

HOMES & COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

24 JANUARY 2022

HOUSING OMBUDSMAN COMPLAINT HANDLING – SELF ASSESSMENT

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide an annual update to Committee on the results of the self-assessment of the Customer Feedback Policy against the Housing Ombudsman Effective Complaints Handling Self-Assessment.
- 1.2 Committee will recall receiving the inaugural update at the January 2021 meeting following the introduction of the Housing Ombudsman Effective Complaints Code in July 2020.

2.0 Background Information

- 2.1 The Complaint Handling Code placed a mandate for all Council's to undertake a self-assessment against the code by 31 December 2020, and an annual review thereafter.
- 2.2 The Complaint Handling Code provides a framework to promote high quality complaint management, in particular:
- i. greater and easier routes of access for tenants and residents with faster resolutions
 - ii. how we use and share the learning from complaints to drive service improvements or amendments
- 2.3 The Tenant Forum have inputted into the self-assessment process again this year and provided feedback on the findings.

3.0 Proposals

- 3.1 The December 2020 self-assessment highlighted that the Council was partially compliant, with a number of areas for improvement, further consideration and a mechanism for continued monitoring.
- 3.2 The 2021 update of these are:

December 2020 Findings	December 2021 Update
Include the full definition of a complaint in the Policy as suggested by the Housing Ombudsman	Full definition now included in Policy
Increased performance reporting regarding complaints, including satisfaction with outcome and capturing and sharing what learning has been gained/implemented as a result.	Complaints performance has been added to the Corporate Performance Report Quarterly reports are shared with Tenant Forum Satisfaction with outcome and handling of complaints is now being collected monthly

	<p>Complaints and learning are discussed at monthly Directorate Meeting</p> <p>Future Tenant Annual Reports will have a complaint/learning/feedback focus.</p>
The subsequent sharing of this learning (where appropriate) with SLT, residents and tenants via the website, the Housing Advisory Group and this committee.	See above
Continued monitoring of complaint handling with an annual review and completion of the self-assessment, including the publication of the assessment	Annual review of self-assessment in place Updated Self-assessment will be put on the Website following committee approval
The formation of a Reasonable Adjustments Policy to ensure full compliance with the Equality Act 2010 to accommodate an individual's needs	Draft policy done. See separate report to Homes and Communities Committee
The assignment of a person or team to take responsibility for complaint handling; the code uses the term "complaints officer".	<p>Business Manager - Customer Services has overall responsibility for Complaints Policy and Business Manager - Housing & Estates for the Compliance with Self-Assessment.</p> <p>The customer services team leaders are responsible for the day to day recording and monitoring of complaints on the corporate CRM system.</p> <p>Business managers are responsible for responding to complaints within business units and reviewing procedures etc. through any lessons learnt</p> <p>A complaints co-ordinator role has been included as a possible initiative to ensure complaints are high priority and highest levels of customer care are provided as part of efficiency savings. This role will focus on our duties and responsibilities as a Landlord.</p>
The discontinuation of a stage 3 within the Policy.	Stage 3 removed.
A procedure guide and templates are currently being progressed	Templates are now in place
Training sessions for all those involved in complaint handling.	Training has taken place with HHW Directorate

4.0 Digital Implications

4.1 Customers have the option of submitting their feedback online. This functionality is a requirement of the self-assessment. We will be investing in our various digital platforms to give a wide variety of options for residents to feed back.

5.0 Equalities Implications

5.1 The production of a reasonable adjustment policy forms part of this report. We already have in place the option for tenant and residents to appoint a representative on their behalf.

6.0 Financial Implications FIN-21-22/2994

6.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

7.0 Community Plan – Alignment to Objectives

7.1 The Housing Ombudsman Self-Assessment and associated Customer Feedback Policy aligns with the following objectives:

- i. Increasing participation with the Council
- ii. Increase residents satisfaction with the Council

8.0 Comments of Director

8.1 The Housing Advisory Group met on 6th January 2022 and confirmed they were happy with the direction of travel. Additional feedback was received that there could be confusion for tenants wanting to make a complaint being directed to a feedback form so it has been recommended that we amend our feedback mechanisms to make clear whether the tenants comments will be treated as feedback or a complaint.

8.2 The Housing Advisory Group recommended in December 2020 that a communications plan be created to ensure all tenants are aware of how to make a complaint, how to provide feedback and the process involved. This is yet to be progressed due in part to the redesign of our website.

8.3 The group endorsed the complaints co-ordinator proposal as a commitment to the importance of addressing issues quickly when our services fall below expectation and how we use this to improve our services.

8.4 Finally the group felt this is still a work in progress and they look forward to see improvements over the next year.

9.0 RECOMMENDATION(S)

- a) That members note the progress and continued compliance against the self-assessment.
- b) That members note and endorse the actions put in place to support the Council's approach the effective complaint handling.
- c) The creation of a communications plan to promote the feedback policy as outlined in section 8.2.

Reason for Recommendation(s)

To ensure the Customer Feedback Policy fully complies with the Complaint Handling Code and reflects the feedback of tenants.

Background Papers

Nil

For further information please contact Julie Davidson – Business Manager Housing Management on 5542 or Jill Baker – Business Manager Customer Services on 5810

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