

**Complaints Analysis, (Angela Horsey, Business Development and Policy Manager)**

**Synopsis of report:**

**This report provides an analysis of complaints made about Housing services in 2022/23 and provides information on arrangements for complaints handling.**

**Recommendation(s):**

**That Members note:**

**(1) the analysis of complaints made about Housing services**  
**(2) the refreshed Housing Complaints Policy**

**1. Context and background of report**

1.1 This committee receives updates on complaints made about housing services as part of regular performance reports. Additional analysis is presented to Members twice a year.

**2. Complaints**

2.1 All complaints about housing services are logged and monitored in line with the Housing Complaints policy approved by this committee in January 2021.

2.2 There was an increase in the number of complaints received between April 2022 and March 2023 (48) and the same period in the previous year (31). In addition, a slightly higher proportion of complaints were upheld last year, compared with the previous year.

2.3 As required by the Housing Ombudsman, information on how tenants can make a complaint has been added to the Council's website and has featured in tenant newsletters and correspondence in recent years. This is thought to have led to the increase in complaints, along with a better understanding from staff of the importance of treating expressions of dissatisfaction as formal complaints. The Housing Complaints Policy notes that learning from complaints informs our risk management, audit functions and contracting arrangements, aids governance and helps us make improvements to policies and processes. Complaints are therefore to be welcomed as feedback, rather than considered an indication of failure.

2.4 Table 1 Housing Complaints Received since April 2021

| April 21 - March 22          |        |            |               |       | April 22 - March 23    |        |            |               |       |
|------------------------------|--------|------------|---------------|-------|------------------------|--------|------------|---------------|-------|
| Subject                      | Upheld | Not upheld | Partly upheld | Total | Subject                | Upheld | Not upheld | Partly upheld | Total |
| Repairs/Maintenance          | 3      | 8          | 2             | 13    | Repairs/Maintenance    | 7      | 8          | 4             | 19    |
| Housing Register             |        | 6          | 1             | 7     | Housing Register       |        | 4          | 1             | 5     |
| Staff                        | 1      | 4          |               | 5     | Staff                  | 1      | 11         | 2             | 14    |
| Data Management              | 2      |            |               | 2     | Adaptation/Improvement |        | 1          | 2             | 3     |
| Untidy neighbouring property |        | 2          |               | 2     | Right to Buy           |        |            | 1             | 1     |

|              |          |           |          |           |                               |           |           |           |           |
|--------------|----------|-----------|----------|-----------|-------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Arrears      |          | 1         |          | 1         | Arrears                       |           | 1         |           | 1         |
| ASB          |          | 1         |          | 1         | ASB                           |           | 1         |           | 1         |
|              |          |           |          |           | Tenancy management            | 1         | 1         |           | 2         |
|              |          |           |          |           | Development/<br>refurbishment | 2         |           |           | 2         |
| <b>TOTAL</b> | <b>6</b> | <b>22</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>31</b> | <b>TOTAL</b>                  | <b>11</b> | <b>27</b> | <b>10</b> | <b>48</b> |

- 2.5 Last year there was a 67% increase in complaints from tenants and a 30% increase from other customers compared with the previous year. There was a sharp increase in the number of complaints about or mentioning staff, compared to the previous year. 79% of these were not upheld. Nine of the fourteen complaints about staff were from council tenants. Of these, two tenants complained twice. When investigating complaints, managers are required to consider making recommendations for service improvements such as revised procedures or staff guidance. Complaints are also analysed at management team meetings.
- 2.6 Registered Social Landlords are required to carry out an annual self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman Complaints Handling Code to ensure complaint handling (in relation to landlord and tenant issues) remains in line with its requirements, and to publish the results. A self-assessment was completed by staff in July 2022 and resulted in some minor amendments to the current complaints policy and procedure. The self-assessment is on the Council's website [here](#).
- 2.7 The refreshed Housing Complaints policy is attached at Appendix A.
- 2.8 This year's self-assessment against the Code will take place in the summer and tenants will be invited to take part.
- 2.9 Three complaints were subsequently referred to one of the Ombudsman Services in 2022/23 - two to the Local Government Ombudsman and one to the Housing Ombudsman.

| Ombudsman | Complaint                 | Outcome                   |
|-----------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| LGO       | Housing Register priority | Not upheld                |
| Housing   | Antisocial Behaviour      | No investigation required |
| LGO       | Disabled Adaptations      | Upheld                    |

- 2.10 In response to the findings of the Local Government Ombudsman, a new Home Improvement Agency Assistance Policy is presented to Members for approval at item 5 of this agenda.

### 3. Policy framework implications

- 3.1 In addition to the Council's corporate complaints policy, a Housing Complaints policy was approved by this committee in 2021. The policy was reviewed in April 2023, with minor amendments made to reflect recommendations arising from the self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code.

#### **4. Resource implications/Value for Money**

4.1 There are no implications arising from this report.

#### **5. Legal implications**

5.1 All bodies registered with the Regulator for Social Housing come under the jurisdiction of the Housing Ombudsman by effect of the Housing Act 1996 and Localism Act 2011. The Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code was updated in 2022 to further strengthen provisions to support a positive complaint handling culture. Landlords must carry out an annual assessment against the Code to ensure their complaint handling remains in line with its requirements and must publish the results.

#### **6. Equality implications**

6.1 There are no known equality implications arising from this report; however analysis of the profile of complainants is planned in order to address any issues that may emerge. Action on this will be reported to future meetings of this committee.

#### **7. Environmental/Sustainability/Biodiversity implications**

7.1 There are no known environmental, sustainability or biodiversity implications.

#### **8. Other implications**

8.1 There are no known additional implications.

#### **9. Conclusions**

9.1 This report provides an analysis of complaints made about Housing services in 2021/2022 and 2022/23. It also provides information on arrangements for handling complaints about housing services.

(For information)

#### **Background papers**

Housing Complaints Policy V1.1

[Effective Involvement of Governing Bodies: Housing Ombudsman guidance for landlords](#)