

Title of meeting:	Cabinet Member for Housing and Preventing Homelessness
Date of meeting:	20 March 2024
Subject:	Local Authority Housing Landlord Services Complaints Policy
Report by:	Sally Scattergood, Assistant Director for Housing Management Louise Jones, Business Compliance & Projects Manager
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Darren Sanders
Wards affected:	All
Key decision:	No
Full Council decision:	No

1. Purpose of report

1.1. The purpose of the of the report is to inform members of new Local Authority Housing Landlord Services Complaints Policy and to seek approval for implementation of the policy.

1.2. This policy will apply to anyone who has been directly affected by Local Authority Housing Landlord Services.

2. Recommendations

2.1. The Cabinet Member for Housing and Tackling Homelessness approves the Local Authority Housing Landlord Service Complaints Policy (Appendix A - Local Authority Housing Landlord Service Complaints Policy V1.6) and that Housing, Neighbourhood and Building Services implement the policy from 1 April 2024 to support the ongoing response to The Charter for Social Housing Residents, Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 and Housing Ombudsman Complaints Handling Code.

2.2. The following key points are covered within the policy which will complement the Corporate Complaints Policy:

2.2.1. The management of Landlord specific complaints to sit within Housing, Neighbourhood and Building Services to enable accurate reporting and improved customer experience.

2.2.2. Clarity of the customers that are affected by the policy and circumstances under which is applied. This includes tenants,

leaseholders, former tenants as well as anyone acting on behalf of someone who is affected by actions or decision made by Portsmouth City Council as a Local Authority Housing Landlord.

- 2.2.3.** The introduction of the Complaints Lead role who will be responsible for implementation of the policy and overall ownership and development of the policy as demand is understood through clear reporting and measures from the start of the service delivery.
- 2.2.4.** Clear definition of the meaning of a complaint and the way in which a landlord specific complaint will be defined to allow purposeful management of complaints relevant to the service.
- 2.2.5.** Clarity around expected response times to Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints and details of how customers can expect complaints to be managed within the stages.
- 2.2.6.** Details of how complaints can be made to the new service, including guidance around Verbal and Anonymous complaints as well as complaints raised via a representative or advocate.
- 2.2.7.** Clear information regarding the new complaints procedure, detailing Landlord responsibilities in terms of investigation and response to assist customers understanding and expectations of the service, as well information about how complaints relating to contractors will be managed.
- 2.2.8.** Information relating to the Housing Ombudsman is included to be available from the outset, ensuring compliance with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code.
- 2.2.9.** Specific details explaining the communications that a customer will be able to expect from the service and process, along with examples of the types of remedies that could be expected and how Housing, Neighbourhood and Buildings Services would manage these outcomes to demonstrate ongoing learning from complaints.
- 2.2.10.** Information about how the process will be monitored and reviewed to ensure constant improvement as well offering the assurance of ongoing compliance in relation to all relevant guidance and legislation.

3. Background

- 3.1.** The Charter for Social Housing Residents brings a requirement for Landlords to be responsible for the management of complaints relating to landlord functions. As a Local Authority, this is a new requirement and changes to the current process of managing complaints via the City Helpdesk are needed to ensure compliance.

3.2. The move of Landlord specific complaints to the management of Housing, Neighbourhood and Buildings Services will lead to greater visibility of the content and learning to be gained from these complaints by the service. It is essential that a close working relationships with the City Help Desk team is maintained. This will allow for joined up reporting to develop in a way that ensures excellent learning for all teams, as well as giving opportunities to establish where change and improvement is needed within the new process to best meet the needs of the customer.

3.3. We are awaiting outcomes from LGSCO and Housing Ombudsman joint complaint handling code consultation. Publication of this information this may result in some minor changes to policy, likely to impact areas such as response times for Landlords. There is currently no date for the findings and amended code to be published. Information from the Ombudsman gives 'early 2024' as the guidance currently.

4. Reasons for recommendations

4.1. To ensure compliance with The Charter for Social Housing Residents, Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 and Housing Ombudsman Complaints Handling Code.

4.2. To improve the complaints process for landlord specific services, enabling a consistent approach to be shared throughout Housing, Neighbourhood and Buildings Services, recognising that landlord specific complaints are not always made by tenants.

4.3. To ensure excellent cross-directorate working in relation to management and reporting of complaints, with the aim of improving the information available to customers and regulators for full transparency.

4.4. Better visibility and reporting for customers to demonstrate ongoing learning and improvement from complaints in a clear and transparent manner that allows compliance with all relevant legislation and guidance.

4.5. Improved data collection and reporting will allow for better reporting and live-time visibility of complaints for staff to in turn inform customers and regulators, offering improved and measurable identified learning outcomes.

5. Integrated impact assessment

5.1. An Integrated Impact Assessment has been completed and submitted and is shown in Appendix B

6. Legal implications

6.1 There are no legal implications to add to this report.



7. Director of Finance's comments

7.1. The cost of the move of landlord specific complaints to Housing, Neighbourhood and Building Services, as far as it was known, was included in the approved Housing Revenue Account revenue budget for 2024/25. The adequacy of this budget will be kept under review as the complaints service develops.

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Signed by: James Hill, Director of Housing, Neighbourhood and Building Services

Appendices:

- Appendix A: Local Authority Housing Landlord Service Complaints Policy V1.6
- Appendix B: Landlord Complaint Policy - Integrated Impact Assessment

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location
The Charter for Social Housing Residents	The charter for social housing residents: social housing white paper - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023	Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 (legislation.gov.uk)
Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code	The Housing ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code (housing-ombudsman.org.uk)

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/ rejected by on

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Signed by: