

Report for: Cabinet

Date of Meeting:	4 June 2024
Subject:	Complaints and Feedback Policy
Cabinet Member:	Cllr Jane Lock, Cabinet Member for Working Environment
Responsible Officer:	Lisa Lewis, Head of Digital Transformation & Customer Engagement
Exempt:	N/A
Wards Affected:	All
Enclosures:	Appendix 1

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendation(s)

To approve the content of the reviewed Complaints and Feedback Policy in light of the new Complaints Code issued by the Local Government Ombudsman and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO).

Recommendation(s):

That Cabinet recommend to Full Council the approval of the revised Complaints and Feedback Policy

Report

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Complaints and Feedback policy was last reviewed in 2021.
- 1.2 The policy sets out the standards and response timescales that customers can expect when providing feedback to the authority. It also provides standards for staff in dealing with complaints and feedback received.
- 1.3 The review of the policy was delayed due to the design timeline of the new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system and a subsequent consultation on, and implementation of, a revised code by the LGSCO which came into effect on 1 April 2024.

2.0 Summary of Changes

- 2.1 The LGSCO code came into effect on 1st April, however monitoring compliance will not formally start until 1 April 2025. Due to the redesign of the system used for logging feedback the intention is that we will move to the new code formally at the point that the policy is approved and the system goes live. To that end certain changes in process are outlined below.
- 2.2 In addition, the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) has taken the opportunity to revise their current code for complaints. For the ease of staff, members and customers this policy is aligned for both the LGSCO and HOS codes and whichever is more favourable through process for our customers/tenants.
- 2.3 More information about Housing complaints will be presented to the Homes PDG on 11 June 2024 in the Complaints Handling paper.
- 2.4 Acknowledgements of complaints will be done within five working days from submission.
- 2.5 Stage One and Two complaints will have a default response time of 10 working days from the date of acknowledgement, unless agreed with the senior officer responsible or their deputy as outlined in the policy.
- 2.6 Evidence/ reasons for extensions of time for complaints will be communicated to customers/ tenants and monitored.
- 2.7 Performance around complaints will be monitored and breaches reported to the Corporate Performance group and designated member responsible. The annual report to Scrutiny committee will continue with enhanced analysis after the new system has been implemented and enough data gathered.
- 2.8 A senior officer responsible will be appointed to oversee complaints performance. This will be the Head of Digital Transformation & Customer Engagement (excluding Housing which will be dealt with as per current arrangements).
- 2.9 A Member responsible for Complaints will be appointed. This is proposed to be the Cabinet member for Service Delivery & Continuous Improvement.
- 2.10 The review frequency of the policy has been reduced from three years to two years.

3.0 Impacts

- 3.1 The new code places additional burdens on services responding to complaints.

- 3.2 The Customer First team will be responsible for managing the general process and system. This will include triage of complaints (excluding Housing) for all services and assigning to services/ officers as appropriate.
- 3.3 Extensions of time over the initial 10 working days will be referred back for authorisation based upon the nature and complexity of the case for agreement of additional time.
- 3.4 Services will be expected to respond to complaints in a much shorter period of time and for complex cases seek clarification from customers prior to commencing any investigation.
- 3.5 The administrative and recording process of complaints may very well impact on service capacity and resources. This is, as yet, unquantifiable but in future may mean additional resources are required within the council to administer and monitor the additional burdens the code places on us.
- 3.6 The annual Scrutiny report is likely to be in a state of flux this year as we transition to a new system and data will not be easily comparable between the new systems. The data may therefore be presented in two distinct formats over the normal annual period within the Scrutiny report.

4.0 Next Steps

- 4.1 A member briefing was held on 7 May 2024 to inform members of the changes.
- 4.2 On the adoption of the policy the web pages and other information sources will be updated.
- 4.3 Implementation of new Complaints and Feedback recording system, including the design and creation of new reporting/ monitoring tools.
- 4.4 A satisfaction survey will be created to monitor customer satisfaction with the complaints process.
- 4.5 Staff training on complaints for designated staff and the dissemination of the new policy to all staff and members through the online Learning Management System (LMS).
- 4.6 We will be required to complete a self-assessment to meet the LGSCO guidelines.

Financial Implications - Failure to deal with service failures and complaints promptly and appropriately may result in compensation being due to the complainant.

Legal Implications - Failure to deal with service failures and complaints promptly and appropriately as identified in our policies may have legal implications.

Risk Assessment – Failure to adopt and apply the new code may result in LGSCO action and reputational damage.

Impact on Climate Change - There is no impact or opportunity for improvement/adaptation in conjunction with MDDC Climate Action Plan.

Equalities Impact Assessment - Complaints are received in a variety of ways. MDDC ensures that there is equality of opportunity for all customers. In addition, and where there is a need, staff will assist in the recording of complaints. There is also an interpretation service available through Language Line.

Relationship to Corporate Plan - The Complaints and Feedback policy underpins the core values of MDDC relating to People and Performance and outlines the process to measure our success with service delivery.

Section 3 – Statutory Officer sign-off/mandatory checks

Statutory Officer: Andrew Jarrett
Agreed by or on behalf of the Section 151
Date: 21/05/24

Statutory Officer: Maria De Leburne
Agreed on behalf of the Monitoring Officer
Date: 21/05/24

Chief Officer: Stephen Walford
Agreed by or on behalf of the Chief Executive/Corporate Director
Date: 21/05/24

Performance and risk: Steve Carr
Agreed on behalf of the Corporate Performance & Improvement Manager
Date: 14/05/2024

Cabinet member notified: (yes/no)

Report: Exclusion of the press and public from this item of business on the published agenda on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information. (Yes/No)

Appendix: Exclusion of the press and public from this item of business on the published agenda on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information. (Yes/No)

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Lisa Lewis, Head of Digital Transformation & Customer Engagement
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Background papers: