

## Self-assessment against the requirements of the Code

Code section	Action	Do we follow the Code: Yes/No	Explanations and Commentary
<b>1: Definition of a service request and complaint</b>	We recognise the difference between a service request and a complaint, and these are defined in our policies and procedures.	Yes	<p><a href="#">Corporate complaints procedure policy</a></p> <p>3.7 of the Slough Borough Council Corporate Complaints Policy states A service request should not be logged as a complaint. For example, if a customer contacts to complain that their refuse bin has not been collected and this has not been reported previously, it should be logged and responded as a service request. If a customer contacts to complain that a previously reported missed refuse bin collection has not been completed or not completed satisfactorily, this will be recorded as a complaint.</p>

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<b>2: Exclusions</b>	Our complaints policy sets out circumstances where we would not consider a complaint. These are reasonable and do not deny individuals access to redress.	Yes	<p><a href="#">Corporate complaints procedure policy</a></p> <p>3.5 Complaints that fall outside of the Council's complaint process Certain types of complaint will not be dealt with through the Council's complaints procedure because there are other processes more suitable for dealing with them, or because they are outside the Council's control. This includes, not exclusively:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First time requests for services such as reporting faults (e.g. a faulty street light)</li> <li>• Services for which there are alternative statutory appeal or tribunal processes, including: Parking appeals, Special Educational Needs 5 Tribunals, Housing Benefit appeals, Appeals against the refusal of planning permission, Appeals against statutory Notices, School admission or exclusion appeals</li> <li>• A complaint that has already been considered by the Council and completed both stages of the corporate complaints procedure.</li> <li>• Complaints from staff about personnel matters, including appointments, dismissals, pay, pensions, and disciplinary action.</li> <li>• Complaints about a registered housing provider</li> <li>• Complaints against an elected Councillor</li> <li>• Requests for information (these are dealt with under separate procedures: the Freedom of Information Act – and Subject Access Requests)</li> <li>• Complaints about the merits of</li> </ul>

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			<p>an insurance claim or matters that would be more appropriately considered by an insurer.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Matters of law or policy.</li> <li>• Complaints where the customer or the Council has started (not threatened) legal proceedings.</li> <li>• Complaints under statutory obligations</li> <li>• Complaints that have already been decided by a court or independent tribunal.</li> <li>• Complaints that are simply criticisms or disagreement with Council policy or decisions.</li> <li>• Schools (including academies) and colleges.</li> <li>• Complaints that are submitted anonymously (although we may still investigate the issue)</li> <li>• where the Council has no power or duty to provide service</li> </ul> <p>If there is any doubt about whether the complaint should be accepted, the customer should be advised to submit the complaint to the Council for consideration. If the Council receives a complaint and decides not to accept it on the above grounds, the customer should be told why and, where possible, an alternative route should be suggested.</p> <p><b>3.6 Time Limits</b> We will not normally consider a complaint that is made more than 6 months after the individual first became aware of the issue they want to complain about, as it is far easier to find out what happened and to put things right if</p>

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			complaints are received at the time. However, if there are exceptional circumstances (illness, changes in personal circumstances) provided by the complainant for the delay in submitting the complaint, the Council may make a discretionary decision to consider the complaint providing the circumstances are evidenced. If the Council receives a complaint and decides to not to accept it on the above grounds the customer should be told why.

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<b>3: Accessibility and awareness</b>	<p>We provide different channels through which individuals can make complaints. These are accessible and we can make reasonable adjustments where necessary</p>	Yes	<p><a href="#">Corporate complaints procedure policy</a></p> <p>3.2 of the Corporate Complaints Policy under support and advocacy states; Many people feel daunted at the prospect of making a complaint. They may be unsure about how to go about it, or how best to put their case. The council has a positive approach to complaints and will encourage people to seek the support of friends or other advocates such as Citizens Advice Bureau. The council will also give assistance to those who have difficulty with written or spoken English and those who are disabled. The council will, where appropriate, accept complaints from advocates or third parties, provided that the person affected has given their written consent.</p> <p>3.4 of the policy states; The council encourages any customer who has a concern to first speak to a member of staff in the relevant service area. If there has been a problem the member of staff should try to resolve, it. However, if a service user is not happy and wants to make a complaint, we need to make it easy for them to do so. We accept complaints:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• online via the council's corporate complaints form</li> </ul>

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• by letter; Corporate complaints team, 25 Windsor Road, Slough, SL1 2EL • by email; <a href="mailto:complaints@slough.gov.uk">complaints@slough.gov.uk</a></li> <li>• by telephone; 01753 475111 Although we accept complaints made by telephone it is helpful to have them in writing, so that we have a clear record of the complainant's views on what went wrong and what the Council should do to put things right. If a complainant wishes to make a complaint by telephone, they must not be prevented from doing so.</li> </ul> <p><a href="#">Book an appointment - Council services contact details – Slough Borough Council</a></p> <p>Residents can also make an appointment or drop in to one of our customer HUBS where a member of our customer services team can assist them in person</p>

