

Tenants', Leaseholders' and Residents' Consultative Forum

Special AGENDA

DATE: Wednesday 26 September 2012

TIME: At the rising of the Special Meeting of the Tenants', Leaseholders' and Residents' Consultative Forum scheduled to commence at 2.00pm

VENUE: Committee Rooms 1 & 2,
Harrow Civic Centre

MEMBERSHIP (Quorum 3 Council Members)

Chairman: Councillor Bob Currie

Councillors:

Mano Dharmarajah

Mrs Camilla Bath (VC)
Kam Chana

Representatives of Individual Housing Estate Tenants' and Residents' Associations

Reserve Members:

1. Victoria Silver
2. Ben Wealthy

1. Susan Hall
2. Barry Macleod-Cullinane

Contact: Nicola Fletcher, Democratic & Electoral Services Officer
Tel: 020 8416 8050 E-mail: nicola.fletcher@harrow.gov.uk

AGENDA - PART I

1. ATTENDANCE BY RESERVE MEMBERS

To note the attendance at this meeting of any duly appointed Reserve Members.

Reserve Members may attend meetings:-

- (i) to take the place of an ordinary Member for whom they are a reserve;
- (ii) where the ordinary Member will be absent for the whole of the meeting; and
- (iii) the meeting notes at the start of the meeting at the item 'Reserves' that the Reserve Member is or will be attending as a reserve;
- (iv) if a Reserve Member whose intention to attend has been noted arrives after the commencement of the meeting, then that Reserve Member can only act as a Member from the start of the next item of business on the agenda after his/her arrival.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To receive declarations of disclosable pecuniary or non pecuniary interests, arising from business to be transacted at this meeting, from:

- (a) all Members of the Forum;
- (b) all other Members present.

3. DEPUTATIONS

To receive deputations (if any) under the provisions of Executive Procedure Rule 50 (Part 4D of the Constitution).

4. INFORMATION REPORT: HOUSING TENANT AND LEASEHOLDER SURVEY 2012 (Pages 1 - 26)

Report of the Divisional Director of Housing Services.

5. INFORMATION REPORT: HOUSING COMPLAINTS HANDLING (Pages 27 - 48)

Report of the Divisional Director of Housing Services.

AGENDA - PART II - NIL

**REPORT FOR: Tenants', Leaseholders
and Residents'
Consultative Forum**

Date of Meeting: 26 September 2012

Subject: **INFORMATION REPORT -**
Housing Tenant and Leaseholder
Satisfaction Survey 2012

Responsible Officer: Lynne Pennington
Divisional Director of Housing Services

Exempt: No

Enclosures: Appendix 1 – Draft STAR surveys and
'You said, we did'

Section 1 – Summary

Tenant and leaseholder satisfaction is a key performance measure for Housing. Recently we have carried out 2 yearly postal surveys of tenants and leaseholders and used the results to changes services, where necessary, to better meet customer expectations and to compare our performance to other social landlords.

This report outlines the proposals for the 2012 tenant and leaseholder survey due to be carried out in October 2012, and asks TLRCF for comments on the draft surveys.

The report also sets out the Council's plans for publicising the survey, and asks TRAs (tenants and residents associations) to support the survey by encouraging a good response.

FOR INFORMATION

Section 2 – Report

Introduction & background

- 2.1** Housing has completed a survey of tenants and leaseholders every 2 years for some time. Originally this was a government requirement (a Best Value performance indicator). Since 2010 we, like other social landlords, have carried it out on a voluntary basis as we believe it offers valuable information on customer satisfaction against a range of issues, including overall satisfaction, quality of home, neighbourhood, value for money, repairs and maintenance etc..
- 2.2** The survey was previously known as the STATUS survey. It is now known nationally as the STAR survey (Survey of Tenants And Residents) and has been developed by a national housing organisation (Housemark) as the new voluntary approach to tenant and resident satisfaction measurement for the social housing sector. Using the STAR survey will mean that we are able to compare results with other councils and housing associations.
- 2.3** In addition to this snapshot survey, undertaken every 2 years, we also carry out a range of service-specific surveys on a regular basis (e.g. caretaking services, housing repairs, major works) and use other methods to seek customer feedback including focus groups, working parties and in depth telephone surveys as well as tenant and leaseholder engagement activities.

2012 Survey proposal

- 2.4** We propose to carry out the STAR survey during October 2012. It will be sent out by post, so that we can compare the results with previous surveys. The postal surveys will include a freepost envelope for return to the research company. In addition, in order to increase the completion and return rate, we will offer tenants and leaseholders the option of completing the survey online via a web link if they wish.
- 2.5** We hope to have results and a final report in January 2013. The research company will present the results to tenants, leaseholders, members and staff groups so that action planning can take place to address the main issues highlighted by the survey.
- 2.6** The survey will be carried out by an independent research company who have been selected on the basis of their previous experience, ability to do the work, quality and cost. The company sends out the surveys, analyses the responses, and administers incentives for completion (see below). All responses are confidential, although tenants/ leaseholders may agree to have their responses passed to the Council e.g. so a comment can be followed up, or to improve the Council's information for equalities monitoring.

- 2.7 Based on STAR guidelines, the survey will be sent to all sheltered tenants, all leaseholders and a representative sample of general needs tenants (approx. 1750 households) selected randomly by the research company.

Tenant and Leaseholder involvement

- 2.8 We set up a tenant & leaseholder advisory group ('the advisory group') to assist with the project. Members include housing and communications officers, and one representative each of a tenant, sheltered tenant and leaseholder. This group has been involved in reviewing the 2010 survey and preparing for the 2012 survey, and we would like to thank them for their participation in this piece of work.
- 2.9 We have consulted the following groups on the draft survey questions: HFTRA, LSG, Housing Editorial board and we thank them for their comments. The research company has also offered advice and suggestions based on their experience of conducting surveys elsewhere.
- 2.10 TLRCF are asked to offer any final comments on the proposed surveys at this meeting.

Survey questions, promotion and next steps

- 2.11 The STAR survey comprises a set of core questions (which all landlords should use, so that they can compare performance) and a long list of extra questions relating to the different service areas. These extra questions can be altered to suit local circumstances, and additional local questions can be added. Housemark provide guidance on how the STAR survey should be administered, including how to draw up a sample, deal with confidentiality, anonymity and data protection, analyse data and reporting the results.
- 2.12 Appendix 1 includes the proposed 3 surveys – for general needs tenants, sheltered tenants and leaseholders. They have been drawn from the long list of possible STAR questions developed by Housemark and customised to the Harrow context, following comments made by tenants and leaseholders.
- 2.13 In order to get a good response rate, we will be publicising the survey via Homing In, posters, press releases etc. We will also be offering a prize draw for returned surveys as an incentive for early completion and return; we are also proposing to increase the number and value of prizes from those offered in 2010.
- 2.14 The results of the survey will be available early in 2013 as a written report and the research company will do presentations/ workshops as required. We will use the outputs of these to plan future service improvements.

Section 3 - Financial Implications

3.1 There is budget provision of £16,000 in the HRA for the survey. This will cover the survey contract with the independent research company (printing, postage, data analysis, reporting etc) together with ancillary costs of publicity, translations etc.

