Gravesham Borough Council

Corporate Complaints Policy and Procedure

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1. Introduction

Gravesham Borough Council believes that dealing effectively with complaints is essential to providing good services. Complaints are not only a way of customers telling us when they are dissatisfied but can also provide us with information that can help us improve our services

- Good complaint handling promotes a positive relationship between an organisation and service users.
- Complaints allow an issue to be resolved before it becomes worse. Those issues not resolved quickly can take significant resources and time to remedy.
- Involvement in complaint resolution develops staff ownership, decision-making and engagement.
- Complaints provide senior staff with essential insight into day-to-day operations, allowing them to assess effectiveness and drive a positive complaint handling culture.
- Data collected about complaints can be analysed and used to inform key business decisions to drive improvement in service provision.

This policy sets out how we define complaints and how we will respond to them. It explains the complaints process, how complaints are monitored and reported; and is written in conjunction with the requirements of both the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman and the Housing Ombudsman.

Information about the role of the Ombudsmen, their Complaint Handling Codes and how to raise a complaint with them can be found on their websites at:

Home - Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

Home | Housing Ombudsman Service (housing-ombudsman.org.uk)

The Council will publicise this Policy and Procedure on its website at www.gravesham.gov.uk/contact-us/make-official-complaint

2. The Complaints Process

1. Definition of a complaint

1.1. A complaint is defined as:

‘an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the Council, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting a resident or individual, or group of residents or individuals.’

1.2. The following are examples of complaints:

- Failure to deliver the quality of service expected
- Failure in following its’ own procedures or timescales
- Provided the wrong information
- Did not return telephone calls or written communications
- Sent unclear communication
- The conduct or behaviour of a member of staff was unsatisfactory

1.3. A customer does not have to use the word ‘complaint’ for it to be recognised and treated as such. If dissatisfaction has been expressed about services, whether directly, through a survey or other mechanism, the customer should be made aware of how they can pursue a complaint.

A customer can also arrange for their complaint to be raised through a representative. In these cases, the Council will require proof of permission from the complainant for the representative to liaise on their behalf. All complaints, whether raised directly or via a representative, will be handled in line with this policy.

1.4. If wider feedback about services is being sought, e.g. through a survey, this should include details of how customers can complain.

1.5. A service request is a request requiring action to be taken to put something right. Service requests should be recorded, monitored and reviewed regularly. A complaint should be raised when dissatisfaction is raised with the response to the service request and should be progressed in line with this procedure.

Efforts to complete the service request should not be stopped due to a complaint being received.

2. Exclusions

2.1. The categories below are generally outside the scope of the complaints procedure and will not be considered;

- An issue that occurred, or where the complainant reasonably would have been aware, more than 12 months previously, or one that has already been investigated and where no fresh evidence is provided
- An initial request for service e.g. report of fly-tipping, missed bin collection
- Complaints where other appeal mechanisms are available to the customer e.g. refusal of planning permission, parking fine or entitlement to Housing Benefit
- Complaints about Council policy e.g. charging structure or decision to close a service
- Complaints about decisions or actions associated with carrying out regulatory powers e.g. hygiene audit of food premises
- Matters for which legal proceedings have started

2.2. However, complaints will be reviewed on individual circumstances and may be considered even when it would normally fall outside the scope of the procedure, if there is good reason to.

2.3. In the cases where the complaint will not be considered, the customer will be notified why the matter will not be dealt with under this procedure and how to access the appropriate service or channel, along with details of how they can contact the relevant Ombudsman if they disagree.

An example letter for a complaint outside the scope of the procedure is attached at Appendix III.

3. Accessibility and awareness

3.1. The Council has a single policy for dealing with complaints, irrespective of which department or service they are complaining about.

3.2. The Council will accept complaints however made, although complaints made in writing can assist with ensuring clarity of the issues raised. However, the Council will make reasonable adjustments for customers who may need support in accessing the complaints process.

3.3. The Council recognises there is a marked increase in the usage of AI, particularly in assisting complaints with constructing complaints and submit complaints. It is recognised that AI can be a very useful tool, making complaining more accessible and effective. However, it can also produce complex arguments, often quoting regulations or Acts of Parliament (some of them which are out of date or not relevant) and running to many pages. This can then increase the time it takes to effectively review and investigate complaints.

