



## Complaints Annual Self-Assessment

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<b>Lead Member/Relevant Portfolio Holder</b>	<b>Councillor Margaret Glancy</b> - Portfolio Holder for Governance, Environment and Regulatory Services (Deputy Leader)

<b>Corporate Priority:</b>	<b>1. Excellent services positively impacting on our communities</b>
<b>Relevant Ward Member(s):</b>	All
<b>Date of consultation with Ward Member(s):</b>	None required
<b>Exempt Information:</b>	No
<b>Key Decision:</b>	No
<b>Subject to call-in:</b>	No

### 1 Summary

- 1.1 The report set out the complaints annual self-assessment, shown in Appendix A as required by the Housing Ombudsman (HO) as part of their Complaints Handling Code.
- 1.2 Our submission sets out our position against this as at the end of 2023 and is supported by evidence to meet the requirements of the eight sections of the self-assessment.
- 1.3 Once noted by Members, this annual self-assessment will be published on the Council's website by the end of December 2023.

### 2 Recommendations

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| <b>2.1 That Cabinet note the findings of the complaints self-assessment for 2023.</b> |
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### 3 Reason for Recommendations

- 3.1 Cabinet should note the position of the Council against this self-assessment and reflect on the performance on complaints.

- 3.2 Over the last 12 months the Council has updated its Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy and associated processes to ensure that we remain fully compliant with the HO's Complaint Handling Code.

## **4 Background**

- 4.1 Landlords must carry out an annual assessment against the HO Complaints Handling Code to ensure their complaint handling remains in line with its requirements and publish the results. These do not need to be submitted to the Ombudsman. Non-compliance could result in the Ombudsman issuing complaint handling failure orders.
- 4.2 Key areas of the Complaints Handling Code include:
- 4.2.1 Universal definition of a complaint.
  - 4.2.2 Providing easy access to the complaints procedure and ensuring residents are aware of it, including their right to access the HO Service.
  - 4.2.3 The structure of the complaint's procedure - only 2 stages necessary and clear times set out for responses.
  - 4.2.4 Ensuring fairness in complaint handling with a resident-focused process.
  - 4.2.5 Taking action to put things right and appropriate remedies.
  - 4.2.6 Creating a positive complaint handling culture through continuous learning and improvement.
  - 4.2.7 Demonstrating learning in annual reports.
  - 4.2.8 Annual self-assessment against the Code.
- 4.3 The Code was introduced as part of the Ombudsman's new powers in the revised HO Scheme. The Code acts as a guide for residents setting out what they can and should expect from their landlord when they complain. The requirements in the Code also provide residents with information about how to make a complaint and how to progress it through the landlord's internal complaints procedure.
- 4.4 Our Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy covers our complaints under both the HO and Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO). The HO covers all complaints about social housing, including councils' role as social landlords whereas the LGSCO covers all other services including complaints about most council housing services other than social housing.

## **5 Main Considerations**

- 5.1 An annual assessment was undertaken of our approach to dealing with complaints, this is shown in Appendix A, this is set out in the responses to the eight sections contained in the self-assessment. These are:
- 5.1.1 Definition of a complaint
  - 5.1.2 Accessibility and awareness
  - 5.1.3 Complaint handling personnel
  - 5.1.4 Complaint handling principles
  - 5.1.5 Complaint stages
  - 5.1.6 Putting things right

- 5.1.7 Continuous learning and improvement
- 5.1.8 Self-assessment and compliance
- 5.2 The purpose of the self-assessment is to demonstrate to an organisation, its service users, and its governing body that it is complying with the Code. Every organisation must complete one for all areas covered by the Code. Our self-assessment shows us to be compliant with all of the mandatory elements of the HO's Complaints Handling Code. The LGSCO does not currently have a self-assessment for the non-Housing related complaints that we receive as a Council. By achieving this compliance, our Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy and associated process are considered fit for purpose and give us a strong level of assurance in this area.
- 5.3 In terms of simplifying and aligning the complaints framework for local authorities the LGSCO have recently consulted on a joint Complaint Handling Code with the HO. They are currently analysing the responses to this and if this is to be adopted, the updated Code will then apply to all local councils in England.
- 5.4 Given that most councils are within both Ombudsman's jurisdictions, this new joint Code will become the single gold standard for complaint handling in the local government sector. If this comes in force, then the joint Code will make it easier for Melton to demonstrate that it is employing best practice and for local people to hold councils and social landlords to account.
- 5.5 Both the HO and LGSCO may also look at this self-assessment as part of the consideration of individual complaints relating to complaint handling. The HO has a statutory duty to monitor compliance with the Code and will consider compliance through a review of submissions and associated intelligence.
- 5.6 The Complaints Handling Code requires each landlord to report the findings contained in the self-assessment to their Members each year. Complaints at Melton are under the Portfolio Holder for Governance, Environment and Regulatory Services (Deputy Leader).
- 5.7 Following the presentation of this report to members, the self-assessment will be published on the Council's website by the end of December 2023.
- 5.8 From 2024, officers will bring one single report to members each year in quarter 3 which will include a self-assessment against the Complaints Handling Code for that year, a breakdown of complaints received by the Council and details of those cases that have been taken by the HO or LGSCO.

## **6 Options Considered**

- 6.1 The Council's self-assessment for 2023 sets out how we comply with the HO's Complaint Handling Code and the evidence to support this position. If this was to not be completed or submitted, the Council would risk non-compliance with the Complaints Handling Code.

## **7 Consultation**

- 7.1 No formal consultation has been undertaken, the self-assessment was completed by officers reviewing our processes and performance against the principles of the Complaints Handling Code.

## **8 Next Steps – Implementation and Communication**

- 8.1 The current position regarding the self-assessment will be communicated to all members and will be placed on the Council's website.

## 9 Financial Implications

9.1 There are no specific financial implications in the report.

**Financial Implications reviewed by: Director for Corporate Services**

## 10 Legal and Governance Implications

10.1 There are no specific Legal and Governance implications in the report.

**Legal Implications reviewed by: Senior Solicitor**

## 11 Equality and Safeguarding Implications

11.1 There are no specific Equality and Safeguarding implications in the report.

## 12. Data Protection Implications (Mandatory)

12.1 A Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIA) has not been completed for the following reasons because there are no risks/issues to the data collated for the purpose of this report.

## 13. Community Safety Implications

13.1 There are no specific Community Safety implications in the report.

## 14 Environmental and Climate Change Implications

14.1 There are no specific Environmental and Climate Change implications in the report.

## 15 Other Implications (where significant)

15.1 There are no other significant implications in the report.

## 16 Risk & Mitigation

Risk No	Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Risk
1	Non-compliance with the HO's Complaint Handling Code.	Very Low	Critical	

		Impact / Consequences			
		Negligible	Marginal	Critical	Catastrophic
Likelihood	Score/ definition	1	2	3	4
	6 Very High				
	5 High				
	4 Significant				
	3 Low				

	2 Very Low			1	
	1 Almost impossible				

Risk No	Mitigation
1	The Council's has recently reviewed its Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy and will keep this under regular review to ensure that we comply with the HO's Complaint Handling Code.

## 17 Background Papers

17.1 None

## 18 Appendices

18.1 Appendix A – Melton Borough Council's Self-Assessment Form 2023