

Committee: Cabinet

Date: Monday, 18
December 2023

Title: Self-Assessment Housing Ombudsman
Service Complaints Code

**Portfolio
Holder:** Cllr Arthur Coote
Portfolio Holder for Housing

**Report
Author:** Kerry Clifford
Director of Housing, Health and Communities

Key decision: No

Summary

1. The Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code was introduced in July 2020. The Code sets out good practice that the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) expects social landlords to follow.
2. The current Code requires landlords to carry out an annual self-assessment to ensure their complaint handling procedures remain in line with the Ombudsman's requirements and the HOS requires the landlord to publish the assessment.
3. The Code is also a useful guide for tenants to understand what they can and should expect from their landlord in respect of complaint handling and culture.
4. Given that some councils are within both the HOS jurisdiction as well as the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO), both have partnered to make a joint Code which will become the single gold standard for complaint handling in the local government sector. It is intended that a joint Code will make it easier for residents to have confidence that the Council is employing best practice and for local people to hold councils and social landlords to account. It will align complaints about housing management, which are already subject to the Code through the Housing Ombudsman Scheme, with other local authority services.
5. This report was considered by the Housing Board on 7 December 2023 and the proposals have been recommended to Cabinet for approval.

Recommendations

6. To approve the self-assessment of the Housing Ombudsman's Complaints Handling Code so it can be published on the UDC website and made available to tenants.
7. To note that the Complaints Policy will undergo further review in line with the joint code which is expected to be published prior to April 2024.

Financial Implications

8. None arising directly from this report.

Background Papers

9. The self-assessment of the HOS Complaints Code is attached to the report as Appendix A.

10. The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report and are available for inspection from the author of the report:

- The HOS Complaint Handling Code

Impact

11.

Communication/Consultation	The Tenant and Leaseholder Panel will be consulted before publication.
Community Safety	Not applicable
Equalities	Accessibility and awareness has been assessed as part of the self-assessment
Health and Safety	Compliance with the Code will enable more openness, transparency and learning, encouraging tenants to come forward with any health and safety concerns
Human Rights/Legal Implications	Compliance with the complaints code will become a regulatory requirement
Sustainability	Not applicable
Ward-specific impacts	None
Workforce/Workplace	Review of resources to oversee and lead complaints and training to complaint responders in IHOS good practice

Situation

12. The council has achieved full compliance with the HOS complaint handling code but will review its Complaints Policy once the joint complaint handling code has been published by the HOS and the LGSCO.

Risk Analysis

13.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
That the complaint handling code is not followed and the Council is at risk of Complaint Handling Failure Orders	2	2	Ensure that complaints are monitored and audited and that

- 1 = Little or no risk or impact
- 2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.
- 3 = Significant risk or impact – action required
- 4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.