

**STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL**  
**HOUSING COMMITTEE**  
**TUESDAY, 9 SEPTEMBER 2025**

<b>Report Title</b>	<b>Stroud Council Tenant Complaints</b>			
<b>Purpose of Report</b>	To provide Housing Committee with an update on the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code and our self-assessment against this code.			
<b>Decision(s)</b>	<b>The Committee RESOLVES to:</b> <b>a) Consider the evidence referred to in the self-assessment and ensure that it is complete and accessible to readers including staff and residents.</b> <b>b) Scrutinise the data and performance information included in complaints performance and service improvement report to ensure it is accurate, reliable and repeatable.</b> <b>c) Challenge any commentary or context to ensure that it is a fair and reasonable assessment.</b> <b>d) Produce a written statement to the self-assessment to provide assurance that it is a true reflection of the landlord's complaint handling.</b>			
<b>Consultation and Feedback</b>	Consultation with managers in Housing Services Members briefing			
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<b>Options</b>	None.			
<b>Background Papers</b>	None.			
<b>Appendices</b>	Appendix A – Complaint Handling Code self-assessment Appendix B – Annual complaints performance and service improvement report Appendix C – Governing Body's response			
<b>Implications (further details at the end of the report)</b>	Financial	Legal	Equality	Environmental
	No	Yes	No	No

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Social Housing providers are required to conduct an annual self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code to ensure they are effectively managing and learning from complaints.
- 1.2 This self-assessment is submitted to the Housing Ombudsman and forms part of our annual performance and service improvement report.

- 1.3 The self-assessment helps us to identify areas for improvement in our complaint handling procedures and demonstrates our commitment to providing a fair and effective service to our community.
- 1.4 Alongside the self-assessment, the Complaint Handling Code also requires landlords to produce an annual complaints performance and service improvement report for scrutiny and challenge by the Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC).

## **2. The Self-Assessment**

- 2.1 The purpose of the self-assessment is to set out how landlords demonstrate their complaint handling service complies with the provision of the Code. In addition, the self-assessment also supports landlords to inform residents about service provision.
- 2.2 Landlords must provide evidence of their compliance with the provisions of the Code within the assessment, by setting out clearly how it complies with each provision and demonstrate that they are being open and accountable to residents. It also supports the Housing Ombudsman's assessment of compliance in policy and practice.
- 2.3 The Housing Service has completed the self-assessment for 2024/25 and determined that the Council's complaints policy and approach to complaints aligns with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code and is, overall, compliant.
- 2.4 During the self-assessment process, it has been identified that some complaints that have been extended were not responded to within the initial time extension. Whilst some complaints are complex and/or are complaints that are about cross service matters, this is an area that the team are reflecting on and will implement measures to improve this to ensure that timely decisions on complaints are made and issued to residents. It is the Council's intention to respond to all complaints within Complaint Handling Code timescales.

## **3. Improvements**

- 3.1 In November 2024, Housing Services formed a Complaints Review Panel consisting of representatives from across the teams. Over the last few months, the Panel have been focussing on improving our complaint handling process. We identified that an improvement action plan was needed to help document, manage and deliver improvements on our complaint handling and to evidence our compliance to meet the requirements of the Housing Ombudsman and Social Housing Regulator. These improvements include:
  - Greater visibility and learning from complaints.
  - Documenting and implementing improvements to services as a direct result of complaints.
  - More learning from the Ombudsman/sector trends in complaints.
  - Actively promoting any changes to our services as a result of complaints.
  - In-depth root cause analysis of complaints, demographic information and cross-cutting themes.
  - Training on our complaints process and the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code for front line staff.
  - Refresher training for complaint handlers, including the release of regular bulletins containing updates on our complaints process and/or any legislative changes.
  - Procedures for handling 'expressions of dissatisfaction' – i.e. those complaints outside of the formal complaints process (service requests).

- Introducing a Complaints Closing Statement which allows complaint handlers to document information and findings which has led to the complaint being made and contributed towards our final decision. It also contains a section where learning outcomes and service improvements can be documented.
  - Introducing an Action Tracker, which allows complaint handlers to track and follow through on any works or actions that are outstanding.
- Revising our complaint handling satisfaction questionnaire. This has been developed using Microsoft Teams and a link is sent to the complainant along with our formal responses. This gives the complainant the opportunity to provide additional feedback on our complaint handling process and supports our commitment to improving our service delivery.

- 3.2 The Panel will also undertake regular reviews of complaints received, analysing trends in both number and nature of complaints, recurring and underlying problems with our stock, and areas where potential improvements can be made.
- 3.3 The Complaints Action Plan is a working document and will be continuously updated to reflect the work being carried out by the Panel and the improvements we are making and embedding across the housing service.
- 3.4 Preliminary work is also underway in producing a proposal for creating a Complaint Review Tenant Group, which is being led by our Tenant Engagement Team. Formation of this group would empower residents to scrutinise the council's complaint handling process within the housing service and co-create solutions that improve service delivery. It would also represent a significant step towards enhancing our complaint handling process and improving resident satisfaction.

#### **4. Governing Body's Response**

- 4.1 When publishing the self-assessment as part of the annual complaint performance and service improvement report, landlords must include the governing body's response to the report. The purpose of publishing this response is to provide assurance that the self-assessment is a true reflection of the landlord's complaint handling.
- 4.2 The report sets out how the MRC has scrutinised and challenged the self-assessment and how any risks identified as part of the review have been addressed. The response can also highlight areas of achievement and any challenges that the landlord has faced during the reporting year. Landlords are encouraged to take an open and transparent approach to demonstrate accountability to their residents and other stakeholders.
- 4.3 The report has been scrutinised by the Chair and Vice Chair of Housing Committee and they have produced their response as per Appendix C.

#### **5. Conclusion**

- 5.1 The aim of the self-assessment is to ensure that we resolve complaints raised by residents quickly and use the data and learning from complaints to drive service improvements. Housing Committee are asked to review the self-assessment and the complaint performance and service improvement report and produce a written statement to provide assurance that it is a true reflection of the landlord's complaint handling.

## **6. Implications**

### **6.1 Financial Implications**

There are no direct financial implications arising from this decision.

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### **6.2 Legal Implications**

Under the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code ("the Code") Landlords are required to self-assess themselves annually on a 'comply or explain' basis and publish the results on their website. Non-compliance with this requirement could result in the Ombudsman issuing complaint handling failure orders and possible reputational damage.

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### **6.3 Equality Implications**

An EIA is not required. All Stroud Council tenants are entitled to register their dissatisfaction and as identified in the self-assessment, there are various different channels available to register a complaint so that it is accessible and available to all. All complaints are considered and determined in accordance with our approved Complaints & Feedback Policy.

### **6.4 Environmental Implications**

There are no significant implications within this category.