

# Item 258/20

Report to Board – 26<sup>th</sup> November 2020  
The Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code

## **FOR: INFORMATION**

### **1. COMMENT(S) SOUGHT**

- 1.1 Board to note the requirements of the new Code for Handling Complaints.
- 1.2 Board to comment on the steps we have and are taking to ensure compliance.

### **2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 2.1 The Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) issued a new Complaint Handling Code on 7<sup>th</sup> July 2020. The aim is to ensure improvements in complaint handling and learning from complaints across the housing sector
- 2.2 This report sets out the main requirements contained in the Code and information about the ways in which we comply, plus further action we will be taking to improve complaints handling and learning.

### **3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Customers are at the heart of everything we do at Halton Housing. We are committed to listening to their enquires and complaints and turning this insight into measurable action, so we can improve our services and enhance the overall customer experience.
- 3.2 Dealing with complaints is an integral part of our customer service offer. It provides us with vital intelligence on our performance and

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reputation. The data on complaint handling is considered alongside other management information to provide assurance and assess risks.

- 3.3 The purpose of the Code is to enable landlords to resolve complaints raised by their residents quickly and to use the learning from complaints to drive service improvements. It will also help to create a positive complaint handling culture amongst colleagues and residents.
- 3.4 The Code includes:
- a. Definition of a complaint
  - b. Accessibility and awareness
  - c. Complaint team, procedure, timeliness, and responsiveness
  - d. Fairness in complaint handling
  - e. Putting things right
  - f. Continuous learning and improvement

## 4. RISK

- 4.1 Non-compliance with the Code may result in the Housing Ombudsman issuing a complaint failure order if there is failure to act following an initial notification to rectify non-compliance.
- 4.2 Effective reporting and monitoring of customer complaints, supports Halton Housing in mitigating the risks relating to The Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard which requires registered providers *“to have an approach to complaints that is clear, simple and accessible that ensures complaints are resolved promptly, politely and fairly (2017)”*.
- 4.3 We can use complaints to improve our services and enhance the overall customer experience. The monthly complaints analysis report

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identifies the key drivers of positive and negative responses that influence satisfaction with the aim of improving the overall customer experience.

### 5. KEY ISSUES

- 5.1 The main issues covered by the Code, our position and further action we are taking, are set out in the self-assessment in Appendix 1.
- 5.2 Halton Housing has reviewed its Complaint Policy in January 2020 and we are fully compliant with the new Code requirements.
- 5.3 Compliance is measured via a self-assessment (Appendix 1), that must be completed for the first time by 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020. The assessment must be repeated at regular intervals and reported to Board and to customers.
- 5.4 There are no new financial implications arising from this report. Learning from complaints and preventing the same issues from arising will lead to value for money improvements.

### 6. CONTACT DETAILS

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### 7. APPENDICES

Appendix 1: The Housing Ombudsman Code Self-Assessment.