Section 4 - Corporate Priorities

4.1 The proposals in this report incorporate the corporate priority:
United and involved communities.

Name: Roger Hampson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer
Date: 7 Sept 2012		

Section 5 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact:

Jane Fernley
Housing Partnerships & Strategy Manager
Tel 020 8424 1283
Jane.fernley@harrow.gov.uk

Background Papers:

Housing STAR survey file

Appendix 1 a) Draft STAR surveys - approach and 'You said, we did'

The main features of the 2012 surveys, including changes in response to comments made by tenants and leaseholder representatives, are:

Comment	Action
Cut down on unnecessary text and questions	We have deleted some questions e.g. about income, housing register/ right to buy
Delete questions about complaints procedure and anti-social behaviour	Instead of sending detailed questions in the general survey, we will send targeted surveys on these topics only to people who have used the services
Be clear about why the survey is being undertaken, how the information will be used, and what the benefits are of participating e.g. service improvements made following responses to previous surveys	This will be included in the covering letter and all publicity
Emphasise in communications that the responses will remain confidential and with the research company, unless the person indicates they want the information to be passed on	This will be included in the covering letter
Tighten and streamline questions to ensure they are relevant to Harrow context e.g. for leaseholders	Amendments made
Additional equalities questions (required to comply with the Equalities Act) need to be explained (why the Council is asking for this information & how it will be used)	Actioned
Additional questions to gauge readership & satisfaction with Homing In magazine	Actioned
Allow people to opt out of the prize draw if they wish	To be actioned
Publicise the telephone helpline, ensure all staff are briefed, and repeat the sheltered housing drop in sessions carried out in 2010	To be actioned

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Appx 1 b) Draft Tenant Satisfaction Survey (12/09/2012)

To be added: - Opt in for comments / data to be passed back to the Council

No	Question	Response options	Comments/suggestions
Core questions - these are standard questions to enable benchmarking. We cannot amend for this reason.			
Cor1	Taking everything into account, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the service provided by [your social housing provider]?	Very satisfied, fairly satisfied, neither, fairly dissatisfied or very dissatisfied	
Cor2	How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the overall quality of your home?	Very satisfied, fairly satisfied, neither, fairly dissatisfied or very dissatisfied	
Cor3	How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your neighbourhood as a place to live?	Very satisfied, fairly satisfied, neither, fairly dissatisfied or very dissatisfied	Add environment? – but could be interpreted differently by respondents
Cor4	How satisfied or dissatisfied are you that your rent provides value for money?	Very satisfied, fairly satisfied, neither, fairly dissatisfied or very dissatisfied	
Cor5	How satisfied or dissatisfied are you that your service charges provide value for money?	Very satisfied, fairly satisfied, neither, fairly dissatisfied or very dissatisfied	
Cor6	Generally, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way [your social housing provider] deals with repairs and maintenance?	Very satisfied, fairly satisfied, neither, fairly dissatisfied or very dissatisfied	'your social housing provider' – Housing Services
Cor7	How satisfied or dissatisfied are you that [your social housing provider] listens to your views and acts upon them?	Very satisfied, fairly satisfied, neither, fairly dissatisfied or very dissatisfied	
General Services			
Gen3	How good or poor do you feel [your social housing provider] is at keeping you informed about things that might affect you as a tenant/ leaseholder?	Very satisfied, fairly satisfied, neither, fairly dissatisfied or very dissatisfied	
Gen6	How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way [your social housing provider] deals with the following?		
Gen6a	- Anti-social behaviour	Very satisfied, fairly satisfied, neither, fairly dissatisfied or very dissatisfied	
Gen6b	- Complaints		
Gen6c	- Your enquires generally		

Service Priorities			
Ser1	Which of the following services would you consider to be priorities? (please tick your top three only)	Please tick your top three	
Ser1a	- Keeping tenants informed		
Ser1b	The overall quality of your home		
Ser1c	Listening to tenant views and acting upon them		
Ser1d	Repairs and maintenance		
Ser1e	Dealing with anti-social behaviour		
Ser1f	Your neighbourhood as a place to live		Add environment? – but could be interpreted differently by respondents
Ser1g	Value for money for your rent (and service charges)		
Theme: advice and support			
Aas1	Thinking about your rent and income, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the advice and support you receive from [your social housing provider] with the following?		
Aas1a	- Claiming housing benefit, council tax benefit and other welfare benefits	Very satisfied, fairly satisfied, neither, fairly dissatisfied or very dissatisfied	amalgamate into 1 question – but these are different issues
Aas1b	- Managing your finances and paying rent and service charges		
Theme: contact and communication			
Cac1	Have you contacted [your social housing provider] in the last 12 months with a query? If YES, go to Q ? If NO, go to Q ?	Yes or no	Should we ask Access Harrow specific questions - discuss
Cac2a	Was getting hold of the right person easy or difficult?	Easy, difficult or neither	
Cac2b	Did you find the staff helpful or unhelpful?	Helpful, unhelpful or neither	
Cac3	If you have made contact with [your social housing provider] in the last 12 months, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the following? If you have not made contact in the last 12 months, go to Q ?		Reduced qs to focus on to 5 key areas: Have you contacted Query handled well Final outcome Staff helpful/ friendly Get hold of right person
Cac3a	- The ability of staff to deal with your query quickly and efficiently	Very satisfied, fairly satisfied, neither, fairly dissatisfied or very dissatisfied	
Cac3b	- The final outcome of your query		

Cac5	Which of the following methods of being kept informed and getting in touch with [your social housing provider] are you happy to use and would you like us to use?		Please tick all that apply		
			You to use	Us to use	
Cac5b	Telephone				
Cac5c	Text / SMS				
Cac5d	In writing				
Cac5e	Visit to the office				
Cac5f	Visit to your home by staff				
Cac5g	Open meetings				
Cac5h	Newsletter				
Cac5i	Other needs - please state eg language, Braille, large print				We need to be able to transfer info to our systems & then action
new	Website				
new	Email				Ask for email addresses if we can upload
new	Social media e.g. Facebook, Twitter				
new 6 7 8	Homing in is the quarterly housing magazine for tenants and leaseholders - Do you get it, Do you read it, How good is it at keeping you informed?				Suggested addl qs - to be developed
Theme: neighbourhood					Suggest add environment
Nei1	To what extent are any of the following a problem in your neighbourhood?				Discuss this section – it is hard to define neighbourhood; we cannot do much about many of the issues. Also parking & rubbish/ litter are always the top 2. Main use would be to geographically map the results.
Nei1a	Car parking	Rank top 3	Major, minor, or not a problem		
Nei1b	Rubbish or litter				
Nei1c	Noisy neighbours				
Nei1d	Dog fouling / nuisance				
Nei1f	Disruptive behaviour				
Nei1g	Racial or other harassment				
Nei1i	Vandalism and graffiti				
Nei1k	Drug use or dealing				
Nei1l	Abandoned or burnt out vehicles				
Theme: Responsive repairs					
Rep1	Have you had any repairs to your home in the last 12 months? If YES, go to Q ?				Need to identify whether repair was pre 1 July (Kier) or under new

			contracts
Rep2	Thinking about the last repair completed, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the following?		NB cannot compare postal survey results directly with those arising from the regular Access Harrow phone survey of repairs
Rep2a	- Being told when workers would call	Very satisfied, fairly satisfied, neither, fairly dissatisfied or very dissatisfied	
Rep2b	- Being able to make an appointment		
Rep2e	- The attitude of workers		
Rep2f	- The overall quality of work		
Rep2g	- Keeping dirt and mess to minimum		
Rep2h	- The repair being completed in one visit		
New	- The contractor's attention to safety and security in your home		
Rep2j	- The repairs service you received on this occasion		
Rep3	- Did the contractor show proof of identity?	Yes or no	
Rep4	Was the repair appointment kept?	Yes or no	
Gen9	How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with gas servicing arrangements?	Very satisfied, fairly satisfied, neither, fairly dissatisfied or very dissatisfied	New – do we want to ask this??
Service Specific: Estate Services			
Est2	How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the grounds maintenance, such as grass cutting, in your area?	Very satisfied, fairly satisfied, neither, fairly dissatisfied or very dissatisfied	Could add shrub maintenance, etc to the question/ or delete as not directly provided by Housing & already covered in estates services survey
Est3	How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the following?		Add cleaning / maintenance (PL)
Est3a	- Cleaning internal communal areas (eg corridors, stair wells,)	Very satisfied, fairly satisfied, neither, fairly dissatisfied or very dissatisfied Not applicable	Tie up with Leaseholders questions
Est3b	- Cleaning of External communal areas (eg play areas, bin areas, external lighting, litter clearing)		
new	- Maintenance of internal communal areas (e.g. lighting, door entry systems)		
Est4	How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the overall estate services provided by [your social housing provider]?	Very satisfied, fairly satisfied, neither, fairly dissatisfied or very dissatisfied	

Equality Monitoring

Why do we monitor?

