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| <b>Committee(s):</b><br>Housing Management and Almhouses Sub Committee                                    | <b>Dated:</b><br>09/10/2024 |
| <b>Subject:</b> Housing Complaints Update – Quarter 1   | <b>Public</b>               |
| <b>Which outcomes in the City Corporation’s Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?</b> | N/A                         |
| <b>Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?</b>                                  | <b>No</b>                   |
| <b>If so, how much?</b>   | <b>N/A</b>                  |
| <b>What is the source of Funding?</b>   | <b>N/A</b>                  |
| <b>Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain’s Department?</b>                             | <b>N/A</b>                  |
| <b>Report of:</b> Judith Finlay, Executive Director of Community & Children’s Services                    | For Information             |
| <b>Report author:</b> Anna Donoghue, Information, Performance and Quality Assurance Manager               |                             |

### **Summary**

The purpose of this report is to update members of the Housing Management and Almhouses Sub-Committee on changes made in the Housing Complaints Team. This report also provides detailed complaint statistics for Quarter 1 of 2024-25, including information on Housing Ombudsman cases active in the period.

There has been a change in staffing and implementation of new procedures to streamline processes. A new complaints reporting procedure is being established using Power BI and will be used going forward.

This report will outline some of the future ambitions for the Housing Complaints Team’s reporting processes. This will include comparative trend reporting each quarter, a further breakdown of complaints statistics using resident profile data, and data around lessons learned.

### **Recommendation(s)**

Members are asked to note the report.

### **Main Report**

#### **Background**

The Annual Complaints Performance & Service Improvement report (Appendix 4) published in June 2024 detailed actions that were taken to improve the complaints service in the financial year 2023/24.

Changes implemented in 2023/24 are detailed below:

1. Officers set up a Complaints Learning Panel to review outcomes of complaints from residents. The purpose of the Complaints Learning Panel was to identify

themes, trends and potential service improvements (including amendment to policies and procedures) arising out from resident complaints. Any identified actions would be tracked by the responsible officers.

2. In line with the Complaints Handling Code, the team worked to raised resident awareness of how to make a complaint by promoting the service and policy changes, including updating webpages, ways to make a complaint, attending estate drop-ins and placing articles in @home residents' newsletters.
3. The changing requirements of the Complaints Handling Code and improved awareness among officers meant that complaint investigators were clearer on the expectations regarding service failures which may have caused distress and inconvenience to residents.
4. A temporary Complaints Investigation Officer was recruited to support with the backlog of complaints in the Property Services Team.
5. 69 members of staff attended Customer Services training.

### **Current Position**

Since June 2024, a number of further changes have been made to the Housing Complaints Service:

#### 1. Accountability and Reporting:

Steve Goodman and Helen Fentimen have been allocated as Members responsible for complaints. The Housing Complaints Team provides them with a weekly update of active complaints.

They are also provided with a monthly summary which outlines the types of complaints received and the timescales taken to deal with them.

Regular reports are provided to the Departmental Leadership Team, and Housing Management and Almshouses Sub-Committee.

Peta Caine has been allocated as the Senior Lead Person responsible for complaints. She is provided with regular updates from the Housing Complaints Team and is in constant communication with the team about future improvements.

#### 2. Timescales:

In quarter one, only 53% of complaints were being acknowledged within the 5 working day deadline. However, in quarter two, 94% of complaints were acknowledged within the deadline.

If any extensions have been required, the resident has been notified within the timescale and extensions have not exceeded the 10-day or 20-day extension timescale set by the Ombudsman.

All Housing Ombudsman requests are adhered to within the timescales set by the Ombudsman.

#### 3. Tracking and Monitoring of Complaints:

Significant improvements have been made to the complaints monitoring log, and additional detail is captured. Existing procedures have been improved.

Power BI software is being used so that the Housing Complaints Team have live, easily accessible data on complaints.

#### 4. Publicising the Housing Complaints Service

The Housing Complaints Team have developed two new complaints leaflets, with updated information in line with the most recent iteration of the Housing Complaints Policy.

The two-page leaflet (appendix 2) uses simplified language to make the Housing Complaints Service and its processes more accessible to a broader audience.

The longer leaflet (appendix 3) provides a detailed explanation of the Housing Complaints Service and its processes.

### **Future Ambitions**

#### 1. Improved Staffing Capacity

With the permanent Head of Repairs & Maintenance and Head of Major Works starting in the Autumn, there will be additional support and capacity for complaints, particularly at Stage 2.

Increased oversight in Repairs and Major Works will facilitate service developments and improvements in record keeping, which should improve our ability to respond to complaints and the Housing Ombudsman.

#### 2. Training

Training sessions to be set up for staff on complaints handling from an external body, as well as some desk-side and in-house training.

#### 3. Visibility

The Housing Complaints Team will visit estates and attend meetings/walkabouts to raise awareness of the service to the residents.

#### 4. Housing Complaints Data

The Housing Complaints Team will produce reports which contain comparative trend reporting each quarter.

The team aim to provide statistics which contain a breakdown of complaints using resident profile data.

The intention is for annual reports to contain information around 'lessons learned' through the Housing Complaints Service and Complaints Learning Panel.

### **Key Data**

Key data contained in Appendix 1 – Housing Complaints Quarter 1 2024

## **Corporate & Strategic Implications**

### **[Sub-headings]**

Strategic implications – none

Financial implications – none

Resource implications – none

Legal implications - none

Risk implications – Housing Complaints have a direct impact upon the reputation of the City of London’s Housing Division. By the time residents get to the point that they want to make a complaint, they have already experienced a service failure, and therefore it is important that we get it right through the complaints process. There is also a reputational risk in terms of the cases that are investigated by the Housing Ombudsman. The Housing Ombudsman post annual reports, and occasionally call out landlords for severe maladministration practices.

Equalities implications – the new leaflet (appendix 2) uses simplified language in order to expand the accessibility of the Housing Complaints Service to a wider pool of residents.

Climate implications – none

Security implications – none

### **Conclusion**

Members are asked to note this report on changes made in the Housing Complaints Team, including the complaint statistics for Quarter 1 of 2024-25.

### **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Housing Complaints (HRA) Quarter 1 2024-25

Appendix 2 – 2-page Housing Complaints Leaflet

Appendix 3 – Longer Housing Complaints Leaflet

Appendix 4 - Annual Complaints Performance & Service Improvement report

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