

Matter for Decision

The self-assessment process was a new statutory requirement. Its purpose was to check that the Council's complaints process is compliant with the Codes of Practice for the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and the Housing Ombudsman.

Part of the new requirement was that the assessment is presented and then published on the Council website. This focused on the process the Council used and did not cover reporting on actual complaints received.

Going forward this self-assessment would be scrutinised alongside the Annual Customer Feedback Report so that information on both the process and on complaints and feedback received was presented at the same time.

Decision of the Leader

- i. Approved the self-assessment for publication

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

This was a statutory requirement therefore there were no alternative options to consider.

Scrutiny Considerations

Before the report was introduced the Chair confirmed that an addendum to the report was provided to members and published on the Council's website that clarified elements of the report, providing more context on the reason the report was being presented to committee.

The report was presented by the Customer Services Development Manager. It was explained to the committee that this was being presented due to a new statutory code from the Housing Ombudsman, introduced on the 1 April 2024, to monitor the Council's compliance with this new code. This needed to be published on the Council's website on an annual basis, having been through members. This would be presented in future alongside the Annual Customer Feedback Report. It was essential that this was approved by the deadline of 29th November 2024 so that the Council stayed compliant with the code.

A smaller report relating to housing complaints would be presented to the Housing Scrutiny Committee.

Overall, on reviewing this new code with the Council's complaints processes it was deemed that the Council was largely compliant overall with some minor tweaks to the process being undertaken. Once the report was published the Council would be fully compliant with the new code.

The Customer Services Development Manager responded to questions from members:

- i. This new code applied to any authority that signed up to the Housing Ombudsman Service. The new code referred to Landlords, but this was wider and referred to the Council as a whole. The language would be updated going forward to make this clear.
- ii. Officers would look to make it clearer what was a service request against what was deemed a complaint against a service the Council provided. For example, when the Council had a request come in for the first time this was different from a request that the Council had already been made aware of and not actioned, the Council would then deem this as a complaint. For clarification the Council had adopted the recommendation from the Housing Ombudsman on what was a complaint.
- iii. The Council had a triage team that reviewed complaints as they were made and would recategorize these if they were a service request, or vice-versa.
- iv. Further information would be provided to members over what was classed as a service request.
- v. Training could be provided to members should they wish to receive this

The Committee unanimously resolved to endorse the recommendation.

The Leader of the Council approved the recommendation.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Leader of the Council (and any Dispensations Granted)

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Leader of the Council.