



Report to: Portfolio Holder for Homes & Health

Decision Date: 13 September 2022

Portfolio Holder: Cllr. Tm Wendels

Director Lead: Suzanne Shead – Director Housing, Health & Wellbeing

Lead Officer: Jill Baker, Business Manager Customer Services, 01636 655810 and Julie Davidson, Business Manager Housing and Estates Management, 01636 655542

Report Summary	
<b>Type of Report</b>	Open report Non-key decision
<b>Report Title</b>	Housing Ombudsman Self-Assessment
<b>Purpose of Report</b>	<p>In July 2020, the Housing Ombudsman introduced its Complaint Handling Code. It was reviewed after one year and the associated changes took effect from 1 April 2022.</p> <p>Landlords must carry out an annual self-assessment against the Complaints Handling Code to ensure their complaint handling remains in line with the requirements of the Code.</p> <p>The purpose of the report is to update the Portfolio Holder on the self-assessment which has been completed and the associated action plan.</p>
<b>Recommendation</b>	To note the results of the self-assessment and associated action plan
<b>Alternative Options Considered</b>	There are no alternatives – the self-assessment must take place
<b>Reason for Recommendation</b>	It is a mandatory requirement that the Council must report the outcome of their self-assessment to elected members.
<b>Decision Taken</b>	As per the recommendation.

## **1.0 Background**

1.1 Following the introduction of the Housing Ombudsman Effective Complaints Code in July 2020, an initial self-assessment was completed in December 2020. This was reported to the 18 January 2021 Homes & Communities Committee

1.2 The key areas in the Code are:

- 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 Housing Ombudsman Service
- The structure of the complaint's procedure - only two stages required and clear timeframes 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.

1.3 Following a review one year after it was introduced, the Housing Ombudsman updated the Code to strengthen provisions to support a positive complaint handling culture. The changes took effect from 1 April 2022 and landlords have until 1 October 2022 to become compliant.

The updated Code has no major changes. It provides clarity and strengthens complaint handling in certain areas.

1.4 Landlords must carry out an annual assessment against the Code to ensure their complaint handling remains in line with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code its requirements and publish the results.

1.5 There are two assessment categories – mandatory and best practice. The action plan has 13 mandatory and 12 best practice actions. These are primarily related to amending the policies, staff guidance and letter templates.

1.6 The self-assessment has been carried out in conjunction with the Local Influencer Networks and their comments have been considered.

## **2.0 Proposals**

2.1 The self- assessment and action plan is attached as appendices to this report.

2.2 Once approved by the Portfolio Holder, the self-assessment will be published on the Councils website and the action plan will be implemented.

## **3.0 Implications**

In writing this report and in putting forward recommendations, officers have considered the following implications: Data Protection, Digital and Cyber Security, Equality and Diversity, Financial, Human Resources, Human Rights, Legal, Safeguarding and

Sustainability and where appropriate they have made reference to these implications and added suitable expert comment where appropriate.

### 3.1 Financial Implications

This self - assessment and action plan have no direct financial implications.

### 3.2 Equalities

The self-assessment and action plan have no direct equalities implications. There is an action in the action plan to review the Reasonable Adjustment Policy and associated Equalities Impact assessment to ensures it adheres to the Equality Act.

### **Background Papers and Published Documents**

Nil.