3.4. Whilst the Council will never refuse an AI generated complaint, it may be necessary to contact the customer to ask that they reclarify the issues being raised to assist and ensure understanding. This may be by asking the complainant to put the complaint in their own words, or through a telephone discussion where the officer can fully understand the complaint issues being raised.

3.5. The Council will ensure its policy and process for handling complaints is made available in a clear and accessible format for all customers and will detail how complaints will be managed; including the number of stages involved, what happens at each stage and the timeframes for responding.

4. Responsible Officers and Training

4.1. The Director of Communities & Inclusive Growth with oversee the management of the Council's Policy and process; with the Assistant Director Communities & Inclusive Growth acting as the Council's Complaint Officer, responsible for overseeing complaint handling including liaison with the relevant Ombudsman and ensuring complaints are reported to Senior Management and relevant Committees for transparency and Member involvement in complaints and learning.

4.2. The Council will appoint a Member Responsible for Complaints who will receive regular updates on the complaints including categories and outcomes; Ombudsman investigations and annual complaints performance and service improvements.

4.3. The Council will prioritise complaint handling and a culture of learning from complaints, with all relevant staff appropriately trained in the importance of complaint handling.

5. The Complaint Handling Procedure

5.1. This procedure has been drawn up on a council-wide basis to encourage a consistent, best practice approach to complaints. It is designed to:

- be as simple as possible, easy to access and easy to follow
- relate to all departments and services
- give clear timescales for dealing with complaints
- ensure complainants are kept up to date, advised of any delays, the reason for any delay and revised timescales
- clearly define stages and officers responsible for dealing with complaints
- detail the monitoring process of complaints, which will lead to improvements

5.2. The Council can receive complaints in a variety of ways – in person, over the telephone, by letter, via social media or online. While it is preferred that the customer puts their complaint in writing (for reasons of clarity and record) this may not always be possible or the customer may prefer to give their account directly to a council officer. In these cases, officers should take down full details of the complaint and repeat it for accuracy.

5.3. When a customer is reporting an issue for the first time, for example, this should be considered as a service request. The council would be expected to respond by arranging appropriate action and ensuring this is delivered. In this case, the customer should be advised of the reason for this and how their issue will be managed.

5.4. When a customer is reporting a concern for the second time, or if the issue is significantly affecting them or they are asking for a complaint to be raised, the Council would be expected to record this as a complaint.

5.5. When a customer expresses dissatisfaction the council must register the issue as a complaint. The council must then set out their understanding of the complaint and the outcomes the customer is seeking. If any aspect of the complaint is unclear the customer must be asked for clarification.

5.6. If the complaint includes reference to third party involvement, e.g. a contractor, the resident should still raise this concern directly with the Council who will contact that third party for information in order to investigate and respond directly to the complainant.

5.7. A customer may prefer to raise their complaint through a representative. In these cases, the council will need proof of permission from the complainant to liaise with the representative. This should be recorded in writing and a copy shared with all parties for clarity. A customer may also be accompanied by or represented at any meeting relating to their complaint.

6. Complaint stages

6.1. The council has a two-stage complaint process and aims to resolve complaints at the earliest opportunity.

6.2. Complaints will be ‘triaged’ on receipt to ensure they fall within the scope of the policy and to consider the complexity, urgency and any vulnerabilities. Most Stage 1

complaints can be resolved quickly and effectively. This may include an explanation, apology or resolution to rectify the situation.

In some cases, the customer will remain dissatisfied with the response and can ask for the matter to be escalated to Stage 2.

6.3. The customer can refer their complaint at any time to the appropriate Ombudsman Service, but the Council will normally expect to have the opportunity to conclude the matter through its own complaint procedure before an Ombudsman investigates

Stage.7

6.4. Stage 1 complaints will be dealt with by the appropriate manager of that service or department, who has the necessary knowledge and experience to investigate and respond to the issues raised. If the complaint involves more than one department or service area, the investigation and response should be coordinated to ensure one comprehensive response is sent.

6.5. Stage 1 complaints must be acknowledged within five working days of the complaint being received, with a full response being sent within a further 10 working days of the acknowledgement unless an extension is requested. The acknowledgement letter must set out the 'complaint definition' (the investigating officer's understanding of each part of the complaint), the outcomes the resident is seeking (if included in the complaint) along with details of who will be investigating and contact details. The acknowledgement must also set out which aspects the landlord is and is not responsible for.

