

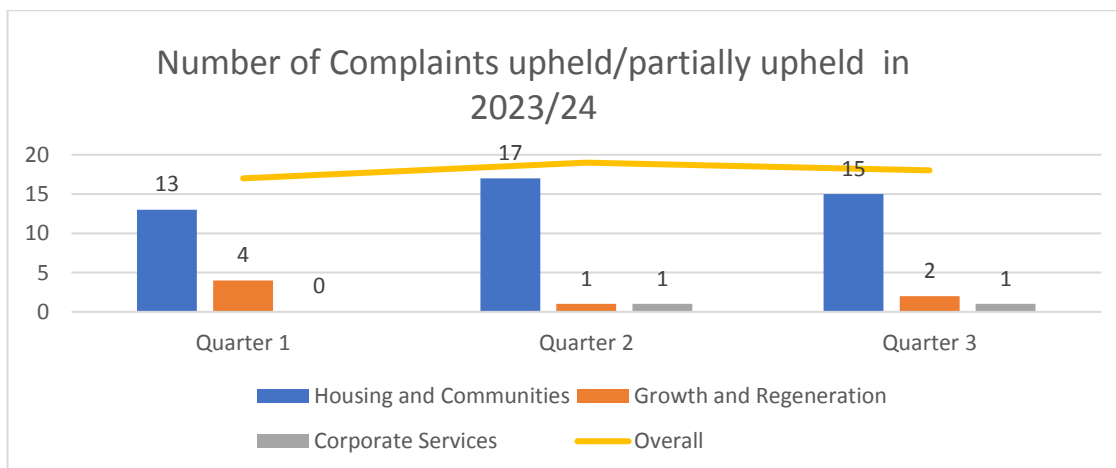
- 5.5 Analysis of complaints trends and learning takes place across directorates and as part of the performance reporting framework.
- 5.6 There has been a reduction in the number of formal complaints made in quarter 3 made in all Directorates compared to the previous quarter.
- 5.7 The Council has clear timelines for investigation and response that are aligned to the HO/LGSCO Complaints Code, extensions are by exception and agreed with the complainant. Performance on response is generally in line with these requirements and is tracked corporately.



**5.8 Complaints upheld or partially upheld**

Of the 103 formal complaints received so far from customers in 23/24, 54 (52%) received have been partially or fully upheld by the Council. This is a much higher than the 11% upheld in the previous year.

The two service areas where these complaints were upheld were Repairs (12) and Tenancy Management (2), both within the Housing and Communities directorate. These are shown below.



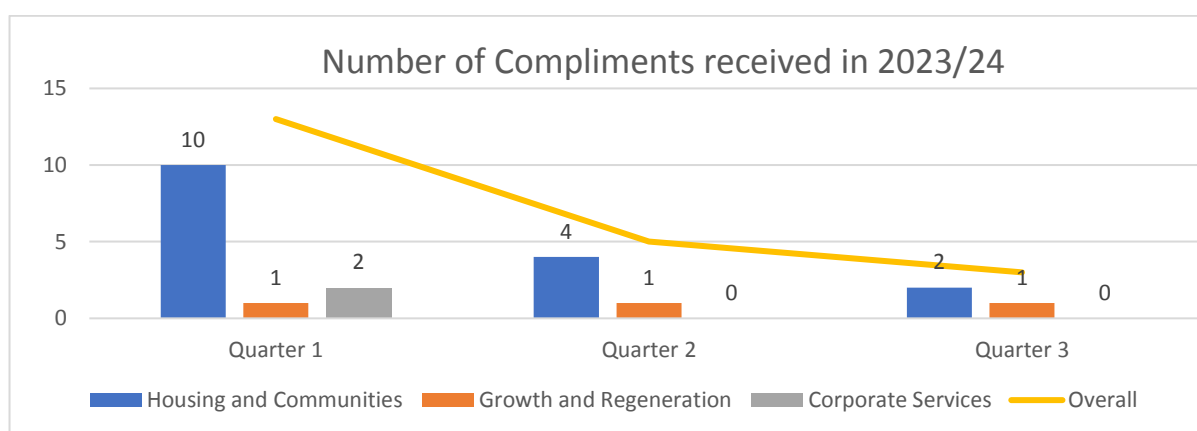
5.9 Further analysis of complaints upheld in 2023/24 has been undertaken. This has identified the following trends which are now being looked at by the relevant teams.

