

PROCEDURE FOR RAISING COMPLAINTS AND ENQUIRIES WITH THE TMO ON BEHALF OF CONSTITUENTS

Draft for consideration by the Labour Group on 19 April 2017

The TMO have introduced a new CRM system for logging all issues raised with them from TMO residents, residents' associations and councillors acting on behalf of or with residents and their associations. This is to enable them to keep accurate records for reporting to the TMO Operations Committee and the TMO Board.

The procedure that the TMO wish us to adopt in future is set out below:

1. Where a councillor forwards an issue from a resident, this is always dealt with as a complaint. This is because it starts the complaints process and enables all stages of the policy to be available to the complainant.
2. When a councillor submits an enquiry regarding our services then this will be dealt with as a Councillor Enquiry and the response sent direct to that councillor.
3. In terms of reporting, the TMO are able to report on the complaints raised by all third parties. In order to copy third parties into complaint responses, the TMO always require a signed consent form. If the TMO do not have the signed consent form, they will ask this from the resident directly and do not expect that the councillor would need to contact the resident to provide this. This does not delay complaint handling or responses.

The initial alternative proposal that I submitted to the TMO is as follows:

As elected councillors, we have a duty to advocate on behalf of our constituents when requested by them to do so.

1. Where we have the residents' e-mail address (and most issues are raised with us now via e-mail), we copy them into the initial enquiry/complaint that we submit on their behalf. The TMO can then e-mail them directly to seek confirmation that we are authorised to submit the enquiry on their behalf.
2. When we receive an enquiry by telephone or post, we submit the enquiry on behalf of the residents. The TMO then writes to them enclosing an authorisation letter and a reply paid envelope so that they can sign and return it directly to the TMO. (This would not necessarily be very efficient in instances where, for example, residents may have literacy problems, where their first language is not English, where they have a disability or a mental health problem, etc.)
3. Where residents raise a problem with us at our surgeries and they do not have an e-mail address, we will ask them to sign the TMO authorisation letter

(attached).

4. As is standard Council practice, we will also copy the complaint to the CEO of the TMO (and/or the Council's Director of Housing).

Issues that need further consideration:

1. Although the TMO expect us to raise every matter as a complaint, on receipt of the councillor complaint, they will then decide whether it is in fact a complaint or an enquiry and they do not advise us where they have changed a complaint to an enquiry. This came to light when they conducted the investigation into the TMO's internal handling of the Grenfell Tower refurbishment. I have records of having submitted 17 complaints on behalf of residents, but the figure reported in the investigation was far lower than that. I was advised that this was because the TMO had re-defined a number of my complaints as "enquiries" (without informing me or the resident involved).
2. The complaints procedure has a specified time for responses (see attached TMO Complaints Procedure). While this is acceptable for most replies, some matters require urgent attention. We acknowledge that the TMO does identify some complaints/enquiries as urgent and deals with them immediately. However, this means that the definition of "urgent" rests with the TMO and not necessarily the councillor or the resident. We therefore suggest that when the councillor and/or resident determines that a complaint or enquiry requires urgent attention and/or an urgent response, we will highlight that in the initial enquiry.
3. Some requests for help from our constituents may require even swifter action. One example is when a constituent had water pouring through her kitchen ceiling on Christmas Eve and had been told that the TMO could not address the problem until the office re-opened in January! This was dealt with through a series of telephone calls and a site visit. However, the procedure proposed by the TMO above does not provide any mechanism for complaints of this nature and it needs to do so.
4. I know that some Residents' Associations have been told that they must also follow this procedure, but I am not sure that all have and I am not sure that all RA representatives have been advised of the procedure, the reasons for it and the means whereby they can deal with any urgent enquiries. I think we need a response from the TMO on this point – including an assurance that all RAs are up to speed, that the TMO observes it strictly with all RAs and does not give favoured status to some.

We agreed to discuss and finalise this at our 9 April meeting and then respond to the TMO accordingly.

JB/10 April 2017