Harrow Council has a legal responsibility to promote and advance equality. To help us to do this, it is important that we have a good understanding of our communities, how our services are being accessed and who is using or would like to use our services. With up-to-date and accurate information we are able to:

- § Better understand our service users / residents and shape services to meet their specific needs
- § Identify and address any barriers / issues individuals may experience when accessing our services (including information about our services)
- § Ensure our policies and services are accessible to everyone who uses them

The information will also enable us to monitor our progress with regards to addressing inequality and allow our employees and service users see how we are performing on equality.

Data Protection – it is your choice whether you provide this information. Your replies will not be used in a way that identifies you. However they will help us to understand how community needs may vary and help us to make informed decisions on how we develop our services and target resources.

1 Age - What is your age group?

Under 16	<input type="text"/>	16 – 24 years	<input type="text"/>
25 – 44 years	<input type="text"/>	45 – 64 years	<input type="text"/>
65 & over	<input type="text"/>		

2 Disability – Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted or is expected to last at least 12 months?

No	<input type="text"/>	Yes, affecting mobility	<input type="text"/>
Yes, affecting hearing	<input type="text"/>	Yes, affecting vision	<input type="text"/>
Yes, a learning disability	<input type="text"/>	Yes, mental ill-health	<input type="text"/>
Yes, another form of disability, please specify	<input type="text"/>		

3 Ethnic origin - What is your ethnic origin?

Asian or Asian British

Afghani	<input type="text"/>	Bangladeshi	<input type="text"/>
Chinese	<input type="text"/>	Indian	<input type="text"/>
Pakistani	<input type="text"/>	Sri Lankan	<input type="text"/>
Any other Asian background – please specify	<input type="text"/>		

Black or Black British

African	<input type="text"/>	Caribbean	<input type="text"/>
Somali	<input type="text"/>		
Any other Black background – please specify	<input type="text"/>		

Mixed background

White and Black African	<input type="checkbox"/>	White and Black Caribbean	<input type="checkbox"/>
White and Asian	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Any other mixed background - please specify	<input type="text"/>		

Other ethnic background

Arab	<input type="checkbox"/>	Iranian	<input type="checkbox"/>
Any other Ethnic group – please specify	<input type="text"/>		

White or White British

Albanian	<input type="checkbox"/>	English	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gypsy / Irish Traveller	<input type="checkbox"/>	Irish	<input type="checkbox"/>
Polish	<input type="checkbox"/>	Romanian	<input type="checkbox"/>
Scottish	<input type="checkbox"/>	Welsh	<input type="checkbox"/>
Any other White background - please specify	<input type="text"/>		

4 Marriage or Civil Partnership

Are you married?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are you in a Civil Partnership?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>

5 Pregnancy or Maternity

Have you been pregnant and / or on maternity leave during the past 2 years?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
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6 Religion and belief - What is your religion?

Buddhism	<input type="checkbox"/>	Judaism	<input type="checkbox"/>
Christianity (all denominations)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sikh	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hinduism	<input type="checkbox"/>	Zoroastrian	<input type="checkbox"/>
Islam	<input type="checkbox"/>	No religion / Atheist	<input type="checkbox"/>
Jainism	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other -please specify	<input type="text"/>

7 Sex - Are you?

Male	<input type="checkbox"/>	Female	<input type="checkbox"/>
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8 Is your gender identity the same as the gender you were assigned at birth?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
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9 Sexual orientation - What is your sexual orientation?

Bisexual	<input type="checkbox"/>	Gay Man	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gay Woman / Lesbian	<input type="checkbox"/>	Heterosexual	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other – Please specify	<input type="text"/>		

Appx 1b) Draft Sheltered Tenant Satisfaction Survey (12/09/2012)

To be added: - Opt in for comments / data to be passed back to the Council

No	Question	Response options	Comments/suggestions
Core questions - these are standard questions to enable benchmarking. We cannot amend for this reason.			
Cor1	Taking everything into account, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the service provided by [your social housing provider]?	Very satisfied, fairly satisfied, neither, fairly dissatisfied or very dissatisfied	
Cor2	How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the overall quality of your home?	Very satisfied, fairly satisfied, neither, fairly dissatisfied or very dissatisfied	
Cor3	How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your neighbourhood as a place to live?	Very satisfied, fairly satisfied, neither, fairly dissatisfied or very dissatisfied	Add environment? – but could be interpreted differently by respondents
Cor4	How satisfied or dissatisfied are you that your rent provides value for money?	Very satisfied, fairly satisfied, neither, fairly dissatisfied or very dissatisfied	
Cor5	How satisfied or dissatisfied are you that your service charges provide value for money?	Very satisfied, fairly satisfied, neither, fairly dissatisfied or very dissatisfied	
Cor6	Generally, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way [your social housing provider] deals with repairs and maintenance?	Very satisfied, fairly satisfied, neither, fairly dissatisfied or very dissatisfied	'your social housing provider' – Housing Services
Cor7	How satisfied or dissatisfied are you that [your social housing provider] listens to your views and acts upon them?	Very satisfied, fairly satisfied, neither, fairly dissatisfied or very dissatisfied	
General Services			
Gen3	How good or poor do you feel [your social housing provider] is at keeping you informed about things that might affect you as a tenant/ leaseholder?	Very satisfied, fairly satisfied, neither, fairly dissatisfied or very dissatisfied	
Gen6	How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way [your social housing provider] deals with the following?		
Gen6a	- Anti-social behaviour	Very satisfied, fairly satisfied, neither, fairly dissatisfied or very dissatisfied	
Gen6b	- Complaints		
Gen6c	- Your enquires generally		

Service Priorities				
Ser1	Which of the following services would you consider to be priorities? (please tick your top three only)	Please tick your top three		
Ser1a	- Keeping tenants informed			
Ser1b	The overall quality of your home			
Ser1c	Listening to tenant views and acting upon them			
Ser1d	Repairs and maintenance			
Ser1e	Dealing with anti-social behaviour			
Ser1f	Your neighbourhood as a place to live		Add environment? – but could be interpreted differently by respondents	
Ser1g	Value for money for your rent (and service charges)			
Housing for older people				
Hop1	Thinking about where you live, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the following?			
Hop1a	- Your support plan	very satisfied, fairly satisfied, neither, fairly dissatisfied or very dissatisfied		
Hop1b	- The frequency of contact with your warden			
Hop1c	- The overall service provided by your warden			
Hop1d	- The emergency call system (Helpline)			
Hop1e	- The safety and security of your home			
Hop1f	- How easy it is to access all areas of your home and scheme			Split into 2 questions? discuss
	- How easy it is to access all areas of your scheme			
New	- promotion of social activities			
New	- the upkeep of communal areas – lounges, toilets, corridors			
Est1	How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the overall appearance of your scheme?			Amended and moved from Estate Services to HOP section
Theme: advice and support				
Aas1	Thinking about your rent and income, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the advice and support you receive from [your social housing provider] with the following?			
Aas1a	- Claiming housing benefit, council tax benefit, and other welfare benefits	Very satisfied, fairly satisfied, neither, fairly dissatisfied or very dissatisfied	amalgamate into 1 question? – these are different issues	
Aas1b	- Managing your finances and paying rent and service charges			

Theme: contact and communication				
Cac1	Have you contacted [your social housing provider] in the last 12 months with a query? If YES, go to Q ? If NO, go to Q ?	Yes or no		Should we ask Access Harrow specific questions?- discuss
Cac2a	Was getting hold of the right person easy or difficult?	Easy, difficult or neither		
Cac2b	Did you find the staff helpful or unhelpful?	Helpful, unhelpful or neither		
Cac3	If you have made contact with [your social housing provider] in the last 12 months, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the following? If you have not made contact in the last 12 months, go to Q ?			Reduced qs to focus on to 5 key areas: Have you contacted Query handled well Final outcome Staff helpful/ friendly Get hold of right person son
Cac3a	- The ability of staff to deal with your query quickly and efficiently	Very satisfied, fairly satisfied, neither, fairly dissatisfied or very dissatisfied		
Cac3b	- The final outcome of your query			
Cac5	Which of the following methods of being kept informed and getting in touch with [your social housing provider] are you happy to use and would you like us to use?	Please tick all that apply		
		You to use	Us to use	
Cac5b	Telephone			
Cac5c	Text / SMS			
Cac5d	In writing			
Cac5e	Visit to the office			
Cac5f	Visit to your home by staff			
Cac5g	Open meetings			
Cac5h	Newsletter			
Cac5i	Other needs - please state eg language, Braille, large print			We need to be able to transfer info to our systems & then action
new	Website			
new	Email			Ask for email addresses if we can upload
new	Social media e.g. Facebook, Twitter			
new 6 7 8	Homing in is the quarterly housing magazine for tenants and leaseholders - Do you get it, Do you read it, How good is it at keeping you informed?			Suggested addl qs - to be developed