6.6. In some cases, an extension to the timescale for investigating a complaint is needed, for example, when considering complex issues. In these cases, the customer must be informed of the expected timescale for response, with any extension being no more than an additional 10 working days. There must be good reason for this extension, and the reason(s) must be clearly explained to the customer at the time of being notified of an extension. The Council must also provide the extension timescale and contact details of the relevant Ombudsman in this extension letter. In the event responses will fall outside the extended timescales, the Council will agree suitable update intervals with the complainant.

6.7. A complaint response must be sent to the customer when the answer to the complaint is known, not when the outstanding actions required to address the issue are completed. Outstanding actions must still be tracked and actioned promptly with appropriate updates provided to the individual.

6.8. The Council must address all points raised in the complaint definition and provide clear reasons for any decisions, referring to the relevant policy, law and good practice where appropriate.

6.9. Where a customer raises additional complaints during the investigation, these must be incorporated into the Stage 1 response if they are related and the Stage 1 response has not been issued. Where the Stage 1 response has been issued, the new issues are unrelated to the issues already being investigated, or it would unreasonably delay the response, the new issues must be logged as a new complaint.

6.10. At the completion of the investigation the response must set out the following in clear, plain language:

- The complaint stage
- The complaint definition – understanding of the complaint and outcomes / clarification and any outcomes the complainant is seeking
- The decision on the complaint
- The reasons for any decisions made
- The details of any remedy offered to put things right
- Details of any outstanding actions
- Details of how to escalate the matter to Stage 2 should the individual be dissatisfied with the response

6.11. The response should also include the following final paragraph

Your complaint has been dealt with in line with our complaints procedure and I trust the above has addressed the issues you raised.

However, if you feel my response has not fully addressed your complaint, that the information I have provided is inaccurate, or if you disagree with my decision, you can request for the matter to be escalated to Stage 2 for review. Stage 2 reviews will be completed by an officer who is more senior to the Stage 1 investigating officer, was not involved in the Stage 1 response, but has sufficient authority to review and consider the complaint.

Stage 2 is a review of the Stage 1 complaint and is not normally a full re-investigation. New evidence should be submitted as early as possible when requesting escalation. The Council may consider relevant new evidence where it is reasonable and proportionate to do so, particularly where it may materially affect the findings of the Stage 1 investigation.

Should you wish to request a review, please contact us within 8 weeks of the date of this letter. To assist with this, it is also helpful if you can also set out the reasons for requesting a review; although you are not required to provide this.

Our Complaint Policy and Procedure sets out details of how we handle complaints as well as information relating to the relevant Ombudsman Services. If you are unhappy with how we handle complaints or if you disagree with the outcome of your complaint, you can refer it to the relevant Ombudsman. Full information can be found at www.gravesham.gov.uk/contact-us/make-official-complaint

Stage.8.review

6.12. If the customer requests a complaint be escalated to Stage 2, the review must be undertaken by an officer who is more senior to the Stage 1 investigating officer, was not involved in the Stage 1 response, but has sufficient authority to review and consider the Stage 1 complaint.

Stage 2 is a review of the Stage 1 complaint. The Stage 2 reviewing officer must review and consider how the Stage 1 complaint was investigated, along with the findings, outcomes and any mitigation or redress.

6.13. The customer is not required to explain their reasons for requesting a Stage 2 escalation, although the Stage 1 response sets out that it is helpful if they do.

6.14. A Stage 2 response is the Council's final response and must be based on a review of the adequacy of the Stage 1 response.

6.15. New evidence should be submitted as early as possible when requesting escalation. The Council may consider relevant new evidence where it is reasonable and proportionate to do so, particularly where it may materially affect the findings of the Stage 1 investigation.

6.16. The Council must acknowledge a Stage 2 complaint within 5 working days, again setting out the 'complaint definition' (the investigating officers' understanding of each part of the complaint), the outcomes the resident is seeking (if included in the complaint) along with details of who will be investigating and contact details. The acknowledgement must also set out which aspects the landlord is and is not responsible for. The final response must be issued within 20 working days unless an extension is requested.