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<b>4: Complaint handling resources</b>	We have designated, sufficient resource assigned to take responsibility for complaint handling. Complaints are viewed as a core service and resourced accordingly.	Yes	<p><a href="https://www.slough.gov.uk/council/council-improvement/2">https://www.slough.gov.uk/council/council-improvement/2</a></p> <p>As part of Slough's Improvement and Recovery Plan there is a complaints workstream which is looking to review its model to ensure we are using the resource assigned to complaint handling across the organisation efficiently and effectively.</p>
<b>5: The complaint handling process</b>	We have a single policy for dealing with complaints covered by the Code and individuals are given the option of raising a complaint where they express dissatisfaction that meets the definition of the complaint in our policy.	Yes	<p><a href="#">Corporate complaints procedure policy</a>- We have a single Corporate Policy for complaint handling which covers different service areas. Housing has a separate policy which was asked for by the Regulator of Social Housing which follows the Housing Ombudsman Code. The policy gives individuals the option of raising a complaint where they express dissatisfaction.</p> <p>4.1 of the policy states</p> <p>If a concern cannot be resolved to a customer's satisfaction at the point of service delivery, or if the customer wishes to make a complaint, a formal complaint must be recorded – unless an exemption, as set out in Section 3.5 is applicable.</p>

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<b>6: Complaints stages (Stage 1)</b>	We process stage 1 complaints in line with timescales and processes set out in the Code.	No	<p><a href="#">Corporate complaints procedure policy</a>- 4.1 of The Corporate Complaints Policy states Complaints should be acknowledged within two working days, and a full written reply sent within fifteen working days. This does not comply with the complaint handling code.</p> <p><a href="https://www.slough.gov.uk/council/council-improvement/2">https://www.slough.gov.uk/council/council-improvement/2</a></p> <p>As part of Improvement and recovery Plan for Slough there is a complaints workstream, the policy will be reviewed and refreshed in line with the complaint handling code by the end of Qtr,3.</p>

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<b>6: Complaints stages (Stage 2)</b>	We process stage 2 complaints in line with timescales and processes set out in the Code.	No	<p><a href="#"><u>Corporate complaints procedure policy</u></a></p> <p>4.3 of the Corporate Complaints Policy states We will acknowledge receipt of a complaint in writing or by telephone within two working days. Our acknowledgement will include who is to investigate the complaint, the subject of the complaint and the reply timing.</p> <p>4.2 of the Corporate Complaints Policy states If the customer is dissatisfied with the outcome of the Stage 1 investigation, at their request, the Council will arrange for the complaint to be reviewed by a more senior manager. In most cases this will be the service Director or a designated officer. The request should be acknowledged within two working days, and a full written reply sent within twenty working days.</p> <p><a href="https://www.slough.gov.uk/council/council-improvement/2"><u>https://www.slough.gov.uk/council/council-improvement/2</u></a></p> <p>As part of Improvement and Recovery Plan for Slough there is a complaints workstream, the policy will be reviewed and refreshed in line with the complaint handling code by the end of Qtr,3.</p>

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<b>7: Putting things right</b>	When something has gone wrong, we take action to put things right.	No	<p>The council is working towards having a positive complaint handling culture, during the year work has been undertaken to clear back logs of overdue and outstanding complaints and resolving long standing issues with residents.</p> <p>Pockets of good practise has been embedded however there is further work to do to ensure we are compliant with the ombudsman code of good practise by putting things right when something has gone wrong and learning to stop the same issues happening again.</p> <p>As part of our Improvement and Recovery Plan <a href="https://www.slough.gov.uk/council/council-improvement/2">https://www.slough.gov.uk/council/council-improvement/2</a>, there are different areas of work which will be undertaken to ensure we are compliant with the code and putting things right for our residents.</p> <p>Work is being carried out by our Transformation Team applying systems thinking principles and practices around complaints. They are exploring how we focus on getting a significantly higher first-time resolution to reduce and preferably eliminate the common and predictable causes for residents' complaints. This work is in the exploratory phase</p>

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			and links in with the improvement and Recovery workstream on Complaints.
<b>8: Performance reporting and self-assessment</b>	We produce an annual complaints performance and service improvement report for scrutiny and challenge which includes a self-assessment against the Code.	Yes	<p>Annual Complaints Report is presented to the corporate leadership Team and Audit and Corporate Governance Committee, the Housing Ombudsman Self-Assessment and the LGSCO self-assessment are appendices to this.</p> <p><a href="#"><u>Appendix D - Statutory and Corporate Complaints report 2023-24.pdf</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>Appendix E Housing Ombudsman self-assessment.pdf</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>Agenda for Audit and Corporate Governance Committee on Wednesday, 13th September, 2023, 6.30 pm</u></a></p>

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<b>9: Scrutiny &amp; Oversight</b>	We have appropriate senior leadership and governance oversight of the complaints process and performance.	Yes	<p>Weekly overdue and outstanding reports are sent to each Director and Head of Service giving oversight of their team's performance.</p> <p>Monthly Key performance Indicators are reported around complaint handling.</p> <p>Monthly meeting and complaints performance pack sis presented to lead Member for Complaints.</p> <p>Quarterly complaints report is produced and presented to Corporate Leadership Team. A copy of this is sent to lead Member for Complaints.</p> <p>Annual Complaints Report is presented to the corporate leadership Team and Audit and Corporate Governance Committee, the Housing Ombudsman Self-Assessment and the LGSCO self-assessment are appendices to this.</p> <p><a href="#">Appendix D - Statutory and Corporate Complaints report 2023-24.pdf</a></p> <p><a href="#">Appendix E Housing Ombudsman self-assessment.pdf</a></p> <p><a href="#">Agenda for Audit and Corporate Governance Committee on Wednesday, 13th September, 2023, 6.30 pm</a></p>

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