Theme: neighbourhood			Suggest add environment
Nei1	To what extent are any of the following a problem in your neighbourhood?		Discuss this section – it is hard to define neighbourhood; we cannot do much about many of the issues. Also parking & rubbish/ litter are always the top 2. Main use would be to geographically map the results.
Nei1a	Car parking	Rank top 3	Major, minor, or not a problem
Nei1b	Rubbish or litter		
Nei1c	Noisy neighbours		
Nei1d	Dog fouling / nuisance		
Nei1f	Disruptive behaviour		
Nei1g	Racial or other harassment		
Nei1h	Drunk or rowdy behaviour		
Nei1i	Vandalism and graffiti		
Nei1k	Drug use or dealing		
Nei1l	Abandoned or burnt out vehicles		
Theme: Responsive repairs			
Rep1	Have you had any repairs to your home in the last 12 months? If YES, go to Q ?		Need to identify whether repair was pre 1 July (Kier) or under new contracts
Rep2	Thinking about the last repair completed, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the following?		NB cannot compare postal survey results directly with those arising from the regular Access Harrow phone survey of repairs
Rep2a	- Being told when workers would call	Very satisfied, fairly satisfied, neither, fairly dissatisfied or very dissatisfied	
Rep2b	- Being able to make an appointment		
Rep2e	- The attitude of workers		
Rep2f	- The overall quality of work		
Rep2g	- Keeping dirt and mess to minimum		
Rep2h	- The repair being completed in one visit		
new	The contractor's attention to safety and security in your home		
Rep2j	- The repairs service you received on this occasion		
Rep3	Did the contractor show proof of identity?	Yes or no	
Rep4	Was the repair appointment kept?	Yes or no	
Gen9	How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with gas servicing arrangements?	Very satisfied, fairly satisfied, neither, fairly dissatisfied or	New – do we want to ask this??

Equality Monitoring

Why do we monitor?

Harrow Council has a legal responsibility to promote and advance equality. To help us to do this, it is important that we have a good understanding of our communities, how our services are being accessed and who is using or would like to use our services. With up-to-date and accurate information we are able to:

- § Better understand our service users / residents and shape services to meet their specific needs
- § Identify and address any barriers / issues individuals may experience when accessing our services (including information about our services)
- § Ensure our policies and services are accessible to everyone who uses them

The information will also enable us to monitor our progress with regards to addressing inequality and allow our employees and service users see how we are performing on equality.

Data Protection – it is your choice whether you provide this information. Your replies will not be used in a way that identifies you. However they will help us to understand how community needs may vary and help us to make informed decisions on how we develop our services and target resources.

1 Age - What is your age group?

Under 16	<input type="text"/>	16 – 24 years	<input type="text"/>
25 – 44 years	<input type="text"/>	45 – 64 years	<input type="text"/>
65 & over	<input type="text"/>		

2 Disability – Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted or is expected to last at least 12 months?

No	<input type="text"/>	Yes, affecting mobility	<input type="text"/>
Yes, affecting hearing	<input type="text"/>	Yes, affecting vision	<input type="text"/>
Yes, a learning disability	<input type="text"/>	Yes, mental ill-health	<input type="text"/>
Yes, another form of disability, please specify	<input type="text"/>		

3 Ethnic origin - What is your ethnic origin?

Asian or Asian British

Afghani	<input type="text"/>	Bangladeshi	<input type="text"/>
Chinese	<input type="text"/>	Indian	<input type="text"/>
Pakistani	<input type="text"/>	Sri Lankan	<input type="text"/>
Any other Asian background – please specify	<input type="text"/>		

Black or Black British

African	<input type="text"/>	Caribbean	<input type="text"/>
Somali	<input type="text"/>		
Any other Black background – please specify	<input type="text"/>		

Mixed background

White and Black African	<input type="checkbox"/>	White and Black Caribbean	<input type="checkbox"/>
White and Asian	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Any other mixed background - please specify	<input type="text"/>		

Other ethnic background

Arab	<input type="checkbox"/>	Iranian	<input type="checkbox"/>
Any other Ethnic group – please specify	<input type="text"/>		

White or White British

Albanian	<input type="checkbox"/>	English	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gypsy / Irish Traveller	<input type="checkbox"/>	Irish	<input type="checkbox"/>
Polish	<input type="checkbox"/>	Romanian	<input type="checkbox"/>
Scottish	<input type="checkbox"/>	Welsh	<input type="checkbox"/>
Any other White background - please specify	<input type="text"/>		

4 Marriage or Civil Partnership

Are you married?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are you in a Civil Partnership?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>

5 Pregnancy or Maternity

Have you been pregnant and / or on maternity leave during the past 2 years?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
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6 Religion and belief - What is your religion?

Buddhism	<input type="checkbox"/>	Judaism	<input type="checkbox"/>
Christianity (all denominations)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sikh	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hinduism	<input type="checkbox"/>	Zoroastrian	<input type="checkbox"/>
Islam	<input type="checkbox"/>	No religion / Atheist	<input type="checkbox"/>
Jainism	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other -please specify	<input type="text"/>

7 Sex - Are you?

Male	<input type="checkbox"/>	Female	<input type="checkbox"/>
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8 Is your gender identity the same as the gender you were assigned at birth?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
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9 Sexual orientation - What is your sexual orientation?

Bisexual	<input type="checkbox"/>	Gay Man	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gay Woman / Lesbian	<input type="checkbox"/>	Heterosexual	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other – Please specify	<input type="text"/>		

Appx 1d) Draft Leaseholder Satisfaction Survey (12/09/12)

To be added: - Opt in for comments / data to be passed back to the Council

No	Question	Response options	Comments/suggestions
Core questions - these are standard questions to enable benchmarking. We cannot amend for this reason.			
Cor1	Taking everything into account, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the service provided by [your social housing provider]?	Very satisfied, fairly satisfied, neither, fairly dissatisfied or very dissatisfied	
Cor3	How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your neighbourhood as a place to live?	Very satisfied, fairly satisfied, neither, fairly dissatisfied or very dissatisfied	
Cor5	How satisfied or dissatisfied are you that your service charges provide value for money?	Very satisfied, fairly satisfied, neither, fairly dissatisfied or very dissatisfied	
Cor6	Generally, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way [your social housing provider] deals with repairs and maintenance?	Very satisfied, fairly satisfied, neither, fairly dissatisfied or very dissatisfied	'your social housing provider' – Housing Services
Cor7	How satisfied or dissatisfied are you that [your social housing provider] listens to your views and acts upon them?	Very satisfied, fairly satisfied, neither, fairly dissatisfied or very dissatisfied	
General Services			
Gen3	How good or poor do you feel [your social housing provider] is at keeping you informed about things that might affect you as a leaseholder?	Very satisfied, fairly satisfied, neither, fairly dissatisfied or very dissatisfied	
Gen6	How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way [your social housing provider] deals with the following?		
Gen6a	- Anti-social behaviour	Very satisfied, fairly satisfied, neither, fairly dissatisfied or very dissatisfied	
Gen6b	- Complaints		
Gen6c	- Your enquires generally		

