**Tenant Scrutiny Panel**

**Complaints Scrutiny Report**

**October 2024**

1. **Background**
   1. The Tenant Scrutiny Panel (TSP) was formed in July 2024 and received information regarding their role and the terms of reference for the panel. It was made clear that the Panel should be tenant led and the determination of any scrutiny activities should come from the panel.
   2. However, due to the panel only just forming, officers in attendance suggested that the panel look at scrutinising how Mansfield District Council (MDC) deals with complaints, guided by the officers in attendance to provide a template for future scrutiny activities determined by the panel.
   3. Officers explained the rationale for selecting complaints including low levels of satisfaction and poor performance in responding to complaints within the set timescales
2. **The Scrutiny Team**
   1. The Scrutiny Team was made up of the following Panel members:

* Nick marks
* Amanda Froggatt
* Johnathon Walton
* Luke Stoddart
* Margaret Fox
  1. The panel were supported by the following officers:
* Jeanette Marples – Performance and Insight Manager  
  Laura Jogela Williams – Tenant Engagement Officer
  1. The following officer also attended a Panel meeting to discuss analysis of the Repairs Service complaints performance:
* Rob Lewis – Interim Assets and Compliance Manager

1. **Evidence Provided**
   1. The panel were provided with the following evidence during the course of their scrutiny:

* Tenant Satisfaction measures including;
* proportion of customers satisfied with how their complaint was handled (TP>>)
* Number of complaints per 1000 properties (Stage 1 and Stage 2)
* Complaints completed within timescales (stage 1 and stage 2)
* A copy of the Housing Ombudsman’s Compliant Handling Code
* MDC’s Annual Self-assessment against the compliant Handling code and action plan
* MDC’s Complaints Policy
* MDC’s Annual Complaints Handling Report and action plan
* Analysis of Repair complaints

1. **Scrutiny Methodology**
   1. A desktop review was undertaken by all panel members of the evidence outlined in 3.1.
   2. Panel members also looked at the information available on complaints and complaints handling on the Housing pages of the website
   3. Following the desk top review several recommendations were made by the panel to improve performance in dealing with complaints, quality assurance and customer feedback
2. **Findings**

**Policy**

* 1. Panel members considered the complaints policy and are assured that its content complies with the requirements of the Housing Ombudsman’s Complaint Handling Code. Whilst the policy was easy to locate on the website along with information on how to make a complaint, from a customer perspective, the policy was very wordy.

**Recommendation 1:**

Create an easy to read document / service standard document that summaries the complaints policy and process for customers

**Self-assessment against the housing ombudsman complaint handling code**

* 1. The panel were able to locate the self-assessment easily on the Housing website and the information relating to the code on the website was clear and understandable.
  2. The panel noted however that there were some outstanding actions that were required to ensure MDC is fully compliant with the code. The Panel would therefore like assurance that the outstanding actions are being progressed.

**Recommendation 2.**

MDC to provide an update on progress against the outstanding actions outlined in the self- assessment action plan in 3 months time

**MDC’s Annual Complaints Handling Report and action plan**

* 1. The panel were able to easily locate the annual complaint handling code on the Housing pages of the website. Again the panel would like assurance that the actions identified in the improvement plan were being progressed.

**Recommendation 3:**

MDC to provide an update on progress against the outstanding actions outlined in the improvement action plan in 3 months time

**Performance**

* 1. The panel were presented with MDC’s performance against the following Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM’s):
* Number of stage 1 complaints received
* Percentage of stage 1 complaints per 1000 properties\*
* Number of stage 1 complaints responded to within 10 working days
* Number of stage 2 complaints received
* Percentage of stage 2 complaints per 1000 properties\*
* Number of stage 2 complaints responded to within 20 working days
  1. It was noted that the information on performance in complaint handling was available on the Housing website. However the panel considered that the performance information would be more meaningful if it could show how MDC compares to other local authorities and housing providers

**Recommendation 4:**

MDC to benchmark their complaint handling performance and publish on the website

* 1. The panel were also given a breakdown of performance by service area and noted that the vast majority of complaints were against the Repairs Service with poor performance in responding to complaints also evident for this service.
  2. Whilst the Performance and Insight Manager informed the panel that further training had been provided to the Repairs service in terms of dealing with complaints in line with the code of guidance, a lack of resources / dedicated officers to deal with complaints along with a reliance on temporary staff seemed to be impacting on performance in responding to complaints
  3. Further analysis of complaints made against the repairs service was also provided to the panel which identified an issue with communication resulting in a high incidence of complaints being made against the service

**Recommendation 5:**

Dedicated resources to be identified within the Repairs Service to deal with complaints

**Recommendation 6:**

Confirmation of the actions to be taken by the Repairs Service to improve communication with customers who report a repair

**Customer feedback**

* 1. The panel noted that customer feedback was limited to the information collated from the annual tenant perception survey and whilst this provides an indication of how satisfied dissatisfied customers are with MDC’s handling of complaints, the information is limited. Information as to why customers are dissatisfied with the way MDC deals with complaints would provide the panel with greater insight as to why customers were dissatisfied.

**Recommendation 7:**

MDC to undertake a transactional survey of all customers that make a complaint to identify why they are satisfied / dissatisfied with the way MDC deals with their complaint

1. **Conclusion** 
   1. The panel would like to thank MDC for their co-operation in assisting and supporting the panel in their scrutiny of complaint handling.
   2. Based on the evidence provided, the panel feels that the way in which MDC deals with complaints could be improved if they deliver against the actions identified in their improvement plans and implement the recommendations of the panel
   3. The panel therefore request MDC provides a quarterly report is provided to the panel on:

* Progress against the action for improving complaints handling, complying with the complaint handling code and the recommendations made in this report
* Performance in complaint handling against timescales
* Analysis of complaints to identify trends