## Self-assessment form

This self-assessment form should be completed by the complaints officer and it must be reviewed and approved by the landlord's governing body at least annually.

Once approved, landlords must publish the self-assessment as part of the annual complaints performance and service improvement report on their website. The governing body's response to the report must be published alongside this.

Landlords are required to complete the self-assessment in full and support all statements with evidence, with additional commentary as necessary.

We recognise that there may be a small number of circumstances where landlords are unable to meet the requirements, for example, if they do not have a website. In these circumstances, we expect landlords to deliver the intentions of the Code in an alternative way, for example by publishing information in a public area so that it is easily accessible.

## Section 1: Definition of a complaint

| Code provision | Code requirement | Comply: Yes / No | Evidence | Commentary / explanation |
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| 1.2 | A complaint must be defined as:<br>*'an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the Council, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting a resident or group of residents.'* | Yes | https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/55jk2gt5/complaints-policy.pdf<br>Page 2 | Cambridge City Council uses the Housing Ombudsman's complaint definition in our Complaints Policy (CCC Policy). The definition used is universal across our complaints service and applies to both Housing and non-Housing related complaints. |
| 1.3 | A resident does not have to use the word 'complaint' for it to be treated as such. Whenever a resident expresses dissatisfaction the Council must give them the choice to | Yes | https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/55jk2gt5/complaints-policy.pdf | Our complaints policy states that if an issue is raised with a staff member, that staff |

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| | make complaint. A complaint that is submitted via a third party or representative must be handled in line with the Council's complaints policy. | | *"If a customer contacts a member of Council staff with an expression of dissatisfaction, but do not specifically mention that they want to complain, our staff will offer them the opportunity to raise a complaint"* | member will offer the customer a chance to raise a complaint: |
| 1.4 | The Council must recognise the difference between a service request and a complaint. This must be set out in their complaints policy. A service request is a request from a resident to the Council requiring action to be taken to put something right. Service requests are not complaints, but must be recorded, monitored and reviewed regularly. | Yes | https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/55jk2gt5/complaints-policy.pdf<br><br>Page 3<br><br>*"Service requests and complaints are slightly different. A service request is a contact from a customer that brings a matter to the council's attention for the first time, and requests a service offered by the council, for example, reporting a missed bin or telling us about noise nuisance."* | We clearly define this within our policy, on our complaints web page prior to raising a complaint and in our internal training documents. |
| 1.5 | A complaint must be raised when the resident expresses dissatisfaction with the response to their service request, even if the handling of the service request remains ongoing. The Council must not stop their efforts to address the | Yes | https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/55jk2gt5/complaints-policy.pdf<br><br>Section 2.0 | CCC policy is clear that we deal with all complaints through the agreed process |

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| | service request if the resident complains. | | "This can sometimes include when the customer is receiving a service from the Council. The customer may still complain whilst this service request is ongoing. It is not necessary to wait for completion of works or requests, and can complain at any time." | unless certain conditions apply. |
| 1.6 | An expression of dissatisfaction with services made through a survey is not defined as a complaint, though wherever possible, the person completing the survey should be made aware of how they can pursue a complaint if they wish to. Where the Council asks for wider feedback about their services, they also must provide details of how residents can complain. | Yes | https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/55jk2gt5/complaints-policy.pdf<br><br>Section 2.0<br><br>*"Customers may be sent a customer satisfaction survey following any interactions with the Council. Any dissatisfaction expressed within these surveys will not be considered a formal complaint, however we will follow up on negative responses to these surveys and offer the opportunity to raise a complaint case if appropriate."* | Our Customer Service managers follow up with any negative feedback left on satisfaction surveys to either resolve issues that occurred or raise a complaint if appropriate. |

## Section 2: Exclusions

| Code provision | Code requirement | Comply: Yes / No | Evidence | Commentary / explanation |
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| 2.1 | The Council must accept a complaint unless there is a valid reason not to do so. If the Council decide not to accept a complaint they must be able to evidence their reasoning. Each complaint must be considered on its own merits | Yes | https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/55jk2gt5/complaints-policy.pdf<br><br>Pages 3-4<br><br>*"If the Council decides not to accept a complaint, a detailed explanation will be provided setting out the reasons why the matter is not suitable for the Council's complaints process and the right to take that decision to the Ombudsman. The Council would not accept a complaint for the reasons set out in section 2.2, or if a complainant chooses to submit their complaint without contact details. If a complainant chooses to omit their contact details, we will treat this as anonymous feedback."* | CCC policy is clear that we deal with all complaints through the agreed process unless certain conditions apply. |
| 2.2 | A complaints policy must set out the circumstances in which a matter will not be considered as a complaint or escalated, and these circumstances must be fair and reasonable to residents. | Yes | https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/55jk2gt5/complaints-policy.pdf<br><br>Page 4 | CCC policy is compliant with this. |