Service Priorities			
Ser1	Which of the following services would you consider to be priorities? (please tick your top three only)	Please tick your top three	
Ser1a	- Keeping leaseholders informed		
Ser1b	- The overall quality of your home		
Ser1c	- Listening to leaseholder views and acting upon them		
Ser1d	- Repairs and maintenance		
Ser1e	- Dealing with anti-social behaviour		
Ser1f	- Your neighbourhood as a place to live		
Ser1g	- Value for money for your service charges		
Leaseholders			
new	Are you a resident leaseholder	Yes or no	
Lea1	Thinking about your leasehold property, block or scheme, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the following?		
Lea1a	- The cleaning and upkeep of internal communal areas (<i>eg corridors, stair wells, internal lighting</i>)	Very satisfied, fairly satisfied, neither, fairly dissatisfied or very dissatisfied – not provided	New item in responses – not provided
Lea1b	- External building repairs and maintenance		
Lea1c	- Upkeep of communal grounds & gardens (<i>eg play areas, bin areas, external lighting, litter clearing</i>)		
Lea2	Thinking about your service charges, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the following?		
Lea2b	- How easy it is to understand your service charge statement	Very satisfied, fairly satisfied, neither, fairly dissatisfied or very dissatisfied	
Lea2c	- The information about how your service charges are calculated		
New	- The accuracy of the service charge statement		
New	- The value for money of your service charge		
Lea3	Thinking about the information and advice you receive from [your social housing provider] about being a leaseholder, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the following?		
Lea3a	- Your obligations under the terms	Very satisfied,	

	and conditions of your lease	fairly satisfied, neither, fairly dissatisfied or very dissatisfied	
Lea4	- Since you moved in, have you found it easier or more difficult to afford your mortgage payments/ service charges?	Easier, about the same, more difficult	
Theme: contact and communication			
Cac1	Have you contacted [your social housing provider] in the last 12 months with a query? If YES, go to Q ? If NO, go to Q ?	Yes or no	Should we ask Access Harrow specific questions - discuss
Cac2a	Was getting hold of the right person easy or difficult?	Easy, difficult or neither	
Cac2b	Did you find the staff helpful or unhelpful?	Helpful, unhelpful or neither	
Cac3	If you have made contact with [your social housing provider] in the last 12 months, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the following? If you have not made contact in the last 12 months, go to Q ?		Reduce to 5 qs: Have you contacted Query handled well Final outcome Staff helpful/ friendly Get hold of right person
Cac3a	- The ability of staff to deal with your query quickly and efficiently	Very satisfied, fairly satisfied, neither, fairly dissatisfied or very dissatisfied	
Cac3b	- The final outcome of your query		
Cac5	Which of the following methods of being kept informed and getting in touch with [your social housing provider] are you happy to use and would you like us to use?	Please tick all that apply	
		You to use	Us to use
Cac5b	Telephone		
Cac5c	Text / SMS		
Cac5d	In writing		
Cac5e	Visit to the office		
Cac5f	Visit to your home by staff		
Cac5g	Open meetings		
Cac5h	Newsletter		
Cac5i	Other needs - please state e.g. language, Braille, large print		
new	Website		
new	Email		Ask for email addresses if we can upload
new	Social media e.g. Facebook, Twitter		

new 6 7 8	Homing in is the quarterly housing magazine for tenants and leaseholders - Do you get it, Do you read it, How good is it at keeping you informed?			Suggested addl qs - to be developed
Theme: neighbourhood				Suggest add environment
Nei1	To what extent are any of the following a problem in your neighbourhood?)			Discuss this section – it is hard to define neighbourhood; we cannot do much about many of the issues. Also parking & rubbish/ litter are always the top 2. Main use would be to geographically map the results.
Nei1a	Car parking	Rank top 3	Major, minor, or not a problem	
Nei1b	Rubbish or litter			
Nei1c	Noisy neighbours			
Nei1d	Dog fouling / nuisance			
Nei1f	Disruptive behaviour			
Nei1g	Racial or other harassment			
Nei1i	Vandalism and graffiti			
Nei1k	Drug use or dealing			
Nei1l	Abandoned or burnt out vehicles			
Service Specific: Estate Services				
Est1	How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the overall appearance of your neighbourhood?		Very satisfied, fairly satisfied, neither, fairly dissatisfied or very dissatisfied	

Equality Monitoring

Why do we monitor?

Harrow Council has a legal responsibility to promote and advance equality. To help us to do this, it is important that we have a good understanding of our communities, how our services are being accessed and who is using or would like to use our services. With up-to-date and accurate information we are able to:

- ⌘ Better understand our service users / residents and shape services to meet their specific needs
- ⌘ Identify and address any barriers / issues individuals may experience when accessing our services (including information about our services)
- ⌘ Ensure our policies and services are accessible to everyone who uses them

The information will also enable us to monitor our progress with regards to addressing inequality and allow our employees and service users see how we are performing on equality.

Data Protection – it is your choice whether you provide this information. Your replies will not be used in a way that identifies you. However they will help us to understand how community needs may vary and help us to make informed decisions on how we develop our services and target resources.

1 Age - What is your age group?

Under 16	<input type="text"/>	16 – 24 years	<input type="text"/>
25 – 44 years	<input type="text"/>	45 – 64 years	<input type="text"/>
65 & over	<input type="text"/>		

2 Disability – Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted or is expected to last at least 12 months?

No	<input type="text"/>	Yes, affecting mobility	<input type="text"/>
Yes, affecting hearing	<input type="text"/>	Yes, affecting vision	<input type="text"/>
Yes, a learning disability	<input type="text"/>	Yes, mental ill-health	<input type="text"/>
Yes, another form of disability, please specify	<input type="text"/>		

3 Ethnic origin - What is your ethnic origin?

Asian or Asian British

Afghani	<input type="text"/>	Bangladeshi	<input type="text"/>
Chinese	<input type="text"/>	Indian	<input type="text"/>
Pakistani	<input type="text"/>	Sri Lankan	<input type="text"/>
Any other Asian background – please specify	<input type="text"/>		

Black or Black British

African	<input type="text"/>	Caribbean	<input type="text"/>
Somali	<input type="text"/>		
Any other Black background – please specify	<input type="text"/>		

Mixed background

White and Black African	<input type="checkbox"/>	White and Black Caribbean	<input type="checkbox"/>
White and Asian	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Any other mixed background - please specify	<input type="text"/>		

Other ethnic background

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Scottish	<input type="checkbox"/>	Welsh	<input type="checkbox"/>
Any other White background - please specify	<input type="text"/>		

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Are you in a Civil Partnership?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>

5 Pregnancy or Maternity

Have you been pregnant and / or on maternity leave during the past 2 years?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Islam	<input type="checkbox"/>	No religion / Atheist	<input type="checkbox"/>
Jainism	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other -please specify	<input type="text"/>

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Gay Woman / Lesbian	<input type="checkbox"/>	Heterosexual	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other – Please specify	<input type="text"/>		

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**REPORT FOR: Tenants', Leaseholders
and Residents
Consultative Forum**

Date of Meeting:	26 September 2012
Subject:	INFORMATION REPORT - Housing Complaints handling
Responsible Officer:	Lynne Pennington Divisional Director of Housing
Exempt:	No
Enclosures:	Appendix 1 – Harrow Council Complaints and Compliments Policy

Section 1 – Summary

This report informs TLRCF about some changes for handling complaints relating to council landlord services, introduced by the Localism Act 2011.

From April 2013 the Housing Ombudsman will investigate complaints, rather than the Local Government Ombudsman, once they have exhausted the Council's internal complaints process.

In addition the Act requires complaints to pass through a 'democratic filter'. Harrow Council has a rigorous internal complaints procedure and this satisfies the requirements of the Localism Act.

TLRCF are asked to note the new arrangements and make any comments on proposed future actions.

FOR INFORMATION

Section 2 – Report

New Housing Ombudsman for landlord complaints

- 2.1** At present all housing complaints are investigated under the Council's Complaints procedure. There are three stages to the procedure (see Appendix 1 – summary at Appendix B). If the customer is still dissatisfied following the Council's response at Stage 3 then they can refer the matter to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO), who will investigate and make a judgment as to whether the complaint is upheld or not.
- 2.2** From April 2013, complaints relating to landlord services can be referred to the Housing Ombudsman (HO) after they have been through the Council's complaints procedure. The HO previously only investigated complaints against registered providers (housing associations) so this change means that all complaints by social housing tenants will be considered via the same route.
- 2.3** Other housing complaints, such as complaints about housing needs issues, will continue to be dealt with by the LGO. In a response to the Parliamentary Committee receiving evidence on the new arrangements, we have commented that this may be potentially confusing for customers and complicated, where a complaint crosses landlord and non-landlord issues. In this situation the two ombudsmen would decide who takes the lead on investigation.
- 2.4** The HO is working with all partners and central government to implement the changes, and is expected to publish further information and guidance from October 2012.

