

Report of the Executive Director

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE1. Purpose of Report

To provide Members with an update for the Council's requirement to enhance its complaints procedure.

2. Recommendation

The Committee is asked to RESOLVE that the changes to the Complaints Procedure be approved.

3. Detail

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. This was adopted by the Council on the 30 November 2020 and came into practise on 1 April 2021.

The Local Government Ombudsman and Housing Ombudsman cannot investigate complaints that are over 1 year from the Council's final response.

The Council has reviewed its current procedure and has determined that a complaint consideration threshold was required. Currently, the Council does not have a threshold, meaning all historic complaints require investigation despite some being registered more than a year since the incident complained about took place. This is because a significant lapse of time makes a thorough and meaningful investigation more challenging.

It is recommended that the Council adopt a threshold of 6 months from the incident date in which the Council will investigate complaints. Any complaints received outside of this threshold will be reviewed on a case by case basis to determine if they require investigation. This will bring the Council in line with the Local Government Ombudsman and Housing Ombudsman's policies.

Additionally, it is recommended that the Council consider further restrictions for complaints that are also subject to legal proceedings and complaints that have already been considered by the Council at its final stage. This will not exclude persistent issues, i.e. repeated missed bins and specific housing repairs issues that have returned from being investigated.

Furthermore, Newark and Sherwood District Council and Ashfield District Council have adopted the 6-month threshold within their policies.

The revised complaints procedure is attached as an appendix to this report.

4. Financial Implications

Head of Finance Services were as follows:
There are no financial implications.

5. Legal Implications

There were no comments from the Monitoring Officer or Head of Legal Services.

6. Background Papers

Nil.