

Council of the Isles of Scilly report

Housing Service Annual Complaints and Service Improvement Report

Date	29 May 2025
Meeting	Council
Part	1
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Recommendations

1. That members note the report and its findings.
2. That members approve the suggested changes to the Councils Using and Processing Feedback Policy in accordance with the self-assessment for the Complaint Handling Code (Appendix B) and summarised in Appendix B of this report.
3. That members provide delegated authority to the Strategic Director for Place, Economy and Environment to make the changes to the Council’s Using and Processing Feedback Policy in line with recommendation 2.

## Annual Service complaints review

1. In accordance with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code this report provides an overview of complaint numbers, key themes, and formal Housing Ombudsman determinations received between 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024 in relation to our role as landlord managing our 99-no. social rented homes.
2. The Council's current complaints policy 'Using and Processing Feedback' (January 2017) sets out how the Council currently responds to all service feedback and is available online via this link [UsingFeedbackFinal.pdf](#).
3. This report forms part of our annual self-assessment for the Complaint Handling Code which we have completed, a copy is attached at Appendix A as part of our Landlord duties for social housing. The Council is currently late in providing its annual complaints handling submission to the Housing Ombudsman and is in correspondence with the Ombudsman in this respect. Council's consideration of this report will enable the Council to comply with its extended deadline of 4 June 2025.
4. The report summarises our complaint handling performance for the 2023/2024 financial year and the lessons learnt from that feedback that will help improve service delivery.
5. Good complaint handling follows the Housing Ombudsman's Dispute Resolution Principles. They are:
  - i. be fair – treat people fairly and follow fair processes
  - ii. put things right
  - iii. learn from outcomes
6. The reporting period saw just one service complaint received and no Ombudsman complaints in relation to the social housing service provided by the Council in the financial year 2023-24.
7. In order to protect the identity of the individual(s) involved the identity of the property is not disclosed, instead it is the learning from that complaint that is important to note here.
8. The issues raised in the complaint related to allegations that:
  - a. The response time in answering concerns was unacceptable.

- b. Concern that there is no qualified Housing Officer within the team to authorise action regarding the issues arising.
  - c. Concern that Health and Safety is compromised and that the Housing Team do not provide a duty of care.
- 9. The Stage 1 Complainant was partially upheld in relation to the delay in responding to one email, the other matters were not upheld.
- 10. The complainant escalated the complaint to stage 2 of the Councils complaints process, the findings at stage 2 were not upheld and the Councils complaints process was concluded. The matter was not escalated to the Ombudsman by the complainant. This would have been the next step in the complaints process.
- 11. In terms of our learning from the matter, the complaint lead to service improvements including a review of service standards. Revised customer service standards were subsequently adopted and internal processes reviewed and improved to ensure emails are more closely monitored and managed.
- 12. In terms of our learning, it is clear that the service knows the importance of timely responses. Response times are however sometimes comprised due to the capacity within the service. Cross directorate administrative support is now in place to help increase service capacity.

## **Self-assessment for the Complaint Handling Code**

### **Complaint Handling Code**

- 13. In July 2020, the Housing Ombudsman published a Complaint Handling code. The code aims to ensure fair and effective complaint handling, promote a positive complaints culture and to embed complaint learning. The Housing Ombudsman provides more information on their website about the Complaint Handling Code.
- 14. The Housing Ombudsman requires all landlords to complete a self-assessment against the Code, the Councils self-assessment is set out at Appendix A.

### **CIOs Using and Processing Feedback Policy**

15. In conducting the self-assessment it was apparent that the Councils current Using and Processing Feedback Policy (January 2017) requires updating if it is to be used for all services including Housing.
16. The self-assessment identified 14 areas where the existing policy requires updating in order to be compliant with best practice and national guidance, these are highlighted in amber at Appendix A and have been summarised in a separate document (Appendix B).
17. The Council could opt to develop a completely separate complaints handling policy for housing or adapt the existing Council wide policy. Given the scale of the Council and number of service users it makes sense to have a single policy for ease of use by our customers. It is recommended that the existing policy be updated in accordance with the requirements set out in the self-assessment document.
18. The proposed changes are set out in the summary document Appendix B. It is recommended that these changes be approved and the Using and Processing Feedback Policy be updated accordingly.

### **Financial implications**

19. None

### **Legal implications**

20. The proposed recommendations will ensure that the Councils policies are up to date and accord with the current Codes of Practice and ensure our customers receive a consistent service level.

### **Other implications**

21. None

### **Appendices**

Appendix A: CIOS Annual self-assessment for the Complaint Handling Code 2023-2024

Appendix B: Summary of Proposed changes to User and Feedback Policy

### **Approval**

<b>Senior Manager</b>	Russell Ashman, Chief Executive & S151 Officer	19.05.2025
<b>Financial</b>	Russell Ashman, Chief Executive & S151 Officer	19.05.2025
<b>Legal</b>	Lia Musto-Shinton	16.05.2025