

CABINET

URN: 24-026

Report Title: Corporate Complaints and Compliments Policy

Report to: ELT 28 February 2024

Cabinet 4 March 2024

Responsible Cabinet Member: Cllr Carl Smith and Cllr Graham Plant

Responsible Director/Officer: Nicola Turner, Head of Housing Assets

James Wedon, Information Governance and Data Protection Officer



Is this a Key decision? No

Date added to Forward Plan of Key Decisions if a Key Decision:

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY / INTRODUCTION FROM CABINET MEMBER

This report seeks delegated approval to make amendments to the Corporate Complaints and Compliments Policy to ensure that it is in full compliance with the Housing Ombudsman's new Complaint Handling Code. This updated code has statutory status and requires Registered Providers to be compliant with the requirements of the code by 1 April 2024.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That Cabinet:

- 1) Delegate authority to the Head of Housing Assets to make revisions to the Corporate Complaints and Compliments Policy to ensure it is compliant with the requirements of the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Housing Ombudsman published in February 2024 a new Complaints Handling Code which applies to all Registered Providers. The code becomes statutory from 1 April 2024. The Council's current Corporate Complaints and Compliments Policy is not compliant with the requirements of the new Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code, meaning that the Council would be in breach of the requirements of the code from 1 April 2024.
- 1.2 This report therefore seeks delegated authority to make a number of changes to the Council's Corporate Complaints and Compliments Policy to ensure that it is fully compliant with the new Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code. These changes will be made through inclusion of an appendix which sets out the approach to complaint handling for complaints regarding the Council's landlord services. The main changes included in the appendix will be:

- Introduction of a two stage complaint process
- Stage one complaints to be responded to within 10 working days following acknowledgement of the complaint being sent.

In addition, to comply with the Code, the Council will appoint the Portfolio Holder for Operational Property and Asset Management to have lead responsibility for complaint

handling in relation to the landlord function ensuring that Cabinet has information on complaints for the Housing Assets Service. Additionally, an annual complaints and service improvement report will be presented to Cabinet on complaints received in relation to the Council landlord services and how these are being used to support service improvement.

- 1.3 It is noted that amending the Corporate Complaints and Compliments Policy so that it is compliant with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code will mean that there will be a two-stage process for complaints regarding the Housing Assets Service and a three-stage process for other Council service complaints. A review of the Corporate Complaints and Compliments Policy will be undertaken during 2024/5 to provide a consistent approach and also make any other changes required to improve the policy and complaint handling processes of the Council.

2.0 Financial Implications

- 2.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report or the changes required to be made to the Corporate Complaints and Compliments Policy.

3.0 Risk Implications

- 3.1 If the Council did not update the Corporate Complaints and Compliments Policy, from 1 April 2024, the Council would be in breach of the new Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code. Where a landlord does not meet the requirements of the code and fails to move into compliance in a reasonable time, the Housing Ombudsman can issue a Complaint Handling Failure Order.

4.0 Legal Implications

- 4.1 The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 provides the legal basis for the Housing Ombudsman to produce and issue a statutory code of practice (the Complaint Handling Code). The act also imposes a duty upon the Housing Ombudsman to monitor compliance against the code of practice. Both powers commence on 1 April 2024.

5.0 Background Papers

Corporate Complaints and Compliments Policy

Areas of consideration: e.g. does this report raise any of the following issues and if so how have these been considered/mitigated against?

Consultations	Comment
Monitoring Officer Consultation:	Via ELT
Section 151 Officer Consultation:	Via ELT
Existing Council Policies:	Corporate Complaints and Compliments Policy
Equality Issues/EQIA assessment:	In investigating and responding to complaints any need for reasonable adjustments will be taken into account. The Housing Ombudsman have prepared an EQIA for the new code.