6.17. If the Council requires an extension to the 20 working days, it must inform the customer of the reasons for this, the extension timescale and provide the contact details of the relevant Ombudsman. Any extension should be limited to a maximum of a further 20 working days. There must be good reason for this extension, and the reason(s) must be clearly explained to the customer at the time of being notified of an extension. The Council must also provide the contact details of the relevant Ombudsman in this extension letter. In the event responses will fall outside the extended timescales, the Council will agree suitable update intervals with the complainant

6.18. A complaint response must be sent to the customer when the answer to the complaint is known, not when the outstanding actions required to address the issue are completed. Outstanding actions must still be tracked and actioned promptly with appropriate updates provided to the individual.

6.19. The Council must address all points raised in the complaint definition and provide clear reasons for any decisions, referencing the relevant policy, law and good practice where appropriate.

6.20. On completion of the investigation the Council must confirm the following in writing, in clear plain language:

- The complaint stage
- The complaint definition and any outcomes sought
- The decision on the complaint
- The reasons for any decisions made
- The details of any remedy offered to put things right
- Details of any outstanding actions
- Details of how to escalate the matter to the relevant Ombudsman Service should the individual remain dissatisfied

6.21. Standard responses for Stage 2 letters.

Depending on the nature of the complaint, the Stage 2 response should also include the following relevant paragraph:

7¡ For.Local.Government.™.Social.Care.Ombudsman¿

"I have reviewed your complaint under Stage 2 of our complaints procedure and set out my findings above. I trust that you are satisfied with my response. However, if you are still not happy with the decision, you may refer your complaint to the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman who is appointed by the government to investigate complaints made against local councils.

You can visit their website for further information at www.lgo.org.uk or use the online form at www.lgo.org.uk/making-a-complaint

8¡ For.Housing.Ombudsman¿

"I have reviewed your complaint under Stage 2 of our complaints procedure and set out my findings above. I trust that you are satisfied with my response. However, if you are unhappy with how I have handled the complaint, or you are unhappy with my decision, you may refer your complaint to the Housing Ombudsman. You can visit their website for information at www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk or use the online form at www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/residents/make-a-complaint/

6.22. If a complaint is upheld at Stage 1 and the Stage 2 review agrees with those findings the complaint must be recorded as upheld. This is the case even if the Stage 2 review finds no fault in the way the Stage 1 complaint was handled.

Ombudsman.Services

6.23. Stage 2 is the Council's final response. At the exhaustion of the council's procedure, the customer is entitled to refer the matter to the Ombudsman to seek further clarification or redress.

6.24. The Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman investigates complaints made against the council, with the exception of some social housing complaints which are dealt with by the Housing Ombudsman. Appendices III and IV set out which housing related complaints each Ombudsman will consider.

7. Putting things right

7.1. Gravesham Borough Council recognises that one of the primary aims of the complaint procedure is to remedy situations of fault. Where something has gone wrong the Council must acknowledge this and set out the actions it has already taken, or intends to take, to put things right. These can include:

- Apologising
- Acknowledging where things have gone wrong
- Providing an explanation, assistance or reasons
- A thorough re-assessment of eligibility for a service
- Taking action if there has been delay
- Reconsidering or changing a decision
- Amending a record or adding a correction or addendum
- Providing a financial remedy
- Changing policies, procedures or practices

7.2. The primary consideration for the appropriate remedy will be to return the customer to the same position they would have been in, had the complaint not occurred. Remedies can be applied at any stage of the complaint procedure.

7.3. When considering remedies, Gravesham Borough Council will refer to the appropriate Ombudsman's guidance on remedies:

Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman Guidance on Remedies
Housing Ombudsman Guidance on remedies

7.4. The remedy offer must clearly set out what will happen and by when, in agreement with the customer where appropriate. Any remedy proposed must be followed through to completion.

8. Complaints of illegality or against Members

8.1. The Council is required by law to appoint a Monitoring Officer who has a wide range of powers to investigate and report to the Council or Cabinet on matters involving illegality, maladministration or injustice. The Monitoring Officer must be advised immediately of any complaint which alleges illegality, maladministration or injustice.

8.2. The Monitoring Officer will decide if it is necessary to call for a fuller report or take over investigation of the complaint.

8.3. Members of the public may on occasion make complaints direct to the Monitoring Officer. Such complaints will normally include a suggestion of illegality, maladministration or injustice. The Monitoring Officer will call for information and comments from any relevant source and will deal with the complainant directly. Staff and Members involved will be advised of the result of the investigation.

8.4. The Monitoring Officer is also responsible for investigating allegations of misconduct by Borough and Parish councillors and for investigating issues on behalf of the Standards Board for England where appropriate.

