

Report to: Audit & Governance Committee Meeting
27 September 2023

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Report Summary	
Report Title	Housing Ombudsman Investigation Outcome
Purpose of Report	The purpose of this report is to update Members of the outcome of a recent Housing Ombudsman investigation
Recommendations	That Members note the findings of the report
Reason for Recommendation	There is a requirement from the Ombudsman that the outcome of their investigations is shared with Members

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The Council recognises the importance of listening to the views of its residents about the services it delivers. Our customer complaints and feedback policy provides the opportunity to capture, investigate, respond and learn from customer feedback to assist with the delivery and shaping of Council services.
- 1.2 The Council has a two stage complaints process. If after receiving the stage two response, the complainant is still unhappy with the outcome, they can refer their case to either the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman or the Housing Ombudsman Service.
- 1.3 The Housing Ombudsman provides support to tenants and landlords and investigates complaints for disputes involving the tenants and leaseholders of social housing landlords. The Council is required to complete an annual self-assessment against the Code for Effective Complaints Handling which sets out how complaints should be managed including promoting the role of the Housing Ombudsman.

- 1.4 The results of any investigations carried out by either of the Ombudsman are shared with the Audit and Governance Committee and the local ward member(s).
- 1.5 In October 2022, the Council received details of a complaint from the Housing Ombudsman. The key issues of the complaint were about the council's handling of:
- A request to be rehoused and
 - Adaptations following occupational therapist assessments.

2.0 Ombudsman Decision

- 2.1 The Housing Ombudsman carried out a detailed investigation and notified the Council of its decision on 31 May 2023. It found that there was no maladministration.
- 2.2 It stated that the Council acted appropriately and in accordance with its policy which gave it discretion as to whether it would carry out complex adaptations or seek suitable alternative accommodation.
- 2.3 The Housing Ombudsman recommended that the Council should consider reviewing its complaint responses in this case. It stated "complaint responses should focus on responding to the issues raised and should not be used to highlight other issues such as resident behaviour. Such issues should be raised separately under the relevant procedures".
- 2.4 The Council recognised the above, however in this case, felt the additional issues included in the complaint responses were relevant to the complaint investigation.
- 2.5 The Housing Ombudsman publishes anonymised decisions on its website, three months after the final decision date. [Decisions Archive - Housing Ombudsman \(housing-ombudsman.org.uk\)](https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk)

3.0 Learning from Complaints

- 3.1 The Council understands the importance of learning from complaints to drive forward service improvements. All staff who respond to complaints are undertaking training which includes responding to and learning from complaints.
- 3.2 Complaints data is reported monthly within the Housing Directorate and included in the quarterly monitoring reports. Themes and learning from housing complaints are presented to the Tenant Engagement Board quarterly with an annual review. Changes made to housing service practice are shared in the Tenant Annual Report to highlight the impact of the tenants voice and that the Council is listening.

4.0 Implications

In writing this report and in putting forward recommendation's 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.

Financial Implications – FIN23-24/2692

- 4.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report, however, there is a budget within the Housing Revenue Account where cases have been determined that the Council need to compensate a tenant.

Background Papers

The investigation report is attached at Appendix 1