Report of the Strategic Director

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

1. <u>Purpose of report</u>

   To provide members with an update for the Council's requirement to enhance its complaints procedure, following notification from the Housing Ombudsman.

2. <u>Detail</u>

   The Housing Ombudsman introduced a new complaint handling Code in July 2020, which was subsequently revised in September 2020. The new Code is a legal requirement for all landlords to adopt following the findings of the Grenfell White Paper report.

   The main update from this new Code is that this Council is required to adjust its timescales to acknowledge and respond to complaints. Currently the Council is required to acknowledge complaints within three working days and respond within 15 working days. Under the new Code the Council will be required to acknowledge complaints within five working days and respond within ten working days. The Code also requires the Council, when acknowledging complaints, to write to the complainant to determine if it has correctly understood the complaint.

   Whilst the new Code only applies to housing issues, it is considered that the procedure should be adopted in relation to non-housing complaints for reasons of consistency.

   The Council is required to implement the new Code by 31 March 2021. The Council's current procedure is attached as appendix 1. The Housing Ombudsman's Code is attached at appendix 2. Attached at appendix 3 is the updated draft complaints procedure.

   Following the adoption of the new Housing Ombudsman Code, the Council is required to undertake a self-assessment. This assessment can be found at appendix 2 and is required to be completed by 31 December 2020.

   It should be noted that Standards complaints are separate and distinct from this process.

3. <u>Financial implications</u>

   There are no financial implication arising from this report.

Recommendation **The Committee is asked to NOTE the Housing Ombudsman's Code and RESOLVE that non-housing related complaints be administered in accordance with the Housing Ombudsman's Code.**

<u>Background papers</u>: Nil