

Report of the Portfolio Holder for Resources and Personnel Policy.**New Housing Complaints Officer**1. Purpose of Report

To seek approval for a new Housing Complaints Officer.

2. Recommendation

Cabinet is asked to RESOLVE that a new Housing Complaints Officer, at Grade 6 be approved, with the estimated cost of £39,700 per annum (including oncosts) to be funded from Housing Revenue Account working balances.

3. Detail

In recent years the Housing Ombudsman and the Regulator for Social Housing have been encouraging tenants and leaseholders to provide feedback and hold their landlords to account by raising complaints.

The report to the Governance, Audit and Standards Committee in November 2024 showed that the Housing service received 71 Stage 1 complaints between 1 July and 30 September 2024 (Q2) of which 15 of these complaints were escalated to Stage 2.

Complaints are currently responded to by the Housing Operations Manager, the Income and Housing Manager, the Housing Services and Strategy Manager or the Repairs Customer Services Manager, depending on the nature of the complaint. Of the 71 complaints received in the quarter, 26 were responded to by the Housing Operations Manager and 24 were responded to by the Repairs Customer Services Manager.

The Housing Service has been working to improve the quality of the investigations into complaints and the detail provided in the responses with an aim to reduce the complaints that are escalated to Stage 2 and onto the Housing Ombudsman. The work also ensures that the root cause of the complaint is correctly identified and appropriate action can be taken to learn from the complaint. To ensure consistency and quality in responses, all Stage 1 responses are checked by the Assistant Director - Housing before being sent. The level of complaints and the amount of work required to produce a good response is having an impact on the ability of managers to complete other essential tasks.

Complaint handling is the Council's lowest satisfaction score in the Tenant Satisfaction Measures, with only 25% being satisfied with complaint handling in

2023/24. There was only a slight increase to 28% in 2024/25. Many landlords also score low in this area. It is therefore a particular focus for the Regulator of Social Housing when they are reviewing the Tenant Satisfaction Scores and completing inspections.

The new role of Housing Complaints Officer would complete the following tasks:

- Acknowledge all Stage 1 complaints, contacting the complainant by telephone to discuss their complaint further when required
- Write responses to all Stage 1 complaints, by reviewing information held on the housing management system and speaking to those involved
- Ensure that there is consistency in the responses sent, and that feedback is used to improve complaint responses
- Liaise with the Complaints and Compliments Officer to discuss cases where compensation may be appropriate, and seek the relevant approval for compensation
- Produce and monitor a log of all actions agreed as part of a Stage 1 complaint
- Produce quarterly reports to highlight the learning from complaints
- Work with Corporate Communications to highlight the positive work that is being undertaken and how the Housing service is learning from complaints
- Support the Complaints and Compliments Officer to obtain all information required for complaints that are escalated to Stage 2 and/or the Housing Ombudsman

4. Key Decision

This report is not a key decision as defined under Regulation 8 of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012

5. Updates from Scrutiny

Not applicable

6. Financial Implications

The comments from the Head of Finance Services were as follows:

The estimated salary of the new Housing Complaints Officer at the proposed Grade 6 is up to £30,200 (2025/26 budgets) with the total additional cost to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) being estimated at £39,700 per annum.

The Budget and Associated Strategies report to Cabinet on 4 February 2025 showed that the HRA finances are under pressure with working balances forecasted to fall to £1.3m by 31 March 2026.

7. Legal Implications

The comments from the Monitoring Officer / Head of Legal Services were as follows:

Whilst there are no direct legal implications that arise from this report, it is important that the recruitment process is carried out in accordance with the Council's Recruitment and Selection policy

8. Human Resources Implications

The comments from the Human Resources Manager were as follows:

9. Union Comments

The Union comments were as follows:

10. Climate Change Implications

The climate change implications are contained within the report.

11. Data Protection Compliance Implications

This report does not contain any OFFICIAL(SENSITIVE) information and there are no Data Protection issues in relation to this report.

12. Equality Impact Assessment

Not applicable.

13. Background Papers

Nil.