Requirement for a local 'democratic filter'

- 2.5** The Localism Act also requires that complaints pass through a 'democratic filter' before the Housing Ombudsman starts an investigation. The 'democratic filter' could take the form of either Members of Parliament, elected councillors or a tenants panel reviewing complaints.
- 2.6** The requirement that complaints pass through a democratic filter does not apply where there are internal procedures in place for dealing with such complaints. This was to restore the tenant's right to directly complain to the Housing Ombudsman. Harrow Council has a corporate complaints (and compliments) policy and procedure (see Appendix 1) under which complaints about Harrow's landlord services are considered. Provided the complaints procedures are first exhausted a complaint can be made directly to the Housing Ombudsman. The complaint must be made within eight weeks of exhausting the complaints procedure.

- 2.7** In commenting on the new arrangements in 2011, former housing minister Grant Shapps said the aim should be for complaints to be resolved locally as far as possible, meaning that only a few complaints should be escalated to the HO. Under the current system, a relatively small number of complaints about Harrow's landlord services are referred to the LGO for consideration and, if necessary, investigation.
- 2.8** In 2011/12, 7 complaints about landlord services were sent to the LGO. Of these, 4 related to repairs (Asset Management) and 3 related to the management of council tenancies (Resident Services).¹ The outcome of these is set out below.

Outcome of landlord services cases sent to LGO in 2011/ 12	
3 cases	Local settlement reached – LGO discontinued the investigation
3 cases	LGO concluded there was insufficient evidence of maladministration
1 case	LGO decided not to use his exceptional powers to investigate
7 cases	TOTAL cases

Comments about the new arrangements

- 2.9** At the present time we have no experience of the Housing Ombudsman, and therefore it is difficult to say what difference the new arrangements will make to the outcome of complaints being referred on, after the Council's procedure has been exhausted, other than to say that the 8 week deadline for referrals to the HO is tighter than current arrangements (where there is no time limit). It is suggested that we should wait until the new arrangements have bedded in, before reporting back to tenants and leaseholders, as necessary.

Other issues relating to complaints

- 2.10** Complaints provide a useful form of feedback from tenants and leaseholders on the service they have received. It is important that any service provider reviews complaints made and learns lessons/ makes adjustments where appropriate. In Housing we do this quarterly at Improvement Board and HFTRA challenge panel meetings.
- 2.11** During 2010/11 the Council convened a group of tenants who had made complaints to form a Tenant Complaints Feedback Panel. This group met periodically and looked at the complaints, the content and style of responses being made, and made comments on where improvements could be made to procedures relating to complaints that had already been resolved/ closed. (It did not decide on the outcome of complaints.) The Complaints Panel ceased when there was a change of personnel in

¹ Context: A total of 190 complaints were received in 2011/12 relating to Asset Management and Resident Services.

the Housing Service, but we intend to reconvene the Panel shortly to look at complaint responses and learn lessons accordingly.

2.12 At present we do not routinely survey people's satisfaction about their experience in making a complaint about housing. As part of the housing satisfaction (STAR) survey, which is reported elsewhere on this agenda, there are a set of questions relating to complaints handling, which might be a useful source of feedback. We could issue a short questionnaire to customers after their complaint has been resolved.

2.13 Research into best practice by other social landlords (councils and housing associations) suggests that some only have a two stage complaints process and some adopt a stage zero (whereby they aim to resolve the complaint with an early phone call/ visit to the complainant rather than making a formal written response). This is something that we may wish to consider at a later date. Any departure from the corporate complaints policy would have to be a decision taken by Cabinet.

2.14 TLRCF are invited to comment on any aspect of the new or existing arrangements.

Section 3 - Financial Implications

3.1 There are no budget implications arising from this report.

Section 4 - Corporate Priorities

4.1 The proposals in this report incorporate the corporate priority: United and involved communities.

Name: Roger Hampson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer
Date: 11 September 2012		

Section 5 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact:

Jane Fernley
Housing Partnerships & Strategy Manager
Tel 020 8424 1283
Jane.fernley@harrow.gov.uk

Background Papers: Housing complaints file



Complaints and Compliments Policy and Procedure

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Introduction

Harrow council welcomes feedback about its services and recognises the right of all its customers to complain, compliment or make a suggestion about any council service or activity. Such feedback provides us with valuable information on our performance and assists in our continuing bid to be recognised as one of London's top performing councils.

This policy details the councils overarching policy on dealing with complaints and compliments received from our customers. The policy is supported by good practice guidance for staff together with detailed customer information and publicity materials.

Aim and Objectives

To provide an accessible means to all our customers who wish to express either satisfaction or dissatisfaction with a service they have received.

To provide a fair, consistent and structured process for resolving complaints in a courteous and efficient manner.

To enable customers to complain with the assistance of a representative or advocate if required.

To record all complaints and compliments to help us analyse customer feedback and inform future service planning and delivery.

To obtain records of complaints and compliments made so that regular reviews can be produced for internal performance monitoring and public accountability.

Ensuring equal access for all

We are committed to equal opportunities and our aim is to make our complaints and compliments policy easy to use and accessible to all of our customers. It will be widely publicised and available in a variety of formats. We will ensure that customer information is available upon request in Braille, large print, community languages, or audiotape.

Who can make a complaint or compliment?

Anyone dissatisfied or satisfied with the service, actions or lack of action from Harrow Council – or someone acting on their behalf and with their permission – can use this procedure.

When can a complaint or compliment be made?

Compliments can be made at any time, however with complaints it is far easier to find out what happened and to put things right if they are received at the time. As time passes it becomes more difficult to investigate events fairly and fully – people’s memories fade, staff who were involved may have left the council, or records may no longer be available.

For these reasons, the council will normally only accept complaints made within **twelve months** of the incident or circumstances that lead to the complaint. However, if there are exceptional circumstances (illness, changes in personal circumstances, etc) provided by the complainant for the delay in submitting the complaint, the relevant Divisional Director and Corporate Complaints Officer may make a discretionary decision to consider the complaint providing the circumstances are evidenced.

If the council receives a complaint and decides not to accept it on the above grounds the customer should be told why.

How to make a complaint or compliment

Anyone who wishes to make a complaint or compliment may do so either:

- in person
- by telephone
- in writing (by letter, fax, email, using the councils complaint form which is also available online)

In normal circumstances a complaint or compliment should be made to the actual service which is subject of the complaint or compliment.

Any member of staff will be able to accept a complaint or compliment.

Support and advocacy

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 assist people in finding such support.

The council will, where appropriate, accept complaints from advocates or third parties, provided that the person affected has given their written consent. In some cases, for example children or vulnerable people, if it seems that the person may be unable to give their consent, the Corporate Complaints Officer will make a judgement as to whether it is appropriate to accept the complaint from an unconfirmed representative.

Anonymous complaints

In normal circumstances the council is unlikely to be able to effectively deal with an anonymous complaint or compliment under the corporate complaints and compliments policy, as the council needs to correspond with and in some cases meet with the complainant in order to address their concerns. Therefore a judgement will need to be made on a case-by-case basis whether to look into the substance of a complaint made anonymously.

Unreasonable and unreasonably persistent complainants

The council is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially and to providing a high quality service to those who make them. As part of this service there is not normally a limit on the contact complainants have with the council. However, there may be complainants who, because of the frequency of their contact with the council, hinder its consideration of their and other people's complaints. Such complainants may be referred to as "unreasonable and unreasonably persistent complainants". The complaints may become persistent, vexatious or repetitive. The complainant may, despite having had an original complaint investigated and been notified of the outcome, not accept that the matter is concluded. The complainant will have exhausted the internal complaints procedure. Exceptionally therefore it may be necessary to take action to limit or terminate their contact with the council.