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| | Acceptable exclusions include:<br>• The issue giving rise to the complaint occurred over twelve months ago.<br>• Legal proceedings have started. This is defined as details of the claim, such as the Claim Form and Particulars of Claim, having been filed at court.<br>• Matters that have previously been considered under the complaints policy. | | *"If we refuse to investigate or escalate your complaint for any of the reasons mentioned in sections 2.1, 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4 we will provide a thorough explanation as to why we made this decision. At this point, you will also be given the information to enable you to raise your complaint with either the Housing Ombudsman, or the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. The Ombudsman will then advise how best to proceed. This may involve returning you case to the Council to investigate despite our initial decision."* | |
| 2.3 | The Council must accept complaints referred to them within 12 months of the issue occurring or the resident becoming aware of the issue, unless they are excluded on other grounds. The Council must consider whether to apply discretion to accept complaints made outside this time limit where there are good reasons to do so. | Yes | https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/55jk2gt5/complaints-policy.pdf<br><br>Section 2.5<br><br>*"Complaints will be accepted from 12 months of the issue being complained about occurring. If we have already investigated the issue within 12 months, we would not investigate it again. In this instance, the complainant would be signposted to the Ombudsman to pursue their complaint further."* | CCC policy is compliant with this. |

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| 2.4 | If a the Council decides not to accept a complaint, an explanation must be provided to the resident setting out the reasons why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process and the right to take that decision to the Ombudsman. If the Ombudsman does not agree that the exclusion has been fairly applied, the Ombudsman may tell the Council to take on the complaint. | Yes | https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/55jk2gt5/complaints-policy.pdf<br><br>Section 2.5<br><br>*"If we refuse to investigate or escalate your complaint for any of the reasons mentioned in sections 2.1, 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4 we will provide a thorough explanation as to why we made this decision. At this point, you will also be given the information to enable you to raise your complaint with either the Housing Ombudsman, or the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. The Ombudsman will then advise how best to proceed. This may involve returning you case to the Council to investigate despite our initial decision."* | CCC policy is compliant with this. |
| 2.5 | The Council must not take a blanket approach to excluding complaints; they must consider the individual circumstances of each complaint. | Yes | https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/55jk2gt5/complaints-policy.pdf<br><br>Section 2.5<br><br>*"Each case will be considered on its own merits and individual circumstances and at times we may make exceptions to investigate complaints outside of the 12 month timeframe. Whenever the Council makes the decision to reject a complaint, the reasoning will be clearly explained to the complainant."* | CCC policy is compliant with this. |

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## Section 3: Accessibility and Awareness

| Code provision | Code requirement | Comply: Yes / No | Evidence | Commentary / explanation |
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| 3.1 | The Council must make it easy for residents to complain by providing different channels through which they can make a complaint. The Council must consider their duties under the Equality Act 2010 and anticipate the needs and reasonable adjustments of residents who may need to access the complaints process. | Yes | https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/55jk2gt5/complaints-policy.pdf<br><br>Section 3.0<br><br>*"If a customer requires any adjustments to the complaints process, these should be recorded on the complaints form when submitting a complaint. The Council will consider these and then discuss with the complainant to agree any reasonable adjustments we can make. A record will be kept of any adjustments made on the case."* | CCC policy is compliant with this. Our staff at all levels are trained to mediate complaints for residents, and we have accessible complaint forms available online and at reception in our offices. |
| 3.2 | Residents must be able to raise their complaints in any way and with any member of staff. All staff must be aware of the complaints process and be able to pass details of the complaint to the appropriate person within the Council. | Yes | https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/55jk2gt5/complaints-policy.pdf<br><br>Section 3.0<br><br>*"There are various ways to contact the council, but regardless of how a complaint is received, all cases will be logged into the Council's* | All staff are briefed on the complaints process, and new starters in frontline services receive in depth training for how to handle complaints and |

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| | | | *central case management system. If a complainant contacts the Council by phone, email or in person, staff members can assist with recording a complaint. The Council would prefer complainants to complete the form themselves so that they can provide their complaint in their own words with as much detail as possible, but where a customer is unable to complete the complaints form themselves, Council staff should assist complainants to record their case."* | raise them on behalf of a customer. Further guidance is available on our internal intranet site. |
| 3.3 | High volumes of complaints must not be seen as a negative, as they can be indicative of a well-publicised and accessible complaints process. Low complaint volumes are potentially a sign that residents are unable to complain. | Yes | Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Committee - Monday, 1st July, 2024 5.30 pm - YouTube<br><br>16:34 in this video of our committee meeting Cllr Bennett mentions this point and is agreed with by the Complaints Officers and other Councillors, including the Leader of the Council | Our Members and staff support this. Regular Corporate Management meetings are focused on what we can learn from the complaints we have received. |
| 3.4 | The Council must make their complaint policy available in a clear and accessible format for all residents. This will detail the two stage process, what will happen at each stage, and the timeframes for responding. The policy must also be published on the Council's website. | Yes | Compliments, complaints and suggestions - Cambridge City Council | Our easy-read complaints form contains a quick guide to the complaints policy to ensure it is accessible to all. |

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| 3.5 | The policy must explain how the Council will publicise details of the complaints policy, including information about the Ombudsman and this Code. | Yes | https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/55jk2gt5/complaints-policy.pdf<br><br>Section 1.0<br><br>*"This policy will be published on the Cambridge City Council website alongside our Annual Customer Feedback report, easy-read complaints form, how to complain guidance and information relating to the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman, and the Housing Ombudsman."* | CCC policy is compliant with this. |
| 3.6 | The Council must give residents the opportunity to have a representative deal with their complaint on their behalf, and to be represented or accompanied at any meeting with the Council. | Yes | Case details - CaseTracker | Complainants have the option on the complaints form for a "on behalf of" complaint, where a representative can rasie a case on their behalf. |
| 3.7 | The Council must provide residents with information on their right to access the Ombudsman service and how the individual can engage with the Ombudsman about their complaint. | Yes | https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/55jk2gt5/complaints-policy.pdf<br><br>Page 8<br><br>*"you can ask the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman to review your complaint. If you are a council tenant, or a council* | The contact details for the Ombudsman are also included in every stage 2 complaints response |

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| | | | *leaseholder with a complaint about our management of your leasehold, you should contact the Housing Ombudsman."* | |

## Section 4: Complaint Handling Staff

| Code provision | Code requirement | Comply: Yes / No | Evidence | Commentary / explanation |
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| 4.1 | The Council must have a person or team assigned to take responsibility for complaint handling, including liaison with the Ombudsman and ensuring complaints are reported to the governing body (or equivalent). This Code will refer to that person or team as the 'complaints officer'. This role may be in addition to other duties. | Yes | https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/55jk2gt5/complaints-policy.pdf<br><br>Section 5.0<br><br>*"The Lead Complaints Officer is accountable for all complaint handling in the Council. They will report on and analyse complaint themes and trends on a monthly, quarterly and annual basis, and report any potential systemic issues, serious risks or any policies or procedures that require a review to the appropriate service staff. This officer will also report to Members on complaints performance and be responsible for identifying service improvements and creating a culture that sees complaints as an opportunity to make these improvements"* | The Business Improvement Manager is responsible for complaint handling within the Council and reports to committee and senior management on a regular basis |
| 4.2 | The complaints officer must have access to staff at all levels to facilitate the prompt resolution of complaints. They must also have the authority and | Yes | https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/55jk2gt5/complaints-policy.pdf<br><br>Section 5.0 | CCC policy is compliant with this. |

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| | autonomy to act to resolve disputes promptly and fairly. | | *"System Administrators are responsible for reporting on performance, and statistics, and managing any training or troubleshooting with the case management system. System Administrators work with staff at all levels to facilitate prompt resolution of complaints"* | |
| 4.3 | The Council are expected to prioritise complaint handling and a culture of learning from complaints. All relevant staff must be suitably trained in the importance of complaint handling. It is important that complaints are seen as a core service and must be resourced to handle complaints effectively | Yes | https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/55jk2gt5/complaints-policy.pdf<br><br>Section 5.0<br><br>*"All staff that handle complaints are trained in the process, policy and system and given regular refresher training."*<br><br>*"Each year an Annual Customer Feedback report will be produced and presented to the Council's Cabinet. This report will put the volumes of complaints into context alongside service performance statistics, and outline any improvements made as a result of the complaints raised throughout the year."* | CCC policy is compliant with this. We have enough resource to manage the complaints process from an investigation and administration perspective. |

## Section 5: The Complaint Handling Process

| Code provision | Code requirement | Comply: Yes / No | Evidence | Commentary / explanation |
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| 5.1 | The Council must have a single policy in place for dealing with complaints covered by this Code. Residents must not be treated differently if they complain. | Yes | https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/55jk2gt5/complaints-policy.pdf | We only have one formal complaints policy which covers all service areas. |
| 5.2 | The early and local resolution of issues between the Council and residents is key to effective complaint handling. It is not appropriate to have extra named stages (such as 'stage 0' or 'informal complaint') as this causes unnecessary confusion. | Yes | https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/55jk2gt5/complaints-policy.pdf<br><br>*"There are 2 stages to the Council's complaints procedure internally, and complainants also have the right for their case to be reviewed externally by either the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) or the Housing Ombudsman."* | We only have two formal complaint stages. |
| 5.3 | A process with more than two stages is not acceptable under any circumstances as this will make the complaint process unduly long and delay access to the Ombudsman. | Yes | https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/55jk2gt5/complaints-policy.pdf | CCC policy is compliant with this. See 5.2 comments |

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| 5.4 | Where the Council's complaint response is handled by a third party (e.g. a contractor or independent adjudicator) at any stage, it must form part of the two stage complaints process set out in this Code. Residents must not be expected to go through two complaints processes. | N/A | https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/55jk2gt5/complaints-policy.pdf<br><br>Section 2.4<br><br>*"Should you complain about a third party, such as a contractor acting on behalf of the Council, we will investigate these complaints in line with this policy, as they are considered to be acting on our behalf."* | The Council handle complaints relating to third parties in line with their policy. Third parties do not handle cases as they are considered to be acting on behalf of the Council |
| 5.5 | The Council is responsible for ensuring that any third parties handle complaints in line with the Code. | N/A | https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/55jk2gt5/complaints-policy.pdf<br><br>Section 2.4 | See 5.4 commentary |
| 5.6 | When a complaint is logged at Stage 1 or escalated to Stage 2, the Council must set out their understanding of the complaint and the outcomes the resident is seeking. The Code will refer to this as "the complaint definition". If any aspect of the | Yes | https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/55jk2gt5/complaints-policy.pdf<br><br>Section 4.0 | CCC policy is compliant with this. |

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| | complaint is unclear, the resident must be asked for clarification. | | • *"At both stages of our complaints procedure, we will confirm with you: The stage at which we are responding*<br>• *The definition of your complaint (what we understand your complaint to be about)* | |
| 5.7 | When a complaint is acknowledged at either stage, the Council must be clear which aspects of the complaint they are, and are not, responsible for and clarify any areas where this is not clear. | Yes | https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/55jk2gt5/complaints-policy.pdf<br><br>Section 4.2<br><br>*"We will also advise how any aspects of the complaint that we are not responsible for can be pursued."* | CCC policy is compliant with this. |
| 5.8 | At each stage of the complaints process, complaint handlers must:<br>a. deal with complaints on their merits, act independently, and have an open mind;<br>b. give the resident a fair chance to set out their position; | Yes | https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/55jk2gt5/complaints-policy.pdf<br><br>Section 4.0<br><br>*"Complaints at both stages will be considered on their own merits,with an open mind by investigators. Residents will be given the chance to set out their position. The Council will take measures to address any actual or perceived conflicts of interest, and consider all relevant information and evidence provided when investigating a complaint."* | CCC policy is compliant with this. |

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| | c. take measures to address any actual or perceived conflict of interest; and<br>d. consider all relevant information and evidence carefully. | | | |
| 5.9 | Where a response to a complaint will fall outside the timescales set out in this Code, the Council must agree with the resident suitable intervals for keeping them informed about their complaint. | Yes | https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/55jk2gt5/complaints-policy.pdf<br><br>Section 4.1<br><br>*"If our response falls outside of these 10 working days, you will be kept informed at regular intervals agreed with you with the progress of your complaint case."* | CCC policy is compliant with this. |
| 5.10 | The Council must make reasonable adjustments for residents where appropriate under the Equality Act 2010. The Council must keep a record of any reasonable adjustments agreed, as well as a record of any disabilities a resident has | Yes | Our equality and diversity policies and plans - Cambridge City Council<br><br>And | All employees must adhere to the equality and diversity policies for all aspects of their work.<br><br>A new section is in development on |

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| | disclosed. Any agreed reasonable adjustments must be kept under active review. | | https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/55jk2gt5/complaints-policy.pdf<br><br>Section 3.0<br><br>*"If a customer requires any adjustments to the complaints process, these should be recorded on the complaints form when submitting a complaint. The Council will consider these and then discuss with the complainant to agree any reasonable adjustments we can make. A record will be kept of any adjustments made on the case."* | our complaints form for complainants to outline any adjustments they require separately to the body of their complaint so it is clearer to case owners on the system. |
| 5.11 | The Council must not refuse to escalate a complaint through all stages of the complaints procedure unless it has valid reasons to do so. The Council must clearly set out these reasons, and they must comply with the provisions set out in section 2 of this Code. | Yes | https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/55jk2gt5/complaints-policy.pdf<br><br>Section 4.1<br><br>*"The reasons for declining to escalate a complaint are the same as the reasons for not accepting a complaint. The Council may also refuse to escalate a complaint if a statutory appeal body is required to resolve the case. See section 2.2 for a list of where this may be applicable."* | CCC policy is compliant with this. |
| 5.12 | A full record must be kept of the complaint, and the outcomes at each stage. This must include the | Yes | https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/55jk2gt5/complaints-policy.pdf | All customer contact relating to a case is recorded |

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| | original complaint and the date received, all correspondence with the resident, correspondence with other parties, and any relevant supporting documentation such as reports or surveys. | | Section 3.0<br><br>*"When a case is entered into the Council complaints system, the case will be allocated to a service manager in the area/department related to the complaint, the complainant will also receive an automatic response informing them that we aim to respond to all complaints within 10 working days. All information and communications relating to the case will be recorded and sent through this system."* | within our case management system, and communications are sent directly to and from this system. |
| 5.13 | The Council must have processes in place to ensure a complaint can be remedied at any stage of its complaints process. The Council must ensure appropriate remedies can be provided at any stage of the complaints process without the need for escalation. | Yes | https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/55jk2gt5/complaints-policy.pdf<br><br>Section 4.2.3<br><br>*"If, as a result of a complaint remedial works, or other action is required, this will be booked as part of the response to the complaint. This can be done at either stage 1 or stage 2."* | CCC policy is compliant with this. |
| 5.14 | The Council must have policies and procedures in place for managing unacceptable behaviour from residents and/or their representatives. The Council must be able to evidence reasons for putting any restrictions in | Yes | https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/vn4joh1q/unreasonable-complainants-policy.pdf | This policy was written based on Ombudsman guidance. We have an internal process with calendar review reminders |

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| | place and must keep restrictions under regular review. | | | for any restrictions placed on residents contact. |
| 5.15 | Any restrictions placed on contact due to unacceptable behaviour must be proportionate and demonstrate regard for the provisions of the Equality Act 2010. | Yes | https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/vn4joh1q/unreasonable-complainants-policy.pdf | Policy was written based on Ombudsman guidance |

## Section 6: Complaints Stages

Stage 1

| Code provision | Code requirement | Comply: Yes / No | Evidence | Commentary / explanation |
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| 6.1 | The Council must have processes in place to consider which complaints can be responded to as early as possible, and which require further investigation. The Council must consider factors such as the complexity of the complaint and whether the resident is vulnerable or at risk. Most stage 1 complaints can be resolved promptly, and an explanation, apology or resolution provided to the resident. | Yes | https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/55jk2gt5/complaints-policy.pdf | Our complaints policy supports this by encouraging complainants to contact the Council to resolve requests for service first if they have not already been raised with the Council. 90% of complaints in 2023-24 were resolved at the first stage. |
| 6.2 | Complaints must be acknowledged, defined and logged at stage 1 of the complaints procedure **within** | Yes | https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/55jk2gt5/complaints-policy.pdf | Complaints are registered in the system as soon as they are submitted |