5.10 **Improve Communication:** Many of the upheld complaints cite lack of communication as a reason for dissatisfaction. Implementing better communication protocols between staff and residents/customers as well as contractors can help manage expectations and keep both parties informed throughout the process. This may include regular updates on repair



statuses, clear explanations of procedures, and providing avenues for clients to easily reach out with concerns or inquiries.

- 5.11 **Enhanced Contractor Management:** Several complaints mention delays due to issues with contractors, such as cancellations or lack of commitment. Strengthening contractor management processes, including rigorous vetting of contractors, ensuring they have necessary parts before appointments, and holding them accountable for delays, can help mitigate these issues. It is important to note that where complaints relate to housing contractors, the council as landlord is still expected to investigate and put things right. To do so, the Council works closely with its contractors to ensure appropriate investigate, remedy, resolution and learning.
- 5.12 **Streamline Repair Processes:** Complaints about delays in repairs highlight potential inefficiencies in repair processes. Conducting a thorough review of repair workflows, identifying bottlenecks, and implementing measures to streamline processes can help expedite repairs and reduce client dissatisfaction. We will look at the repairs customer journey with the team as part of the ongoing corporate customer journey review.
- 5.13 **Training and Development:** Addressing issues related to lack of responsiveness and communication may require additional training for staff. Providing training sessions on effective communication strategies, customer service skills, and conflict resolution techniques can empower staff to better address client concerns and minimise complaints.
- 5.14 **Regular Monitoring and Feedback:** Establishing regular monitoring mechanisms to track repair progress and client satisfaction can help identify issues early on and proactively address them. Additionally, seeking feedback from clients about their experiences with repairs and communication can provide valuable insights for continuous improvements.
- 5.15 **Exceptional service provided by employees (Compliments)**
- 5.16 The Council also records positive feedback about the work undertaken by employees. 13 compliments were received in Q1, 5 in quarter 2 and 3 in quarter 3. These have been broken down by Directorate and are shown below. It is noted that not all positive feedback is sent directly to the colleagues who maintain the customer feedback log, and it is often necessary to remind teams to forward any positive feedback or recognition from customers that they have received directly.



## 5.17 Remedies

- 5.18 The Council can offer a range of remedies in the resolution of complaint. The Council is clear that it aims to use the complaints process as a learning experience and, where appropriate, will put things right.
- 5.19 When the Council is at fault, we need to put things right by acknowledging our mistakes and apologising for them, explaining why things went wrong and what the Council will do to prevent the same mistake happening again. This should happen at the earliest possible point in the process.
- 5.20 So far as possible, the aim is to put the customer back in the position they would have been if there had been no fault. Sometimes it is not possible to do this, and, in such cases, compensation may be appropriate. In other cases, a remedy could include:
- Apology or explanation
  - Remedial actions such as changes or service improvements
  - Where appropriate, financial compensation
- 5.21 Compensation paid out as part of the complaints process: As part of the complaints process and in line with our Customer Complaints and Feedback Policy and the guidance set out by the HO, we may at times pay out an amount in compensation as part of a resolution of a complaint.
- 5.22 A specific Compensation and Reimbursement Policy for Housing is currently in development, further to engagement with tenant representatives.
- 5.23 Shown below is a summary of the compensation paid out so far this year as part of these remedies in complaints resolution. This has reduced in quarter 3 from the previous quarters.