In consultation with the Director of Legal & Governance service, the Director of Customer Services and the Corporate Complaints Officer shall be authorised to identify a complainant as "unreasonable or unreasonably persistent" under the terms of this policy.

Before applying this policy the Director of Customer Services and Corporate Complaints Officer shall:

- Ensure that the complainant has exhausted the internal complaints procedure
- Ensure that the complainant has been reminded of his/her right to refer the complaint to another body e.g.
 - The Local Government Ombudsman
 - The Standards Board for England
 - The Information Commissioner
 - The Council's External Auditor
 - The Secretary of State (if the complainant considers the council has failed to meet its statutory duty).
- Ensure that the complainant has been reminded of his/her right to obtain independent professional advice.

The Director of Customer Services and the Corporate Complaints Officer shall determine any restrictions which shall be imposed in respect of a complainant deemed to be "unreasonable or unreasonably persistent". Any restrictions imposed will be appropriate and will normally follow a prior warning to the complainant. The options most likely to be considered are:

- Requesting contact in a particular form (for example, letters only)
- Requiring contact to take place with a named officer
- Restricting telephone calls to specified days and times
- Terminating further communication

In all cases where it is decided to treat someone as an unreasonable or unreasonably persistent complainant, the council will write to tell the complainant why his or her behaviour falls into that category and what action is being taken as above.

Complaints involving more than one service

In the event that a complaint involves more than one service, a lead department will be nominated based upon the main focus of content of the complaint to co-ordinate a single response. This decision should be made by the Corporate Complaints Officer in conjunction with the relevant Divisional Director.

Complaints about our contractors

We require any organisation that provides services on our behalf to comply with the policy. This means we require our contractors to record and respond to customer feedback, provide us with information when requested and assist us with complaint investigations as appropriate.

Complaints about Councillors

Complaints about the conduct of Councillors are outside the scope of this procedure and are dealt with by the Standards Committee of the Council.

Anyone can complain about a Councillor breaching any part of the Code of Conduct for Councillors. A copy of the Standards Committee's guidance on how to make a complaint and complaint form are available from the main reception one stop shop and on the Council's website.

Councillor, GLA Member and Member of Parliament (MP) Enquiries

Members of the Council, the GLA Member for Brent and Harrow and Members of Parliament make enquiries of the council about a range of matters raised with them by constituents. The general purpose of these enquiries is to obtain information in order to respond to a constituent.

If the constituent wishes to make a complaint about the delivery of a service, the Member (i.e. Councillor or GLA) or MP can refer the matter to be dealt with under this policy. This will avoid the Member or MP acting as an intermediary and enables them to represent their constituent if they feel this is appropriate. If the matter is not within the remit of this policy and there is a statutory or other appeal process available, the Member or MP will be advised promptly to ensure that the constituent does not miss the opportunity of exercising a statutory right by using an inappropriate complaint channel.

The Council aims to respond to Members' and MPs' enquiries within **10 working days** of receipt. Where the matter is urgent, the response time will be reduced as appropriate.

Complaints about staff

If a complaint regarding staff actions or behaviour is found to be valid, then the issue will be referred to the appropriate Human Resource Procedure such as the disciplinary procedure and investigated and resolved in accordance with those requirements.

What is a compliment or suggestion?

This policy defines a 'compliment' as:

"A customer giving us feedback about how well we delivered a service or how helpful an employee has been".

We will log details locally within service areas and thank the customer for taking an interest in our services and for taking the time to let us know we are providing a good service.

The Divisional Director or appropriate manager will acknowledge excellent service with individual employees.

This policy defines a 'suggestion' as:

"A customer giving us feedback on how we can improve any council service".

We will log details of the suggestion locally and the relevant service manager will consider the suggestion and send a response to the customer within **10 working days**. This response will include a thank you to the customer for taking the time out to be involved and help us to improve council services and provide an explanation on how we will implement their suggestion or explain why we are unable to.

The Corporate Complaints Officer will collate and monitor compliments and suggestions and will ensure that this information is regularly published on the council's intranet site.

What is a complaint?

This policy defines a 'complaint' as:

“An expression of dissatisfaction by one or more members of the public about the council’s action or lack of action or about the standard of a service”.

This applies to whether the action was taken or the service provided by the council itself or a person or body acting on behalf of the council.

There can be confusion between what constitutes a complaint and what represents a request for a service. For the purpose of this policy a request for a service is defined as reporting a fault or problem or requesting information. The request only becomes a complaint if the customer chooses to contact the council again to point out that the service has not been delivered and would therefore, like it treated as a complaint.

Examples of service requests:

- Libraries: “You haven’t got the book I want”. This is not a complaint, this is a service request for the book to be procured for use by the customer.
- Refuse: “my bin has been missed today”. A service request can resolve the problem, but the customer should be asked if they want to make a complaint based on the councils failure to deliver a service.

With this in mind, where a customer has submitted a complaint which the council deems to be a request for service, it is important that this is clarified to the customer from the outset.

Scope of policy

Complaints will generally include allegations about:

- Failure to provide a service at the level or standard laid down by council policy or published service standards
- Unhelpful or insensitive attitude of an employee or agent of the council
- Neglect or delay in answering a query or responding to a request for a service
- Failure to follow the council’s agreed policies and/or procedures
- Failure to take account of relevant matters in coming to a decision

The following types of complaint are *excluded* from this policy:

- Complaints which amount to a disagreement with the council, about its decisions rather than the way in which the decision has been made
- A planning or development control matter where a right of objection exists, unless the complaint is about the way the matter has been dealt with
- A council decision using regulatory powers, for example licences or certain environmental functions, or when the decision is governed by other regulations such as benefit assessments, rent reviews and lease renewals or Council Tax recovery unless the complaint is about how the matter has been dealt with
- A complaint that is, or could reasonably be expected to be the subject of legal proceedings

This complaints and compliments policy will not cover:

- Requests for a service
- An explanation of council policy
- Matters for which there is an existing right of appeal, with a separate procedure, such as an appeal within the council or to an independent tribunal, or other legal remedy
- Complaints about the alleged breaches of council's Code of Conduct for Members

This policy should be read in conjunction with the council's other relevant policies, including (but not exclusively) those relating to Harassment and Racist Incident Reporting and Customer Service Standards.

The complaints process

Stage 1

Where possible, complaints will be dealt with quickly and informally.

- A record of the complaint will be made on the council's complaints system (SAP/CRM) and acknowledged within **3 working days**. The acknowledgement will detail the allocated reference number for the complaint, a brief summary of the complaint as the council understands it, the date the complainant should expect a full response and contact details of the sender.
- In the event that a full response can be made within the 3 working days, an acknowledgement need not be sent.
- The complaint will be fully responded to within **10 working days**. It will advise the complainant of their right to move to Stage 2 if they are not satisfied with the outcome of the service's initial investigations.
- The time period of 10 days to respond fully maybe extended where additional information is required from the complainant to clarify the issues.
- The complainant will be advised that they have 28 days from the date of the full response letter in which to request a further review of their complaint.

If the complaint cannot be resolved within the timescale for this stage, the complainant will be advised that further enquiries will be carried out and a response made as soon as possible and within a maximum of 20 working days of receipt of the complaint. If the complaint cannot be resolved within 20 working days, the complainant will be informed of the reasons in writing and the complainant will be offered the opportunity to progress to Stage 2.

Stage 2

The purpose of Stage 2 is to formally investigate the concern or complaint, consider the findings and make a decision about the outcome. Where appropriate some complaints may be referred directly to stage 2:

- When the person complaining is not satisfied with our efforts to resolve the complaint at Stage 1
- When the complainant wishes – and the appropriate Head of Service/Divisional Director agrees – to start proceedings at the formal investigation stage
- When a Head of Service/Divisional Director judges the complaint sufficiently serious to warrant immediate investigation at Stage 2.

A request for a Stage 2 investigation should be made in writing to the Corporate Complaints Officer. On receipt the Corporate Complaints Officer will:

- Acknowledge the complaint within **3 working days**. The acknowledgement will detail the allocated reference number for the complaint, a brief summary of the complaint as the council understands it, the date the complainant should expect a full response, contact details of the sender and provide information explaining the formal complaints procedure.
- Forward the complaint to the investigating officer (an appropriate service manager responsible for the service being complained about and selected in liaison with the appropriate Head of Service/Divisional Director) for investigation.
- Inform the complainant of the name and contact details of the investigating officer.