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| | **five working days of the complaint being received**. | | | with no further internal triage. |
| 6.3 | The Council must issue a full response to stage 1 complaints **within 10 working days** of the complaint being acknowledged. | Yes | https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/55jk2gt5/complaints-policy.pdf<br><br>Section 4.2.1 | Our policy is compliant with this.<br><br>*"The Council aim to respond to complaints within 10 working days"* |
| 6.4 | The Council must decide whether an extension to this timescale is needed when considering the complexity of the complaint and then inform the resident of the expected timescale for response. Any extension must be no more than 10 working days without good reason, and the reason(s) must be clearly explained to the resident. | Yes | https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/55jk2gt5/complaints-policy.pdf<br><br>Section 4.1<br><br>*"Sometimes cases are complex and require more than 10 days to investigate. If this is the case, the person investigating the complaint will contact the complainant to advise them of a new target date for a response. This will be a single time extension of up to a further ten working days."* | CCC policy is compliant with this.<br><br>We do not extend past a further ten working days. |
| 6.5 | When an organisation informs a resident about an extension to these timescales, they must be provided with the contact details of the Ombudsman. | Yes | https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/55jk2gt5/complaints-policy.pdf<br><br>Section 4.1 | CCC policy is compliant with this. Our template for formulating an extension notification |

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| | | | *"When we change the target date on a case, the complainant will be provided with the contact details for the relevant Ombudsman."* | contains this information. |
| 6.6 | A complaint response must be provided to the resident when the answer to the complaint is known, not when the outstanding actions required to address the issue are completed. Outstanding actions must still be tracked and actioned promptly with appropriate updates provided to the resident. | Yes | https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/55jk2gt5/complaints-policy.pdf<br><br>Section 4.0<br><br>*"We consider the case resolved and responded to when we have agreed a solution with the complainant and any follow on work has been scheduled. Rather than when that work has been completed. We will still keep track of follow on work to ensure it is completed within an appropriate timescale."* | CCC policy is compliant with this. |
| 6.7 | The Council must address all points raised in the complaint definition and provide clear reasons for any decisions, referencing the relevant policy, law and good practice where appropriate. | Yes | https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/55jk2gt5/complaints-policy.pdf<br><br>Section 4.0 | CCC policy is compliant with this. |

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| | | | *"We will also ensure that all points raised within the complaints definition are responded to and any decisions we make reference the relevant law, policy or good practice."* | |
| 6.8 | Where residents raise additional complaints during the investigation, these must be incorporated into the stage 1 response if they are related and the stage 1 response has not been issued. Where the stage 1 response has been issued, the new issues are unrelated to the issues already being investigated or it would unreasonably delay the response, the new issues must be logged as a new complaint. | Yes | https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/55jk2gt5/complaints-policy.pdf<br><br>Section 4.2.1<br><br>*"If any new complaints about the same issue are raised during the investigation of a Stage 1 complaint, these will be merged into the original case and responded to within the response to that case. The Officer responding will highlight which case reference numbers they are responding to at the start of their response."* | Our Triage Admin team are notified of all new cases and merge where appropriate. Case investigators are required to quote which case numbers they are responding to at the start of their responses.<br><br>If a customer raises a new unrelated issue within a case it is raised as a new stage 1 complaint. |
| 6.9 | The Council must confirm the following in writing to the resident at | Yes | https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/55jk2gt5/complaints-policy.pdf | CCC policy is compliant with this. |

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| | the completion of stage 1 in clear, plain language:<br>a. the complaint stage;<br>b. the complaint definition;<br>c. the decision on the complaint;<br>d. the reasons for any decisions made;<br>e. the details of any remedy offered to put things right;<br>f. details of any outstanding actions; and<br>g. details of how to escalate the matter to stage 2 if the individual is not satisfied with the response. | | Section 4.0<br><br>• *"At both stages of our complaints procedure, we will confirm with you: The stage at which we are responding*<br>• *The definition of your complaint (what we understand your complaint to be about)*<br>• *Whether we uphold your complaint, or do not uphold your complaint*<br>• *The reasoning behind any decisions made*<br>• *The details of any remedies we offer to put things righ*<br>• *Details of any outstanding actions relating to your complaint Cambridge City Council – Complaints Policy 2024*<br>• *How you can escalate your complaint to the next stage of the process if you are not satisfied with your response"* | Our template to assist with formulation of a stage 1 response contains bullet point reminders of the things to include in the response and some standard text for escalating to stage 2. |

Stage 2

| Code provision | Code requirement | Comply: Yes / No | Evidence | Commentary / explanation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6.10 | If all or part of the complaint is not resolved to the resident's | Yes | https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/55jk2gt5/complaints-policy.pdf | The sign-off text on a stage 1 response instructs |