Service Area	Amount (£)
<b>Quarter 1</b>	
Housing Repairs	650
<b>Quarter 2</b>	
Housing Repairs	812
Housing Management	300
<b>Quarter 3</b>	
Housing Repairs	300
Housing Management	100
<b>Quarter 4</b>	

- 5.24 **Changes to external governance/regulatory requirements**
- 5.25 Alongside our own analysis as to how we need to develop our policy, process and systems around complaints and feedback we also need to have due regard for the changes coming from the HO and LGSCO.
- 5.26 Landlords must carry out an annual assessment against the HO Complaints Handling Code to ensure their complaint handling remains in line with its requirements and publish the results. These do not need to be submitted to the Ombudsman. Non-compliance could result in the Ombudsman issuing complaint handling failure orders.
- 5.27 Key areas of the Complaints Handling Code include:
- Universal definition of a complaint.

- Providing easy access to the complaints procedure and ensuring residents are aware of it, including their right to access the HO Service.
- The structure of the complaint's procedure - only 2 stages necessary and clear times set out for responses.
- Ensuring fairness in complaint handling with a resident-focused process.
- Taking action to put things right and appropriate remedies.
- Creating a positive complaint handling culture through continuous learning and improvement.
- Demonstrating learning in annual reports.
- Annual self-assessment against the Code.

- 5.28 The Code was introduced as part of the Ombudsman's new powers in the revised HO Scheme. The Code acts as a guide for residents setting out what they can and should expect from their landlord when they complain. The requirements in the Code also provide residents with information about how to make a complaint and how to progress it through the landlord's internal complaints procedure.
- 5.29 Our Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy covers our complaints under both the HO and LGSCO. The HO covers all complaints about social housing, including councils' role as social landlords whereas the LGSCO covers all other services including complaints about most council housing services other than social housing.
- 5.30 Over the last 12 months the Council has updated its Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy and associated processes to ensure that we remain fully compliant with the HO's Complaint Handling Code. It has been reviewed by the HO in the last 12 months.
- 5.31 To simplify and align the complaints framework for local authorities the LGSCO have recently consulted on the Complaint Handling Code with the HO, which took place in late 2023.
- 5.32 Although originally consulted on as a joint code with the LGSCO, the two Ombudsmen have now decided to issue separate Codes following analysis of consultation feedback.
- 5.33 Each Code is based on a unified set of principles and share many of the same approaches in key areas such as response times, timeliness and oversight. But by issuing separate Codes they are able to recognise the differences between the roles and powers in relation to the different approaches individual council services may need to take when responding to complaints.
- 5.34 Key points of difference of the new code published relate to:
- That processes must have two stages only (including any 3rd party arrangements)
  - Timescales and requirements for acknowledging complaints at each stage
  - Timescales for responding to complaints at each stage (including extensions)
  - Exclusions to raising and/or escalating complaints
  - Resourcing arrangements, including the Member Responsible for Complaints
  - The requirement to produce and publish an annual complaints performance and service improvement report
- 5.35 The HO Complaint Handling Code will become **statutory** from 1 April 2024, meaning that landlords will be obliged by law to follow its requirements. The Code aims to achieve best practice in complaint handling and ultimately to provide a better service to residents. Key areas of the Code have not changed.

