**REPORT NO. 11**

# BIRMINGHAM CIVIC HOUSING ASSOCIATION LIMITED

## BOARD OF MANAGEMENT – 12th MARCH 2026

## REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

## Complaints Performance & Service Improvement Report

### Purpose of Report

To present the annual report on complaints performance and service improvements and a self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code (the Code).

To provide the Board of Management with the information and assurance it needs to prepare and publish a response to the report and the self-assessment.

### Background

We welcome feedback from tenants, as it provides an opportunity to review our performance and identify areas for improvement. Our complaints policy is published on the website and periodically in newsletters to tenants. The policy reflects a two stage complaints process, ensuring all complaints are investigated thoroughly and, if required, the findings reviewed. Should a complainant remain dissatisfied after the second stage, the policy supports people to escalate their complaint to the independent Housing Ombudsman.

The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 strengthened the powers of the Regulator of Social Housing and the Housing Ombudsman. It empowered the Ombudsman to issue a code of practice for complaint handling and placed a duty on the Ombudsman to monitor compliance with it. The Ombudsman published a new, more prescriptive, version of the Complaint Handling Code in February 2024 effective from 1st April 2024.

The code requires landlords to produce an annual complaints performance and service improvement report, including a self-assessment against the code. The report must be published on the website along with a response from the board.

This report provides a summary of the number and types of complaints received in 2025 and an overview of the service improvements made as a result. It also provides a self-assessment against the 2024 Complaint Handling Code Appendix 1).

### Performance on Complaint Handling - 2025

In 2025, 11 complaints were received, of these, 9 were resolved at Stage 1 (82%) another was resolved at Stage 2 (9%). One complainant remains dissatisfied and has escalated their complaint to the Housing Ombudsman.

The Ombudsman has not yet allocated a case worker to review the complaint and reach a conclusion on our handling of it.

The table below provides a summary of the types of complaint received:

| Service Area | Stage 1 | Stage 2 | Upheld Yes/No |
|---|---|---|---|
| Repairs Service (OOH call-out) | 1 | 1 | Partial |
| Missing fence panels | 1 | 0 | Partial |
| Rent Arrears (action) | 1 | 0 | No |
| Letting date (delay) | 1 | 0 | No |
| Smell in property & alley | 1 | 0 | No |
| Smell from flat below – (failure to resolve) | 1 | 0 | No |
| Repair (delay before work started & poor communication) | 2 | 0 | Yes |
| Customer Service (attitude of staff) | 1 | 0 | No |
| Rubish on street | 1 | 0 | Yes |
| Mice/Rent Arrears/Photographs taken in property | 1 | 1 | Partial |
| **Total** | 11 | 2 | |

Under the Regulator of Housing's Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs), the number of complaints must be expressed per 1000 units (e.g. 11/217 x 1000):

| | Number per 1000 units |
|---|---|
| Stage 1 complaints | 51 |
| Stage 2 complaints | 9 |

The target response times for complaints (based on the 2024 code) is as follows:

Stage 1 – acknowledge, define and log within 5 days of receipt and respond within 10 working days of acknowledgement (unless further time is agreed with the complainant)

Stage 2 – acknowledge, define and log within 5 working days and respond within 20 working days of escalation to Stage 2 (unless further time is agreed with the complainant)

Performance against these targets in 2025 is as follows:

| Target | % within target time |
|---|---|
| Stage 1 | 90% |
| Stage 2 | 100% |

Complaints made by telephone are acknowledged at the time, although it is our practice to also send a written acknowledgement. The target for acknowledging

complaints that come in by email is more challenging as several days may have passed over a weekend before the email is opened.

In the 2025 tenant satisfaction survey, tenants were asked how satisfied they are with the association's approach to handling complaints:

| TSM | % Satisfied | 2023 Survey | Acuity (all providers) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Satisfaction with the association's approach to handling complaints | 70% | 70% | 33.8% |

The 2025 result is the same as that achieved in 2023, although it is disappointing not to have improved in this area, the result compares favourably with other associations.

There is not necessarily a correlation between the tenant satisfaction survey result and the complaints made in 2025, as the tenant satisfaction survey includes the views of all participants, regardless of whether they made a complaint in the year.

**Definition of a Complaint**

The complaints policy provides the following definition of a 'Service Request' and a 'Complaint', these are consistent with the Ombudsman's code of practice:

A service request is "***a request from a tenant requiring action to be taken to put something right"***

A complaint is "***an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions, or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or a group of residents".***

**Learning from Complaints**

There was no common factor in the reasons for complaints, however, there have been learning points and changes in practice as a result:

- Laker BMS have revised their out-of-hours response and escalation procedures.
- Staff have been reminded that they should seek consent from the tenant before taking photographs inside the property.
- Additional bins have been provided to one of the converted properties.

Other measures implemented in 2025 to improve our complaint handling include:

- Review of the Complaints Policy to comply with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code.
- Completion of a self-assessment against the Code (Appendix 1)
- Review of performance by the Member Responsible for Complaints

## Member Responsible for Complaints

The Complaint Handling Code requires the Board of Management to appoint a Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC) to have lead responsibility for complaints, in 2025 this role was undertaken by Mrs Damaris Kanco-Hammond.

Having undertaken a review of complaints received in the year and the responses to them, the MRC's findings are as follows:

*"Following the completion of the recent audit of all complaints for 2025/26, several key observations have emerged. Encouragingly, the majority of complaints received were resolved at Stage 1 and did not escalate further, demonstrating the continued effectiveness of our complaint resolution process. A notable proportion of complaints related to external contractors not meeting expected standards, rather than issues arising directly within the Association.*

*It is reassuring that all complaints were handled in line with the timeframes set out in the Complaints Policy and the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code, with responses issued promptly. Investigations were conducted thoroughly and professionally, with some outcomes reflecting good practice that went beyond standard policy requirements.*

*Particularly positive was the strong emphasis placed on supporting tenants in cases involving poor mental health. The sensitivity, care and diligence shown in these instances highlight the Association's ongoing commitment to tenant wellbeing and safeguarding.*

*Overall, I am satisfied with the effectiveness of the complaints handling process during the year. Staff have demonstrated a clear commitment to resolving issues appropriately and ensuring tenants receive the support they need. This report reflects a positive culture, underpinned by a thorough and conscientious approach to complaint handling".*

## RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

i) The Board of Management agree a response to this report for publication on the complaints section of the website.

ii) The Board of Management approve the self-assessment and authorise the Chief Executive to submit it to the Housing Ombudsman.

**Helen Marson - Chief Executive** **February 2026**