

Appendix C: Governing Body's Response to Self-Assessment

Appointment of Member Responsible for Complaints

On Thursday 23 May 2024, I, Cllr Gary Luff and I, Lucas Schoemaker were appointed as the Chair and Vice Chair of Stroud District Council Housing Committee. As the Chair and Vice Chair, in accordance with the Housing Ombudsman's requirement for a member responsible for complaints (MRC), we have taken the role of scrutinising and challenging the Council's social housing complaints self-assessment.

We wish to thank the Housing Team for completing the self-assessment report on our social housing complaints handling. We appreciate the thorough evaluation of our compliance with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code and for bringing the report to Housing Committee for review and approval.

Member Review of Complaint Self-Assessment

After careful review of the self-assessment and annual report, we, as the MRC and on behalf of the governing body acknowledge the following key points:

Compliance and areas of strength

- The self-assessment demonstrates that the Council's Complaints and Feedback Policy is robust and complies with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code. The MRC acknowledge that this corporate policy has been updated in accordance with the revised handling code and gives consistency across the whole organisation of what a complaint is and how we the Council will respond to the complaint.
- The processes and procedures in housing for complaint handling are strong and comply with the code.
- The MRC are pleased to see that 100% of complaints were acknowledged within three working days. Meeting this target deadline gives the complainant certainty that their complaint has been successfully registered and gives them a timescale for when they will have a decision.
- The Housing Quality Assurance Team track complaints and provide a weekly reminder to complaint handlers of which complaints are open and the deadline for response to support complaints being completed within the required timescales.
- The MRC are pleased to see that templates are in place and regularly reviewed which gives consistency to the decision format that complaints are conveyed to residents.
- The MRC are also pleased to note that all complaints are reviewed by the Housing Quality Assurance Team prior to issuing the decision, which gives each complaint a review and quality check prior to issuing.
- The MRC are aware that complaint handling and the importance of making timely decisions has been raised at senior level and operational team meetings regularly during 2023-24 and a culture of positive complaint handling is being embedded.

- The MRC are pleased that all complaint handlers have been provided with internal training from the housing quality assurance team.
- The MRC recognise and appreciate the commitment of the team to improve in the area of complaint handling moving forward.

Recommendations

- The MRC acknowledge that the Council perform comparably with peers in terms of responding to complaints within complaint handling time frames. The review of complaint performance showed that 88.30% of stage one complaints were made within complaint handling times which is slightly above the sector average of 87.93%. The MRC, whilst acknowledging the complexity of some complaints, recommend that the housing service continue to “aim high” as per the Councils core values and recommend the target for 2024-25 should meet the sector upper quartile of 99.16%.
- The MRC recognise that complaints are important and should be used to improve service delivery. The MRC welcome the proposals to further develop and embed a positive complaint handling culture that learns from complaints.

Ongoing Monitoring

- The MRC, as part of the member briefings, request a copy of the quarterly complaint report and regular updates on areas of improvement or concern.
- In the self assessment three areas were described as partially met. The MRC wish to receive regular updates as to progress and full compliance against these areas.
- The MRC recommend that the Councils performance continues to be benchmarked against the sector and the appropriate Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs)
- The MRC acknowledge that complaint handling across the Council is discussed and scrutinised at the Council's Corporate Governance Group and recommend that this continues so that there is scrutiny and consistency across the organisation.
- The MRC request timely notice of any compliance area if the rating is likely to change to partial or non-compliant.

The MRC have prepared this paper in good faith and recommend to Housing Committee that the report is approved as a true reflection of the position of the Council against the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code.


Cllr Gary Luff
Housing Committee Chair



Cllr Lucas Schoemaker
Housing Committee Vice Chair

Verbal approval given at Housing Committee