A written reply will be provided to the complainant as soon as possible within **20 working days** of receipt of the complaint as a Stage 2 complaint. The response will fully address the issues raised (and any proposed remedy) or explain the reasons for any delay.

If a full response is not possible within the 20 working day deadline, the complainant should be sent a progress report within this timescale informing them of the delay, the reasons for this and an anticipated response date.

The complainant will be advised that if they are still not satisfied with the response following the formal investigation, they can request (within 28 days of the response being sent to them) a final review of their complaint at Stage 3.

Stage 3

If the complainant continues to be dissatisfied following Stage 2, the complaint can be reviewed by the appropriate Corporate Director for the final time.

Exceptionally, it may be decided that there is nothing more that can be said or done after the Stage 2 response and the relevant Corporate Director may then decline to look at the matter.

Should the relevant Corporate Director decide to pursue with the review of the complaint, the request will be:

- Acknowledged within **3 working days** and will give the name of the Corporate Complaints Officer who will be assisting in the review.
- The relevant Corporate Director, as a result of his/her review, will provide a full written reply within **20 working days** of receipt of the request for a review at Stage 3.

Stage 4

If the customer is still not satisfied after progressing through all three stages of this process, the customer has the right to complain to the Local Government Ombudsman if they feel that the council has not resolved their complaint satisfactorily.

A copy of the Ombudsman's complaint leaflet, which includes a complaint form, is available from main reception at the Civic Centre.

Correspondence from the Ombudsman is addressed to the Chief Executive and the Corporate Complaints Officer acts as the link officer for these complaints.

Although the corporate complaints policy covers the whole organisation, the law says that certain types of complaints have to be handled differently from others. For this reason, the corporate complaints and compliments policy is made up of the following separate procedures:

- Complaints and Compliments Procedure
- Adults & Children's Social Care Complaints Procedure

When complaints are received, they may trigger other Council procedures, for instance the Racial Incident Reporting Procedure.

Remedies

Where the complaint is upheld or upheld in part, the remedy needs to be appropriate to the complaint. The Local Government Ombudsman offers the general principle for guidance that "as far as possible the complainant should be put in the position he or she would have been in if things had not gone wrong".

Remedies may include:

- An apology
- An explanation:
 - as to what went wrong
 - of policy/procedures
 - of the way in which the council has handled the matter
- Remedial action - such as providing the service desired
- A commitment to review procedures to avoid the same thing happening again
- Financial compensation and clear instructions about anything the complainant needs to do

The complaints investigator, in consultation with their Head of Service/Corporate Director, who have upheld a complaint, shall be responsible for determining the appropriate remedy. If the complainant has suffered loss or suffering, financial compensation may be appropriate. Where they feel that financial compensation is appropriate they should refer to the Corporate Complaints Officer and the Director of Customer Services.

Rights, Roles and Responsibilities

Our customers have the right:

- To have a friend or other representative help them with their complaint
- To confidentiality (if an investigation cannot proceed without the complainant being identified, the complainant will be given the option whether or not to continue)
- To be kept informed of the progress of their complaints
- To receive an apology if a complaint is upheld
- To be informed of any changes to Council policy or procedures arising from a complaint

This complaints and compliments policy does not affect the right of an individual or organisation to approach a local councillor or Member of Parliament for advice or assistance. If this results in a complaint being made by or on behalf of an individual, it will be dealt with using this procedure.

Our staff has the right:

- To be treated with respect and courtesy at all times by both customers and managers
- To have the support of a friend, Trade Union or other representative if they are the subject of a complaint
- To be made aware of and have the support of, the council's Violence at Work policy and procedure

The responsibilities for the resolution of complaints are set out for officers under the appropriate stage headings. At the informal stage the receiving officer should attempt to resolve the complaint, or if this is not possible, refer the matter to an appropriate officer to action.

Corporate Complaints Officer

- Co-ordinate complaints across the council
- Ensure compliance to the process and standards
- Provide quality assurance
- To be the central co-ordinator for all Stage 2 complaints in consultation with the relevant Divisional Director for that complaint (excluding Adults & Children's services)
- Liaise with the Legal Department on Ombudsman complaints
- Coordinate corporate reports for Corporate Strategic Board performance mornings, and Overview and Scrutiny.
- Ensure there is learning from the way complaints are managed across the council.

Department Complaints Co-ordinator

- Acknowledge receipt of the complaint (Stage 1) and informing the complainant that an investigation will be carried out
- Ensure details of all complaints received by the Service are recorded on the complaints system
- Ensure the progress of complaints is monitored and responses are sent within timescale

- Update the complaints system when an investigation is complete
- Provide quarterly reports to relevant improvement boards

Investigating Officer (Service Manager)

- Provide the complainant with information about the complaints process
- Ensure that the complaint is investigated objectively
- Keep the complainant informed of progress of the investigation
- Provide the final response to the complainant within the appropriate timescale for a Stage 2 complaint
- Inform the Corporate Complaints Officer when the complaint is closed and providing a copy of the final response.

Head of Service/Divisional Director

- Adherence to the council's complaints and compliments policy and guidelines by staff and providing advice where necessary
- Oversee the handling of complaints by their staff at Stage 2
- Ensure that, where possible, frontline staff within their service are supported to resolve complaints
- On receipt of compliments ensure that appropriate staff receive a copy of the correspondence

Corporate Directors

- Adherence to the council's corporate complaints and compliments policy guidelines by their department
- Consider complaints monitoring information in the planning and improvement of services
- Implementation of specific procedures, if actions by complainants are deemed to be unacceptable.

Performance and monitoring of complaints

The council is committed to continually improving the services we deliver to our customers. Information gained from complaints can be a valuable tool in identifying the needs of our customers and developing our services to meet those needs.

The Corporate Complaints Officer has the overall responsibility for monitoring and reporting performance in complaints handling and resolution by collating such statistical information and reporting it to the council's performance and finance scrutiny committee, corporate improvement boards and the Chief Executive and Corporate Directors on a quarterly basis.

The complaints system contains a reporting facility that enables data to be analysed to identify any trends in specific service or geographical areas or complaint subject.

Equalities monitoring

The council is committed to equal opportunities and tackling all forms of discrimination. To assist the council identify areas where there may be discrimination in service provision. We will undertake periodic equality monitoring to assess whether there are any equalities issues underpinning the issues raised by complainants.

Review and Evaluation

In order to ensure we continue to provide the best possible complaints handling service for our customers, this policy will be subject to ongoing evaluation and annual review by the Director for Customer Services and Corporate Complaints Officer.

Retention of records

All records relating to complaints and Ombudsman complaints will be kept for a period of 7 years.

Appendix A

Useful contacts for further information

Citizen's Advice Bureau
Civic Centre
Civic 6 Building
Station Road
Harrow
HA1 2XH
0844 826 9711

Harrow Council for Racial Equality
Exchequer Building
Civic Centre
Station Road
Harrow
HA1 2UT
020 8427 6504
www.hcre.org.uk

Harrow Association of Voluntary Services
The Lodge
64 Pinner Road
Harrow
HA1 4HZ
020 8863 6707
www.harrowcvs.org.uk

Appendix B

Summary of complaints process

	Acknowledgement	Full response	Escalation	Quality Assurance
Stage 1 – Informal	Will endeavour to deal with the complaint on the spot or within 3 days. 3 working days Department Complaints Co-ordinator	10 working days Appointed service officer / manager (dependant on circumstances of the complaint)	Within 28 days to Corporate Complaints Officer	Department Complaints Co-ordinator
Stage 2 – Formal investigation	3 working days Corporate Complaints Officer	20 working days Appointed investigating officer (Service Manager)	Within 28 days to relevant Corporate Director	Corporate Complaints Officer / Head of Service/ Divisional Director
Stage 3 – Review	3 working days Corporate Complaints Officer	20 working days Relevant Corporate Director	Anytime after receipt of full response Local Government Ombudsman	Corporate Complaints Officer / Corporate Director