9. Monitoring, Reporting and Compliance

9.1. The Council will record Stage 1 & 2 complaints on its' content management system which captures a range of information subsequently used to monitor and report back to the Council's Management team. This information includes:

- customer's details
- nature of complaint
- date complaint received
- date acknowledgement sent
- officer assigned to deal with the complaint
- details of the complaint
- date complaint was closed
- whether complaint has been upheld
- whether complaint was responded to within the target times / extended target times
- what learning opportunities have/are to be implemented

9.2. The Council will produce an annual complaints performance and service improvement report for scrutiny and challenge. This will include:

- A qualitative and quantitative analysis of the Council's complaint handling performance and include a summary of the types of complaints the Council has refused to accept
- Service improvements and learning from complaints
- Any annual report about the council's performance from the relevant Ombudsman
- The Housing Ombudsman's annual self-assessment against the Ombudsman Code to ensure our complaint handling policy remains in line with its requirements
- Any findings of non-compliance with the Code
- Any other relevant reports or publications produced by the relevant Ombudsman in relation to the work of the Council

10. Scrutiny and oversight: Continuous learning and improvement

10.1. The Council will look beyond the circumstances of individual complaints and consider whether service improvements can be made because of any learning from the complaint. The Council will use complaints as a source of intelligence to identify issues and introduce positive changes in service.

10.2. Accountability and transparency are integral to a positive complaints culture, and the Council will report back on wider learning and improvements from complaints to stakeholders, staff and relevant committees.

11. Managing Unreasonable and Unreasonably Persistent Complaints

11.1. The Council has a Policy and procedures in place for dealing with unreasonable or unreasonably persistent complainants. Full details can be found on the website at www.gravesham.gov.uk/contact-us/make-official-complaint

11.2. The Policy sets out examples of when a complaint is considered to be unreasonable and what steps the Council can take in these cases.

12. Further information

For further information relating to this Policy and Procedure, please contact Customer Services at customer.services@gravesham.gov.uk or by calling 01474 337000.

Anita Tysoe
Assistant Director (Communities & Inclusive Growth)
September 2026

3. List of Appendices

- Appendix I – Acknowledgement template for stage 1 & 2 complaints
- Appendix II – Response templates for Stage 1 & 2 complaints
- Appendix III – Example notification of complaints outside the scope of the policy/procedure
- Appendix IV – Complaints investigated by Local Government and Social Care Service
- Appendix V - Complaints investigated by the Housing Ombudsman

Appendix I - Acknowledgement template for complaints

Stage.7

Dear [Insert Name]

Re: Stage One Complaint

I am writing to acknowledge receipt of your complaint, which has been assigned to me to investigate.

Investigations are normally concluded within 10 working days from the date of my acknowledgement. However, on occasion, it is necessary to extend the length of time required to investigate matters. If this is the case, I will write to you again to let you know, explaining the reasons for the delay and when the investigation will be concluded.

I have set out below my understanding of your complaint (complaint definition). If this is not correct, please contact me as soon as possible so that I can rectify this:

1. [Set out each point of the complaint e.g. unhappy with the time take to deliver a service; provided incorrect information; unhappy with the conduct of an officer; along with the outcome the customer expects]

2. [Set out each point of the complaint e.g. unhappy with the time take to deliver a service; provided incorrect information; unhappy with the conduct of an officer; along with the outcome the customer expects]

3. [Set out each point of the complaint e.g. unhappy with the time take to deliver a service; provided incorrect information; unhappy with the conduct of an officer; along with the outcome the customer expects]

The above aspects are the responsibility of the Council.

However; [delete as appropriate]

Whilst writing, I would appreciate you clarifying the following:

4. [Set out any areas where you require clarification or supporting evidence e.g. you were told you would have a decision the same day you sent in your application – can you please let me have details of who you spoke with so I can investigate this. If this advice was provided in writing, please supply me with a copy].

5. The following is not the responsibility of the Council [set out what is not within GBC control/liability and who the complainant should direct this aspect of their complaint to]

Whilst I am investigating your complaint, if you have any further information or require any further assistance, please let me know.

You can find the Council's Complaint Policy and Procedure on our website. This sets out details of how we deal with complaints as well as information about Ombudsman Services. If you are unhappy with how we handle your complaint or if you disagree with the outcome of your complaint, you can refer the matter to the relevant Ombudsman.