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| | satisfaction at stage 1, it must be progressed to stage 2 of the Council's procedure. Stage 2 is the Council's final response. | | Section 4.2.1<br><br>*"The Council aim to respond to complaints within 10 working days. If any or all part of the complaint is not dealt with to the satisfaction of the complainant at stage 1, they can ask for their complaint to be escalated to stage 2 of the Council's complaints procedure"* | complainants how to request escalation. |
| 6.11 | Requests for stage 2 must be acknowledged, defined and logged at stage 2 of the complaints procedure within five working days of the escalation request being received. | Yes | https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/55jk2gt5/complaints-policy.pdf<br><br>Section 4.0 | Our Triage Admin team are notified immediately when an escalation request is made and it is assigned to the appropriate Officer straight away who will acknowledge the escalation. |
| 6.12 | Residents must not be required to explain their reasons for requesting a stage 2 consideration. The Council are expected to make reasonable efforts to | Yes | https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/55jk2gt5/complaints-policy.pdf<br><br>Section 4.2 | We do ask for why the complainant remains unhappy, but it is made clear that this is not a requirement, it is to help us |

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| | understand why a resident remains unhappy as part of its stage 2 response. | | *"When we respond at stage 1, we will ask why the complainant does not feel their case was resolved at stage 1, and their preferred outcome of escalating their complaint to stage 2. This information is only to guide the Council, and is not a requirement to escalate a complaint."* | understand how to put things right. |
| 6.13 | The person considering the complaint at stage 2 must not be the same person that considered the complaint at stage 1. | Yes | https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/55jk2gt5/complaints-policy.pdf<br><br>Section 4.2<br><br>*"Once a complaint is escalated to stage 2 it will be allocated to a member of the Corporate Management Team, or Senior Manager acting on their behalf. The person considering the complaint at stage 2 will not be the same person that investigated at stage 1."* | Each service has an Officer at stage two with a higher seniority than the person at stage 1 |
| 6.14 | The Council must issue a final response to the stage 2 **within 20 working days** of the complaint being acknowledged. | Yes | https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/55jk2gt5/complaints-policy.pdf | Our target time is 20 working days at stage 2 |
| 6.15 | The Council must decide whether an extension to this timescale is needed when considering the complexity of the | Yes | https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/55jk2gt5/complaints-policy.pdf<br><br>*"Sometimes cases are complex and require more than 10 days to investigate. If this is the case, the person investigating the complaint* | Our policy and internal guidance is compliant with this. |

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| | complaint and then inform the resident of the expected timescale for response. Any extension must be no more than 20 working days without good reason, and the reason(s) must be clearly explained to the resident. | | *will contact the complainant to advise them of a new target date for a response. This will be a single time extension of up to a further ten working days. We may on rare occasions pause case timers if we require more information from complainants and are waiting for them to provide it."* | |
| 6.16 | When an organisation informs a resident about an extension to these timescales, they must be provided with the contact details of the Ombudsman. | Yes | https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/55jk2gt5/complaints-policy.pdf<br><br>Section 4.1<br><br>*"When we change the target date on a case, the complainant will be provided with the contact details for the relevant Ombudsman."* | CCC policy is compliant with this. |
| 6.17 | A complaint response must be provided to the resident when the answer to the complaint is known, not when the outstanding actions required to address the | Yes | https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/55jk2gt5/complaints-policy.pdf<br><br>Section 4.1<br><br>*"We consider the case resolved and responded to when we have agreed a solution with the complainant and any follow on work has* | Our policy states that the point of resolution is when a solution to the issues has been identified or when any follow on |

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| | issue are completed. Outstanding actions must still be tracked and actioned promptly with appropriate updates provided to the resident. | | *been scheduled. Rather than when that work has been completed. We will still keep track of follow on work to ensure it is completed within an appropriate timescale."* | works have been booked rather than when they have been completed. |
| 6.18 | The Council must address all points raised in the complaint definition and provide clear reasons for any decisions, referencing the relevant policy, law and good practice where appropriate. | Yes | https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/55jk2gt5/complaints-policy.pdf<br><br>Section 4.0<br><br>*"We will also ensure that all points raised within the complaints definition are responded to and any decisions we make reference the relevant law, policy or good practice."* | Our guidance and training internally states that all issues within a complaint must be addressed. There are also prompts within our case management system for formulating a response |
| 6.19 | The Council must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage 2 in clear, plain language:<br>a. the complaint stage; | Yes | https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/55jk2gt5/complaints-policy.pdf<br><br>Section 4.0 | All of these items are prompted within a response template in our |

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| | b. the complaint definition;<br>c. the decision on the complaint;<br>d. the reasons for any decisions made;<br>e. the details of any remedy offered to put things right;<br>f. details of any outstanding actions; and<br>g. details of how to escalate the matter to the Ombudsman Service if the individual remains dissatisfied. | | *"At both stages of our complaints procedure, we will confirm with you:*<br>• *The stage at which we are responding*<br>• *The definition of your complaint (what we understand your complaint to be about)*<br>• *Whether we uphold your complaint, or do not uphold your complaint*<br>• *The reasoning behind any decisions made*<br>• *The details of any remedies we offer to put things right*<br>• *Details of any outstanding actions relating to your complaint*<br>• *How you can escalate your complaint to the next stage of the process if you are not satisfied with your response."* | case management system. |
| 6.20 | Stage 2 is the Council's final response and must involve all suitable staff members needed to issue such a response. | Yes | https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/55jk2gt5/complaints-policy.pdf | Staff at stage 2 are members of our Corporate Management Team and have the authority to make any relevant decisions. |

