



**EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW &
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:
21 October 2021**

CABINET: 2 November 2021

Report of: Corporate Director of Transformation & Resources

Relevant Portfolio Holder: Councillor Adam Yates

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SUBJECT: NEW CUSTOMER FEEDBACK POLICY

Wards affected: Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To seek approval of the new Customer Feedback Policy (previous Complaints Policy).

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS TO EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

2.1 That the Policy be considered and that agreed comments be referred to Cabinet, and the Head of Corporate & Customer Services in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holders.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET

3.1 That the draft policy be approved.

3.2 That the Head of Corporate & Customer Services be authorised to amend the Policy having considered any agreed comments of the Executive Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet.

4.0 BACKGROUND

4.1 The current complaints process has been in place since 2015. The process has three stages; stage one is an informal complaint which is managed by the relevant Service Manager. Stage two and Stage three are formal complaints,

with stage two being dealt with by the Head of Service and stage three, by the Chief Operating Officer. Customers also have the option of raising their complaint with the relevant Ombudsman; Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) or Housing Ombudsman (HO) if they remain unhappy with the response at Stage three.

- 4.2 Good practice guidelines issued by the LGSCO state that periodic reviews of the process should be conducted.
- 4.3 The Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government White Paper published in November 2020, sets out clear expectations for landlords in relation to dealing with expressions of dissatisfaction, complaints, including redress and evidence of learning.
- 4.4 Given the new guidance, it is appropriate to conduct a review of the complaints policy to ensure it is fit for purpose. The new policy will also enable the Council to meet its "We Will" action to "Listen and provide feedback to customers about how their views have improved services".
- 4.5 A review of the complaints policy started earlier in 2020, however due to COVID-19, it was delayed. In June 2020, the Housing Ombudsman required all social housing providers to complete and publish a self-assessment of their complaints policy as part of the launch of their new Code of Practice.
- 4.6 Our self-assessment was published in December 2020 and updated in July 2021 to reflect progress made.
- 4.7 As complaints can have a negative connotation, the updated policy is now referred to as a Customer Feedback Policy.

5.0 DEVELOPMENT OF THE POLICY

- 5.1 In order to develop a policy that was fit for purpose, a number of activities have been undertaken and these are detailed at Appendix 2.
- 5.2 The policy has been developed to ensure that it meets the requirements of the HO and the LGSCO best practice, this has resulted in the number of stages in relation to a complaint reducing from three to two.
- 5.3 There will also be an alignment and integration of data gathered through other channels such as MP enquiries and Patch Problems.

6.0 NEXT STEPS

- 6.1 The website and intranet pages will be updated in line with the new procedure.
- 6.2 Through the recording of complaints and expressions of dissatisfaction, trends will be identified and action taken in order to improve or change services as required.

6.3 Learning from complaints will be documented and published on the Council's Website. This will provide evidence of the delivery of the Council's Vision and Priorities as there is a clear link to the 'We Will' statement of " Listen and provide feedback to customers about how their views have improved services".

7.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The new feedback policy will simplify the process of providing feedback for customers. The learning from complaints will be published on the Council's website, which will evidence to customers how their feedback/views have been used to shape and improve services.

8.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no financial or resource implications as a result of this policy change.

9.0 RISK ASSESSMENT

9.1 The actions referred to in this report are covered by the scheme of delegation to officers and any necessary changes have been made in the relevant risk registers.

10.0 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no health and wellbeing implications arising from this report.

Background Documents

There are no background documents (as defined in Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) to this Report.

Equality Impact Assessment

There is a direct impact on members of the public, employees, elected members and / or stakeholders, therefore an Equality Impact Assessment is required. A formal equality impact assessment is attached as an Appendix to this report, the results of which have been considered in the Recommendations contained within this report

Appendices

1. Draft Customer Feedback Policy
2. Activities undertaken
3. Equality Impact Assessment
4. Minute of Executive Overview & Scrutiny Committee: 21 October 2021 (Cabinet only)