Full information can be found at www.gravesham.gov.uk/contact-us/make-official-complaint

Yours sincerely

[Name of investigating officer]

[Department]

.Acknowledgement.template.for.Stage.8.complaints

Dear [Insert Name]

Re: Stage Two Complaint

I am writing to acknowledge receipt of your complaint, which has been escalated to myself to investigate.

Investigations are normally concluded within 20 working days from the date of my acknowledgement. However, on occasion, it is necessary to extend the length of time required to investigate matters. If this is the case, I will write to you again to let you know, explaining the reasons for the delay and when the investigation will be concluded.

I have set out below my understanding of your complaint (complaint definition). If this is not correct, please contact me as soon as possible so that I can rectify this:

1. [Set out each point of the complaint; along with the outcomes the customer is seeking]

2. [Set out each point of the complaint; ; along with the outcomes the customer is seeking]

3. [Set out each point of the complaint; ; along with the outcomes the customer is seeking]

The above aspects are the responsibility of the Council.

However; [delete as appropriate]

Whilst writing, I would appreciate you clarifying the following:

4. [Set out any areas where you require clarification or supporting evidence e.g. you were told you would have a decision the same day you sent in your application – can you please let me have details of who you spoke with so I can investigate this. If this advice was provided in writing, please supply me with a copy].

5. The following is not the responsibility of the Council [set out what is not within GBC control/liability and who the complainant should direct this aspect of their complaint to]

Whilst I am investigating your complaint, if you have any further information or require any further assistance, please let me know.

You can find the Council's Complaint Policy and Procedure on our website. This sets out details of how we deal with complaints as well as information about Ombudsman Services. If you are unhappy with how we handle your complaint or if you disagree with the outcome of your complaint, you can refer the matter to the relevant Ombudsman.

Full information can be found at www.gravesham.gov.uk/contact-us/make-official-complaint

Yours sincerely

[Name of investigating officer]

[Department]

Appendix II Standard Paragraphs for Response

Stage.7.response.letters.must.include.the.following¿

- The complaint stage
- The complaint definition – understanding of the complaint and outcomes / clarification
- The decision on the complaint
- The reasons for any decisions made
- The details of any remedy offered to put things right
- Details of any outstanding actions
- Details of how to escalate the matter to a stage 2 should the individual be dissatisfied with the response (as follows):

Your complaint has been dealt with in line with our complaints procedure and I trust the above has addressed the issues you raised.

However, if you feel my response has not fully addressed your complaint, that the information I have provided is inaccurate, or if you disagree with my decision, you can request for the matter be escalated to Stage 2 where an Assistant Director or Director will undertake a review.

Should you wish to request a review, please contact me within 8 weeks of the date of this letter. To assist with this, it is also helpful if you can also set out the reasons for requesting a review; although you are not required to do this.

Our Complaint Policy and Procedure sets out details of how we handle complaints as well as information relating to the relevant Ombudsman Services. If you are unhappy with how we handle complaints or if you disagree with the outcome of your complaint, you can refer it to the relevant Ombudsman. Full information can be found at www.gravesham.gov.uk/contact-us/make-official-complaint

Standard.Paragraphs.for.Stage.8.Responses

Stage 2 response letters must include the following:

- The complaint stage
- The complaint definition – understanding of the complaint and outcomes / clarification
- The decision on the complaint
- The reasons for any decisions made
- The details of any remedy offered to put things right
- Details of any outstanding actions
- Details of how to escalate the matter to the relevant Ombudsman Service (as follows):

For.Local.Government.™.Social.Care.Ombudsman¿

“I have reviewed your complaint under Stage 2 of our complaints procedure and set out my findings above. I trust that you are satisfied with my response. However, if you are still not happy with the decision, you may refer your complaint to the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman who is appointed by the government to investigate complaints made against local councils. You can visit their website for further information at www.lgo.org.uk or use the online form at www.lgo.org.uk/making-a-complaint

For.Housing.Ombudsman¿

“I have reviewed your complaint under Stage 2 of our complaints procedure and set out my findings above. I trust that you are satisfied with my response. However, if you are unhappy with how I have handled the complaint, or you are unhappy with my decision, you may refer your complaint to the Housing Ombudsman. You can visit their website for information at www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk or use the online form at www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/residents/make-a-complaint/

Appendix III - Example notification of complaints outside the scope of the procedure

Dear [Insert Name]

I am writing to confirm receipt of your complaint.