## Section 7: Putting things right

| Code provision | Code requirement | Comply: Yes / No | Evidence | Commentary / explanation |
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| 7.1 | Where something has gone wrong the Council must acknowledge this and set out the actions it has already taken, or intends to take, to put things right. These can include:<br>• Apologising;<br>• Acknowledging where things have gone wrong;<br>• Providing an explanation, assistance or reasons;<br>• Taking action if there has been delay;<br>• Reconsidering or changing a decision;<br>• Amending a record or adding a correction or addendum;<br>• Providing a financial remedy;<br>• Changing policies, procedures or practices. | Yes | https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/55jk2gt5/complaints-policy.pdf<br><br>Section 4.2.3<br><br>*"These actions can include, an apology and acknowledging what has gone wrong, providing an explanation, taking action to rectify a delay to receiving a service, reconsidering and potentially changing a decision, amending a record or adding a correction/addendum, providing financial redress, or reviewing and changing policies, procedures or practices. This list is not exhaustive."* | CCC policy is compliant with this. This is highlighted in training, and case owners are reminded of these things in the response template |

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| 7.2 | Any remedy offered must reflect the impact on the resident as a result of any fault identified. | Yes | https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/55jk2gt5/complaints-policy.pdf<br><br>Section 4.2.3<br><br>*"The Council's remedial action will reflect the impact the fault had on the resident, and be tracked and monitored as part of the Complaints process"* | CCC policy is compliant with this. Remedial action is based on Ombudsman guidance, or actions which will resolve the issue(s) raised. |
| 7.3 | The remedy offer must clearly set out what will happen and by when, in agreement with the resident where appropriate. Any remedy proposed must be followed through to completion. | Yes | https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/55jk2gt5/complaints-policy.pdf<br><br>Section 4.2.3<br><br>*"When the Council outline this action, we will be clear with the resident about what will happen, and the timescales involved. This remedy will also be offered in line with guidance from the Local Government and Social Care and Housing Ombudsman."* | CCC policy is compliant with this. |
| 7.4 | The Council must take account of the guidance issued by the Ombudsman | Yes | https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/55jk2gt5/complaints-policy.pdf | CCC policy is compliant with |

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| | when deciding on appropriate remedies. | | Section 4.2.3 | this. See 7.2 comments |

## Section 8: Self-assessment, reporting and compliance

| Code provision | Code requirement | Comply: Yes / No | Evidence | Commentary / explanation |
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| 8.1 | The Council must produce an annual complaints performance and service improvement report for scrutiny and challenge, which must include:<br>a. the annual self-assessment against this Code to ensure their complaint handling policy remains in line with its requirements.<br>b. a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the Council's complaint handling performance. This must also include a summary of the types of complaints the Council has refused to accept;<br>c. any findings of non-compliance with this | Yes | https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/55jk2gt5/complaints-policy.pdf<br><br>Section 5.0<br><br>*"Each year an Annual Customer Feedback report will be produced and presented to the Council's Strategy & Resources committee. This report will put the volumes of complaints into context alongside service performance statistics, and outline any improvements made as a result of the complaints raised throughout the year."* | CCC policy is compliant with this. |

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| | Code by the Ombudsman;<br>d. the service improvements made as a result of the learning from complaints;<br>e. any annual report about the Council's performance from the Ombudsman; and<br>f. any other relevant reports or publications produced by the Ombudsman in relation to the work of the Council. | | | |
| 8.2 | The annual complaints performance and service improvement report must be reported to the Council's governing body (or equivalent) and published on the on the section of its website relating to complaints. The governing body's response to the report | Yes | Annual Report 25/26 link: Compliments, complaints and suggestions - Cambridge City Council<br><br>Annual report 25/26: Agenda for Cabinet on Tuesday, 7th July, 2026, 5.00 pm - Cambridge Council<br><br>Governing body response 25/26: Compliments, complaints and suggestions - Cambridge City Council | Last Years reports and self-assessment are linked in the box to the left. The Report for 2025/26 was presented on July 7th to Cabinet as part of the annual performance report. |

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| | must be published alongside this. | | | |
| 8.3 | The Council must also carry out a self-assessment following a significant restructure, merger and/or change in procedures. | Yes | https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/55jk2gt5/complaints-policy.pdf<br><br>Section 2.0<br><br>*"Each year the Council will carry out a self-assessment against the Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code to ensure that our complaint handling remains in line with its requirements. This will be made accessible to the public. This self-assessment will also be completed following any major restructure, change to procedure or if requested by the Ombudsman."* | If this situation arises we would be compliant. |
| 8.4 | The Council may be asked to review and update the self-assessment following an Ombudsman investigation. | Yes | https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/55jk2gt5/complaints-policy.pdf<br><br>Section 2.0<br><br>*"Each year the Council will carry out a self-assessment against the Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code to ensure that our complaint handling remains in line with its requirements. This will be made accessible to the public. This self-assessment will also be completed* | If this situation arises we would be compliant. |

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| | | | *following any major restructure, change to procedure or if requested by the Ombudsman."* | |
| 8.5 | If the Council is unable to comply with the Code due to exceptional circumstances, such as a cyber incident, they must inform the Ombudsman, provide information to residents who may be affected, and publish this on their website the Council must provide a timescale for returning to compliance with the Code. | Yes | Should this occur a message would be put on the main page of our website and all complaints related pages to inform residents. | CCC Policy would be compliant with this should it occur. |

