



Full Council	Tuesday, 10 December 2024	Matter for Decision
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Report Title: **Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy (December 2024)**

Report Author(s): **Teresa Neal (Strategic Director)**

Purpose of Report:	<p>The purpose of this report is to seek members approval for the updated Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy which now includes a chapter that specifically focuses on the handling and management of Housing Complaints as required by the Social Housing Regulator (SHR).</p>
Report Summary:	<p>The Council is a large and complex organisation and provides a wide range of services to many people. Sometimes we will get things wrong. We encourage feedback so we can learn and make improvements.</p> <p>This policy ensures that there is a clear process for our customers to follow when making a complaint. It also helps us to put things right when they go wrong and most importantly ensures we learn from our mistakes.</p> <p>All feedback is important, so this policy also covers how we handle compliments and comments from our customers.</p> <p>The policy is reviewed on an annual basis to ensure it meets requirements of any new legislation, in this case the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023. Thus, an additional chapter has been added to the policy to include the handling and management of housing complaints. As part of the Act there is a requirement to appoint a Member Representative for Housing Complaints.</p>
Recommendation(s):	<p>A. That Members approve the updated Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy including the chapter on handling and managing housing complaints; and</p> <p>B. That Members appoint a Member Representative for Housing Complaints (MRC).</p>
Senior Leadership, Head of Service, Manager, Officer and Other Contact(s):	<p>Teresa Neal (Strategic Director) (0116) 257 2642 teresa.neal@oadby-wigston.gov.uk</p> <p>Trish Hatton (Head of Customer Services & Transformation) (0116) 257 2700 trish.hatton@oadby-wigston.gov.uk</p> <p>Adrian Thorpe (Head of the Built Environment) (0116) 257 2645 adrian.thorpe@oadby-wigston.gov.uk</p> <p>Chris Eyre (Housing Manager) (0116) 257 2726 chris.eyre@oadby-wigston.gov.uk</p> <p>Sally Moseley (Policy, Performance & Transformation Manager)</p>

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Strategic Objectives:	Our Council (SO1) Our Communities (SO2) Our Environment (SO4) Our Partners (SO5)
Vision and Values:	"Our Borough - The Place To Be" (Vision) Customer & Community Focused (V1) Proud of Everything We Do (V2) Collaborative & Creative (V3)
Report Implications:-	
Legal:	There are no implications arising from this report.
Financial:	The implications are as set out at paragraph 7 of this report.
Corporate Risk Management:	Reputation Damage (CR4)
Equalities and Equalities Assessment (EA):	There are no implications arising from this report.
Human Rights:	There are no implications arising from this report.
Health and Safety:	There are no implications arising from this report.
Statutory Officers' Comments:-	
Head of Paid Service:	The report is satisfactory.
Chief Finance Officer:	The report is satisfactory.
Monitoring Officer:	The report is satisfactory.
Consultees:	None.
Background Papers:	None.
Appendices:	1. Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy (December 2024) 2. Complaints Handling and Management Housing Chapter

1. Introduction

1.1 The Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy is reviewed on an annual basis; therefore, it was due for review November 2024. In terms of complaints our aim is to ensure that these are handled in a consistent, fair and appropriate manner. When dealing with complaints we use the following principles:

- It should be easy for customers to make a complaint.
- When a complaint is made, where possible, we will focus on early resolution and try to solve the issue for the customer.
- When a full investigation is needed, we will consider all aspects and contact the

complainant for more information when we need to.

- We will deal with complaints in an open-minded and impartial way. The complainant, and if applicable any staff member who is the subject of the complaint, will be given a fair chance to set out their position and comment on any adverse findings before a final decision is made.
- Customers who make a complaint will be treated fairly and will not be disadvantaged in any way for raising their issue.
- When responding to a complaint, we will explain what happened, admit when things go wrong and do our best to put them right. If a complaint is unjustified, we will explain why we believe this to be the case.
- We will regularly monitor all complaints to ensure timescales and satisfaction levels are met.
- We will learn from complaints so that we can improve our services.

1.1.1 The policy was due to be reviewed in November 2025, as part of this review we have included a detailed chapter on how to handle and manage housing complaints.

2. Handling and Managing Housing Complaints

2.1 The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 (the Act) empowered the Housing Ombudsman (‘the Ombudsman’) to issue a code of practice about the procedures social housing landlords should have in place for considering complaints. It also placed a duty on the Ombudsman to monitor compliance with a code of practice that it had issued.

2.2 The Ombudsman’s Complaint Handling Code (‘the Code’) sets out best practice for landlord’s complaint handling procedures, to enable a positive complaints culture across the social housing sector, regardless of the size or type of landlord. The Code encourages landlord-tenant relationships so that residents can raise a complaint if things go wrong. The Code became statutory on 1 April 2024, meaning that all social housing providers are obliged by law to follow its requirements. The Ombudsman also has a legal duty to ensure landlords’ complaint procedures and responses are compliant with the Code and in June 2024 the Council carried out a self-assessment as to the position of the Council’s complaints procedure against the Ombudsman’s Code.

2.3 Having completed the self-assessment and identifying several gaps in the way the Council manage housing complaints, it has been necessary to implement a service improvement plan (SIP). The improvement plan contains six key actions for the Council to comply with the Ombudsman’s code of practice. These actions are to:

- Review the Council’s Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy against the Ombudsman’s Complaint Handling Code
- Draft and adopt additional guidance to comply with the Ombudsman’s Complaint Handling Code (Attached as **Appendix 2**) (Complaints Handling and Management – Housing Chapter)
- Appoint a Member Responsible for Complaints (‘MRC’)
- Produce an annual complaints performance and service improvement plan.
- Provide the Senior Leadership Team with an annual complaints’ performance report.
- Report on wider learning and improvements from complaints to stakeholders, such as residents’ panels, staff, and relevant committee

2.4 The action to appoint an MRC is a requirement of the Ombudsman’s statutory Code. This role is responsible for ensuring that the Council receives regular information on complaints that provides an insight on the Council’s Housing Team’s complaint handling performance and to advocate a positive complaint handling culture. The Code says that the MRC should be a

member of the governing body, which for housing associations would be a member of the board and for a local authority would be a Councillor.

- 2.5 As part of the new requirements set by the Social Housing Regulator there is a requirement to provide a financial remedy where appropriate to individuals whose complaints are upheld, the amount of the financial remedy will be decided by the Housing Manager in consultation with the Head of Service after seeking guidance from the Housing Ombudsman.