However, as the issue you raise relates to a parking penalty notice, for which there is an alternative method of appeal, the matter is outside the scope of the complaints procedure and should be dealt with through the appeal process.

Details of this appeal process and how to submit an appeal can be found at www.gravesham.gov.uk/parking/parking-tickets-1/3

On this occasion your letter will be taken as your appeal and considered as quickly as possible. In the event that you are requested to pay the charge, you will be given the opportunity to pay the reduced rate within 14 days of writing to you with a decision.

Our Complaint Policy and Procedure sets out details of how we handle complaints as well as information relating to the relevant Ombudsman Services. If you are unhappy with how we handle complaints or if you disagree with the outcome of your complaint, you can refer it to the relevant Ombudsman. Full information can be found at www.gravesham.gov.uk/contact-us/make-official-complaint

Yours sincerely

[Insert Name]

Parking Services Manager

Appendix IV - Complaints investigated by the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman

Housing.allocations.under.Housing.Act.7❺❷.Part.❷

Applications for re-housing that meet the reasonable preference criteria (dealt with by the local housing authority or any other body acting on its behalf, which could include a housing association). Includes complaints about:

- Assessment of such applications, the award of points, banding or a decision that the application does not qualify for reasonable preference
- Operation of choice-based lettings schemes and about the suitability of accommodation offered under those schemes.

Homelessness.under.Housing.Act.7❺❷.Part.❸

Applications for assistance under the homelessness legislation (dealt with by the local housing authority or any other body acting on its behalf, which could include a housing association). Includes complaints about:

- Homelessness advice and homelessness prevention activities
- How applications are dealt with and decisions about eligibility for and allocation of interim and temporary accommodation.

General.housing.advice

General advice from the local authority about housing options

Handling of reports from tenants of private landlords about unlawful eviction, harassment and other matters

Housing.benefit

Handling of applications for housing benefit

Housing.improvement.grants

Applications for mandatory and discretionary housing improvement grants. Includes complaints about:

- Provision of advice, processing of applications, preparation of schedules of work, payment of grant and other decisions on grant eligibility and entitlement
- Actions of social services occupational therapy services with regard to assessment and eligibility for disabled facilities grant

Antisocial.behaviour

Antisocial behaviour which does not fall within the remit of a social landlord

Noise.nuisance

Reports of statutory noise and other nuisances to environmental health services

Sale.or.disposal.of.land.on.housing.estates

Applications or requests to buy parcels of land owned by local authorities

Sales.processes.for.properties.owned.by.local.authorities.

Right to buy and right to acquire for tenants of local authorities

Planning.and.building.control.at.properties.owned.by.a.social.landlord

Applications for planning permission

Planning.enforcement.

Applications and enforcement under the building regulations

Appendix V - Complaints investigated by the Housing Ombudsman

(Housing.Landlord.Functions)

Leasehold services

Shared ownership and sales processes for leasehold properties

Shared ownership stair-casing

Full ownership and sales processes for leasehold properties owned by Housing Associations

Right to buy and right to acquire for tenants of Housing Associations

Repair responsibilities under the lease

Mortgage rescue schemes

Leasehold services provided by the landlord

Moving to a property

Transfer applications that are outside Housing Act 1996 Part 6

Type of tenancy offered

Mutual exchange

Decision to renew a fixed tenancy

Decants

Mobility Schemes

Rent and service charges

Rent or service charges

Occupancy rights

Terms and conditions of occupancy rights

Succession

Assignment

Ending a tenancy (e.g. notice periods)

Abandonment of property

Possession proceedings

Property condition – repairs and improvements

Condition of the property when first let (e.g. void works)

Responsive repairs

Planned maintenance or cyclical works

Improvement works carried out by landlord or tenant

Rechargeable repairs

Disabled adaptations

Tenant behaviour

Anti-social behaviour

Noise nuisance

Harassment

Estate management

Cleaning or repairs of communal areas

Boundary issues

Grounds maintenance

Parking

Use of communal areas

Complaint handling

The landlord’s handling of a complaint in their complaint process, including delays

Compensation

Home loss or disturbance payments

Improvements carried out by the tenant

Payment for damage to property or tenant’s belongings

Discretionary payments