

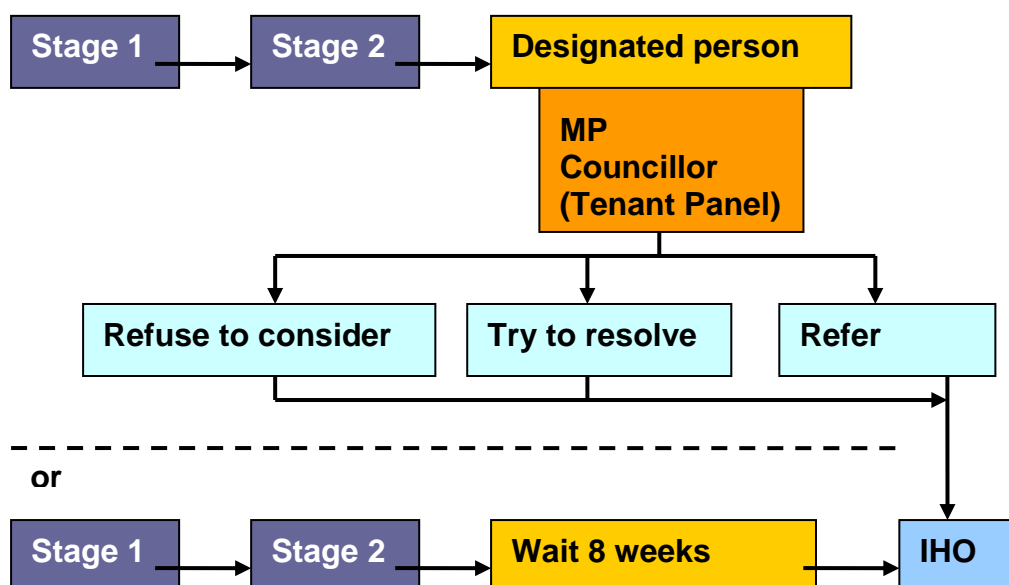
04 July 2013

Independent Housing Ombudsman – Briefing for Leaders Group

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 From 01 April 2013 the Localism Act introduced new procedures for dealing with complaints to the ombudsman that relate to the landlord functions of the Local Authority.
- 1.2 The purpose of this paper is to give to the leaders group an overview of:
 - a. the new arrangements for referring complaints to the Independent Housing Ombudsman
 - b. the role members will play in the process
 - c. options for available for sharing this information with members

2.0 Overview of the Housing Ombudsman procedure



- 2.1 The Localism Act has not required the council to make changes to the corporate complaint process. A person will continue to have their complaint investigated and replied to at Stages 1 and 2 of the council's procedure.
- 2.2 Under the new arrangements a person wishing to take their complaint to the Independent Housing Ombudsman (IHO) has two options.

- a. The may refer their complaint through a Designated Person, or
- b. The can wait eight weeks from the conclusion of the corporate complaint process and then refer the complaint to the IHO.

2.3 A Designated Person is:

- A member of the House of Commons,
- A member of the local housing authority for the district in which the property concerned is located
- A designated tenant panel for a social landlord

2.3.1 Some local authorities have chosen to identify one or more councillors to act in the role of designated person.

3.0 The role members will play

3.1 The general role of a Designated Person is to assist in resolving tenant complaints and to help the landlord gather learning from complaints and help improve services.

- i. DP can try to assist in resolving the complaint, if that does not work they can refer the complaint to the IHO in writing.
- ii. DP can decide to immediately refer the complaint to the IHO in writing.
- iii. DP may decide they are unable to assist with the complaint which will allow the tenant to contact the IHO in writing.

4.0 Options for advising members on their role

4.1 A number of possible options exist for informing members of this process. The Leaders Group are asked to decide what approach(es) they think would be most effective.

- a. Briefing paper for all local councillors
- b. Training session for all local councillors
- c. Paper to Full Council

5.0 Background material

5.1 Letter from DCLG to Local Authority Leaders.
<http://nationaltenants.files.wordpress.com/2012/07/dclg-letter-to-la-leaders.pdf>

5.2 Key points for Councillors and MPs.
<http://nationaltenants.files.wordpress.com/2012/07/resolving-complaints-locally-flyer-for-councillors-mps.pdf>

- 5.3 A response to questions about the role functions and operations of designated persons prepared by national stakeholder groups.
<http://nationaltenants.files.wordpress.com/2012/07/designated-person-faqs-1.pdf>