## Section 9: Scrutiny & oversight: continuous learning and improvement

| Code provision | Code requirement | Comply: Yes / No | Evidence | Commentary / explanation |
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| 9.1 | The Council must look beyond the circumstances of the individual complaint and consider whether service improvements can be made as a result of any learning from the complaint. | Yes | https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/55jk2gt5/complaints-policy.pdf<br><br>Section 5.0<br><br>*"They will report on and analyse complaint themes and trends on a monthly, quarterly and annual basis, and report any potential systemic issues, serious risks or any policies or procedures that require a review to the appropriate service staff. This officer will also report to Members on complaints performance and be responsible for identifying service improvements and creating a culture that sees complaints as an opportunity to make these improvements."* | CCC Policy is compliant |
| 9.2 | A positive complaint handling culture is integral to the effectiveness with which the Council resolve disputes. The Council must use complaints as a | Yes | https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/55jk2gt5/complaints-policy.pdf<br><br>Section 5.0 | CCC Policy is compliant.<br><br>See text in 9.1 |

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| | source of intelligence to identify issues and introduce positive changes in service delivery. | | | |
| 9.3 | Accountability and transparency are also integral to a positive complaint handling culture. The Council must report back on wider learning and improvements from complaints to stakeholders, such as residents' panels, staff and relevant committees. | Yes | https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/55jk2gt5/complaints-policy.pdf<br><br>Section 5.0 | CCC Policy is compliant<br><br>See text in 9.1 |
| 9.4 | The Council must appoint a suitably senior lead person as accountable for their complaint handling. This person must assess any themes or trends to identify potential systemic issues, serious risks, or policies | Yes | https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/55jk2gt5/complaints-policy.pdf<br><br>Section 5.0<br><br>*"The Lead Complaints Officer is accountable for all complaint handling in the Council. They will report on and analyse complaint themes and trends on a monthly, quarterly and annual basis, and* | CCC Policy is compliant |

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| | and procedures that require revision. | | *report any potential systemic issues, serious risks or any policies or procedures that require a review to the appropriate service staff. This officer will also report to Members on complaints performance and be responsible for identifying service improvements and creating a culture that sees complaints as an opportunity to make these improvements."* | |
| 9.5 | In addition to this a member of the governing body (or equivalent) must be appointed to have lead responsibility for complaints to support a positive complaint handling culture. This person is referred to as the Member Responsible for Complaints ('the MRC'). | Yes | Responsibility for complaints sits with Officers from Customer Services and the Exec Cllr for Customer Services receives updates, as does the Leader of the Council<br><br>Executive post - Executive Councillor for Finance and Resources - Cambridge Council | Cllr Gerri Bird |
| 9.6 | The MRC will be responsible for ensuring the governing body receives regular information on complaints that provides insight on the Council's complaint handling performance. This person must have access to suitable | Partially | Responsibility for complaints sits with Officers from Customer Services and the Exec Cllr for Customer Services receives updates, as does the Leader of the Council<br><br>Executive post - Executive Councillor for Finance and Resources - Cambridge Council | Quarterly meetings are scheduled with Cllr Bird to update on performance and issues. |

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| | information and staff to perform this role and report on their findings. | | | |
| 9.7 | As a minimum, the MRC and the governing body (or equivalent) must receive:<br>a. regular updates on the volume, categories and outcomes of complaints, alongside complaint handling performance;<br>b. regular reviews of issues and trends arising from complaint handling;<br>c. regular updates on the outcomes of the Ombudsman's investigations and progress made in complying with orders related to severe maladministration findings; and<br>d. annual complaints performance and service improvement report. | Yes | https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/55jk2gt5/complaints-policy.pdf<br><br>Section 5.0 | CCC Policy is compliant |

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| 9.8 | The Council must have a standard objective in relation to complaint handling for all relevant employees or third parties that reflects the need to:<br>a. have a collaborative and co-operative approach towards resolving complaints, working with colleagues across teams and departments;<br>b. take collective responsibility for any shortfalls identified through complaints, rather than blaming others; and<br>c. act within the professional standards for engaging with complaints as set by any relevant professional body. | Yes | The Council has an overall objective which is **"All colleagues will work together as a whole council to live our values and behaviours in all that we do."**<br><br>Our values and behaviours fall into four categories:<br><br>Collaborative<br><br>• I actively participate in team working.<br>• I work with colleagues, external partners and customers to achieve agreed outcomes.<br>• I share my knowledge and experience with others.<br>• I enable opportunities for internal and external partnership working.<br>• I make time to consult with networks to inform my decisions.<br>• I create opportunities for knowledge and experience to be shared.<br><br>Courageous<br><br>• I identify and embrace new and better ways of doing things.<br>• I question and challenge constructively when needed.<br>• I act quickly to resolve issues when they arise.<br>• I act boldly to achieve positive impacts and results | By living our values in all that we do and meeting our corporate objective these behaviours will meet this requirement. |

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| | | | • I drive change, and support others to engage in change.<br>• I embrace challenges and challenge others, taking balanced risks when needed.<br><br>Compassionate<br><br>• I treat others fairly and respectfully<br>• I act inclusively and challenge discrimination<br>• I care about myself, others and my impact on the environment<br>• I foster a culture of respect, diversity and inclusion<br>• I champion the wellbeing of others<br>• I take actions which reduce the effects of climate change<br><br>Accountable<br><br>• I am responsible for my own actions and performance<br>• I focus on delivering outcomes and I'm not easily deterred<br>• I actively seek development opportunities<br>• I'm responsible for the delivery and performance of my team<br>• I act quickly when standards are not met<br>• I'm responsible for decision making and accountable for the outcomes | |