

Thursday, 29 August 2024

Report of the Leader of the Council

Comments, Compliments and Complaints

Exempt Information

None

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the revised comments, compliments and complaints policy and to publish the required elements of the Housing Ombudsman statutory complaints handling code.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that Cabinet:

1. Approve the Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report 2023-2024 for submission to the housing ombudsman.
2. Approve the updated Comments, Compliments and Complaints Policy for publication and implementation.

3. Executive Summary

3.1 The Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code,

Effective April 1, 2024, this statutory requirement outlines how landlords must handle complaints fairly and efficiently. The code's goal is to enhance service quality and foster better relationships between landlords and residents.

Key aspects of the Code include:

- Universal definition of a complaint.
- Easy access to the complaints procedure and ensuring residents are aware of it.
- A two-stage complaint procedure with clear response times.
- Fairness in complaint handling with a resident-focused process.
- Taking action to put things right and providing appropriate remedies.
- Creating a positive complaint handling culture through continuous learning and improvement.

Part of the new statutory nature of the Code means that as a housing landlord Tamworth Borough Council are required to submit an annual submission of performance against the code to demonstrate compliance. The submission requires Tamworth Borough Council to provide key information about the organisation's approach to complaint handling and to confirm compliance with the provisions of the code through an annual complaints performance and service improvement report, the submission must be made by 5 September 2024.

3.2 Annual complaints performance and service improvement report

This report is a comprehensive view of the council's performance in complaint handling as well as identifying future actions for improvement. The detailed report can be found at appendix A, the report must contain the following key elements:

3.2.1 Members responsible for complaints

One of the requirements of the code is for landlords to appoint members responsible for complaints. The Leader of the Council is responsible for all complaints corporately with the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Homelessness and Planning taking responsibility for housing related complaints

3.2.2 2023/24 Annual self-assessment

In line with the requirements of the Housing Ombudsman, a self-assessment has been undertaken to identify whether the organisation's current approach to complaints handling meets all the requirement of the 2024 Complaint Handling Code. This document can be found at Appendix A1.

3.2.3 Governing body response

There is a requirement for the governing body (in Tamworth's case Cabinet) to respond to the report and self-assessment, this is contained within the report.

3.2.4 Analysis of our complaint handling performance for housing services.

Qualitative and quantitative evidence is included to provide a thorough analysis of complaint handling performance which also identified key complaint themes and insight gained.

3.2.5 Learning from Complaints and Service Improvements

Complaints give us valuable information, enabling us to improve our services and overall customer satisfaction. The report highlights some of the improvements we have made in 2023-24.

3.2.6 Housing Ombudsman Report

The final element is to report on reports from the Housing Ombudsman regarding their findings in complaints made against Tamworth Borough Council.

3.3 Comments, Compliments & Complaints Policy

This policy has been revised to take account of the new code and this is attached at **Appendix B**.

The changes made are highlighted within the policy, some of the key changes are detailed below.

- An enhanced commitment to demonstrating continuous improvement
- Updated definition of a complaint to include the council as a social landlord
- Revision from 6 months to 12 months of the issue occurring or the resident becoming aware of the issue, in which to accept complaints
- Complainants not required to explain their reasons for requesting a stage 2 consideration
- Enhanced definition of a service request
- The requirement to have an Elected Member who takes full accountability for Housing complaints.

Resource Implications

There are no direct human or financial resource implications as a result of this report.

Legal/Risk Implications

If the Annual complaints performance and service improvement report and policy are not approved and published by 5th September 2024 the council will be non-compliant with the complaint handling code and there is a risk that a complaint handling failure order will be issued.

Equalities Implications

A Community Impact Assessment is included at appendix B1.

Environment and Sustainability Implications (including climate change)

There are no direct environment and sustainability implications as a result of this report.

Report Author

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Appendices

Appendix A - Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report 2023- 24

Appendix A1 – Self Assessment

Appendix A2 – Development areas

Appendix B - Comments, Compliments, and Complaints Policy

Appendix B1- Community Impact Assessment

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