- 5.36 There is a legal duty placed on the HO to monitor compliance with the Code, regardless of whether it receives individual complaints from residents about a landlord. For the first time, this means landlords will need to submit their self-assessment annually to the Ombudsman at the same time as their Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs). As a landlord, Melton Borough Council must submit this by 30th June 2024.
- 5.37 The new duty to monitor means that the HO is required to ensure that all landlords meet the standards set out in the Code for complaint handling, regardless of their size and operating model.
- 5.38 The duty allows the HO to assess landlords even where no complaints have been referred to us for investigation. Where the HO identifies any concerns with a landlord's compliance with the Code, they will engage with them to bring them back into compliance promptly. If there is evidence of ongoing failures in compliance, they will consider using our wider powers including Complaint Handling Failure Orders.
- 5.39 The LGSCO new Complaints Handling Code was launched in February 2024 following the consultation. They have issued the Code as "advice and guidance" for all local councils in England under section 23(12A) of the Local Government Act 1974. This means that councils should consider the Code when developing complaint handling policies and procedures and when responding to complaints. If a council decides not to follow the Code, the LGSCO would expect it to have a good reason for this.
- 5.40 Organisations should have a single policy for dealing with complaints covered by the Code. The principles, process and timescales in this Code are aligned with the Complaint Handling Code issued by the HO. This means that organisations who fall under the jurisdiction of both Ombudsmen should be able to provide a co-ordinated complaint handling process across services covered by both Codes.
- 5.40.1 A review has been undertaken on our existing Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy and this remains compliant with the HO/LGSCO Complaint Handling Codes. There will be some minor amendments to the wording to ensure that this is the case. The updated policy will then be published on the Council's website and details of any changes made recorded.
- 5.41 **Make Things Right Campaign**
- 5.42 In December 2023, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) launched the [Make Things Right Campaign](#).
- 5.43 This is to ensure those living in social housing who have issues with their home know their rights, know how to complain, and feel empowered in the knowledge that their voice will be heard.
- 5.43.1 The campaign sets out 3 steps for tenants to get issues sorted:
1. Report it to your landlord
  2. Complain to your landlord
  3. Escalate to the HO
- 5.43.2 The Council is committed to ensuring tenants know how to complain and are empowered to do so. The Council aims to make it easy for tenants to raise issues through this process.

5.43.3 If tenants are not happy with our final response to a complaint, or, the way in which a complaint has been handled, it can be escalated to the HO. They are free to use, impartial and will investigate fairly.

#### 5.44 **Housing Disrepair**

5.45 The Council is also keen to ensure that tenants direct any concerns about repairs to their homes directly to the Council, and to avoid the use of 'no win, no fee' type companies who are known to target social housing tenants. The companies often tell tenants they will help them to claim compensation for any repairs that they find. However, many of the companies are trying to make money from landlords, and often customers do not get any money. There has been a significant increase in disrepair claims received by the council which suggests that Melton has been targeted in this way.

5.46 The Council is clear that if tenants have repairs in their home that need doing, the council will seek to fix the problem as soon as possible.

#### 5.47 **Looking to the future - system/process changes planned**

5.48 There are a number of actions planned including:

##### 5.48.1 **Implementing a new Complaint Management System and data oversight arrangements:**

A crucial step is the implementation of a new complaint management system that not only streamlines the complaint-handling process but also supports robust and effective data management. Following approval in the 24/25 budget, this system will be procured in 2024/25 and will also address Freedom of Information, system access and member requests to enhance transparency and compliance. It will mean that the Council no longer relies on an excel document and file-based recording system.

##### 5.48.2 **Advancing complaint categories (Improving data quality, relevance and alignment with Council priorities):**

As part of the new Complaints Management System, the Council will review the categorisation of complaints to ensure they reflect the range of complaints received and to improve data insight and learning. Some complaints may also be more intricate, and this initiative aligns with ongoing improvements and modernisation.

##### 5.48.3 **Enhancing learning capture processes:**

A comprehensive review of how the organisation captures learning from actions following complaints is vital for sustained improvements. This involves tracking the actions taken and their impact on enhancing services across the Council. To facilitate quick changes in the short term, addressing specific findings mentioned in the report is imperative. This may involve targeted interventions and adjustments based on immediate needs for particular services. An annual report on complaints trends and analysis is already underway for the Housing and Communities directorate to support continuous improvement.

##### 5.48.4 **Learning from issue related complaints**

We need to take learning from where particular issues in services cause a rise in the number of complaints. Where this is the case, we need to look at the root cause of this and tackle the issue rather than the symptoms. For example, there were a number of complaints in housing repairs around damp and mould, ensuring effective treatment of damp and mould

in housing is crucial and if we do not get this right this may impact on the number of complaints and ultimately on tenant experience.

#### 5.48.5 **Regular monitoring and reporting:**

We are establishing a regular monitoring and reporting mechanism for complaints through quarterly reporting to Cabinet, ensuring that trends and patterns are identified promptly. Alongside this we will incorporate data-driven insights into our decision-making processes, enabling the organisation to adapt and improve services based on evolving needs. The Council is also introducing a Landlord Assurance Board which will receive updates on complaints as part of its remit.

## **6 Options Considered**

6.1 Not applicable. This report responds to a request from the Scrutiny committee.

## **7 Consultation**

7.1 Feedback from the Scrutiny Committee is welcome. There has been no formal consultation in developing this update report.

## **8 Next Steps – Implementation and Communication**

8.1 Feedback from the committee will be considered as part of the continuous development of how the Council responds to customer complaints and feedback.

## **9 Financial Implications**

9.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this report but there are potential financial implications in terms of any compensation paid as part of the resolution of any complaints.

**Financial Implications reviewed by: Assistant Director for Resources**

## **10 Legal and Governance Implications**

10.1 The Council must ensure it complies with both the HO Complaints Handling Code and the LGSCO Complaints Handling Code since these are “advice and guidance” for all local authorities in England published under section 23(12A) of the Local Government Act 1974.

10.2 Neither the HO or LGSCO may investigate a complaint about a local authority’s exercise of its administrative functions, alleged failure in providing a service or alleged failure to provide a service unless the authority concerned is aware of the allegation and has been given a reasonable opportunity to investigate and respond to that complaint.

In addition to meeting the requirements referred to in paragraph 10.1 above, the Council’s Complaints Procedure establishes a robust framework to ensure that such complaints are properly investigated and that an appropriate response is provided. By following that process the Council can investigate, address any failure with the customer concerned and avoid matters escalating to formal investigation by either Ombudsman. In turn this reduces the risk of formal reports being issued by the Ombudsman in relation to the Council’s functions.

10.3 As indicated in the body of the report, an important outcome from the steps proposed (particularly the Complaints Handling System) is to provide detailed information regarding complaints and allow the Council to identify and address the matters giving rise to those



complaints. This is crucial in ensuring that the Council meets the required standards of administration, complies with the law, and avoids injustice to its customers.

**Legal Implications reviewed by: the Monitoring Officer.**

## 11 Equality and Safeguarding Implications

- 11.1 Equality and safeguarding considerations are a key component of any response to community safety.
- 11.2 An Equalities Impact Assessment was carried out for the associated Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy and can be found on the council's website [Equality Impact Assessment](#).
- 11.3 A further impact assessment will be undertaken when the policy is reviewed in 2025.

## 12 Data Protection Implications (Mandatory)

- 12.1 Data Protection is addressed in the Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy. All complaints will be handed in accordance with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018. The handling and storage of personal data will be handled and stored in accordance with the Council's Data Protection Policy.

## 13 Community Safety Implications

- 13.1 None identified.

## 14 Environmental and Climate Change Implications

- 14.1 None identified.

## 15 Other Implications (where significant)

- 15.1 No other implications

## 16 Risk & Mitigation

Risk No	Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Risk
1	Failure to comply with the Complaints Handling Code	Very Low	Critical	9
2	Failure to follow the processes set out in our Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy	Very Low	Critical	9

		Impact / Consequences			
		Negligible	Marginal	Critical	Catastrophic
Likelihood	Score/ definition	1	2	3	4
	6 Very High				
	5 High				
	4 Significant				
	3 Low			1,2	
	2 Very Low				
	1 Almost impossible				

Risk No	Mitigation
1	The requirements set out in the Complaints Handling Code has been included in our Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy. This will be a key part of any future reviews of this Policy.
2	Training and support have been provided for all employees involved in complaints on the key stages and processes set out in the Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy. The Council also publicises the approach and policy on complaints and regular information is shared on the intranet and messenger with officers.

## 17 Background Papers

17.1 [Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy](#)

## 18 Appendices

18.1 None