

RESPONSE TO THE COMPLAINTS ANNUAL REPORT 2025/26 BY THE BOARD OF STONEWATER

July 2026

This statement has been written by Juliana Crowe, our Member Responsible for Complaints on behalf of Stonewater's Board.

As a Board, we remain committed to ensuring complaints are used not only as a measure of performance, but as a vital source of customer insight to help shape better services and improve customer experience. During 2025/26, we have continued to build on the improvements made in previous years and are encouraged by the positive progress reflected within this report. But we also recognise there is still some way to go.

Overall complaint volumes reduced by 15.1% during the year, including an 11.5% reduction in Stage 1 complaints and a 25.4% reduction in Stage 2 complaints. We are particularly encouraged to see a significant reduction in complaints relating to estate services following focused work to improve service delivery and customer communication in this area.

Performance against the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code remained strong, with 98% of Stage 1 complaints and 97.5% of Stage 2 complaints responded to within timescales. This continues the substantial improvement achieved over recent years and reflects the organisation's ongoing focus on timely complaint resolution and oversight.

We are also pleased to see continued improvement in Housing Ombudsman outcomes. Despite a significant increase in the number of Ombudsman findings issued during the year, the overall maladministration rate reduced from 64% to 59%, with severe maladministration findings remaining low. This reflects continued investment in complaint handling, early resolution, quality assurance and stronger management of Ombudsman investigations.

We recognise, however, that there remains more to do. Complaint volumes continue to benchmark comparatively high against sector peers and customer satisfaction with complaint handling reduced during the year, although this has been significantly impacted by changes to survey methodology which now captures all dissatisfaction regardless of cause. Increasing resolution at Stage 1 and improving the wider customer experience therefore remain key priorities for the organisation.

We would like to thank our customers for continuing to provide feedback and challenge, including through the Customer Complaints Learning Panel, which continues to play an important role in helping shape service improvements. We also thank colleagues across

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Stonewater for their continued commitment to improving services and complaint handling in what remains a challenging operating environment.

As a Board, we remain committed to ensuring complaints drive learning, accountability and service improvement across the organisation during 2026/27 and beyond.

Juliana Crowe