

Transparency, Influence and Accountability Policy

Policy Owner	Head of Housing
Version	V1
Frequency of Review	At least every 3 years
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EQI Assessment Required / Completed	N/A
Data Impact Assessment Required / Completed	N/A
Reviewed By	Communities Manager
Approved By	Deputy Chief Executive 30.06.25

1. Policy Statement

- 1.1. This policy outlines how Cottsway Housing Association ensures transparency, enables customer influence, and upholds accountability in line with the **Transparency, Influence and Accountability Consumer Standard**. We are committed to placing customers at the heart of decision-making and service delivery, ensuring they have access to clear information and meaningful opportunities to shape their homes and communities.

2. Definitions

- **Transparency:** Openness in communication and decision-making, including access to information.
- **Influence:** The ability of customers and stakeholders to contribute meaningfully to decisions that affect them.
- **Accountability:** The obligation to explain and justify decisions and actions to stakeholders.
- **Customer:** Anyone living in a Cottsway owned home, including tenants, leaseholders and shared owners.

3. Policy Scope and Objectives

- 3.1. This policy applies to all staff, board members, contractors, and partners. It aims to:
- Promote trust and confidence in our operations.
 - Ensure that customers and stakeholders can influence decisions that affect them.
 - Demonstrate clear lines of accountability for decisions and actions taken by the organisation.

3.2. We are committed to the following principles:

- **Transparency:** We provide timely, accessible, and clear information about our services, performance, decisions, and governance.
- **Influence:** We give customers genuine and diverse opportunities to influence decisions at both strategic and operational levels.
- **Accountability:** We demonstrate how customer views are considered and acted upon, and how we are accountable for our performance and service delivery.

4. Regulatory and Legal Considerations

4.1. This policy supports compliance with:

- The Regulator of Social Housing's Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard.
- The Consumer Standards Code of Practice.
- The Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code.
- The Freedom of Information Act 2000 (where applicable).
- The Equality Act 2010.
- Data protection legislation including the UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018.

5. Stakeholder consultation

5.1. The draft policy has been reviewed by the Scrutiny Group and posted on our closed Facebook Group for comment. Feedback was positive and no substantial changes recommended.

6. Policy Details

6.1 Transparency Measures

We will:

- Publish annual reports on our performance against service standards and regulatory requirements.
- Maintain an accessible website with up-to-date information on services, policies, board decisions, complaints, and customer engagement.
- Share financial information in a customer-friendly format, including executive pay and service charges.
- Ensure all information is available in formats that meet customers' accessibility needs.
- Provide customers with information on how decisions are made and how they can get involved.

6.2. **Customer Influence**

We will:

- Offer a variety of engagement opportunities (surveys, scrutiny group, digital platforms, local events & consultations) tailored to different needs and preferences.
- Involve customers in the design and scrutiny of services, including procurement and policy development.
- Provide training and support to enable customers to participate confidently and effectively.
- Support scrutiny functions that review services and hold the organisation to account.

6.3. **Accountability Mechanisms**

We will:

- Demonstrate how customer feedback influences policies, services, and priorities.
- Publish responses to customer scrutiny reports, complaints trends, and lessons learned.
- Ensure our Board receives regular reports on customer feedback, complaints, and engagement outcomes.
- Ensure Board members are visible and accessible and have opportunities to engage directly with customers.
- Review and act on outcomes from surveys, tenant perception measures (TPMs), and complaints.

6.4. **Complaints and Feedback**

We will:

- Operate a fair, accessible, and timely complaints procedure that meets the statutory Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code.
- Use complaints as a key source of learning to improve services.
- Maintain clear feedback and complaints mechanisms, with regular reporting on trends and outcomes.
- Report on complaint volumes, outcomes, and trends regularly and transparently.
- Promote the complaints process widely and ensure staff and residents understand it.

6.5. **Governance and Oversight**

- The Board has ultimate responsibility for compliance with the Consumer Standards.

- The Corporate Leadership Team oversees delivery and ensures customer feedback is embedded in service design and decision-making
- We will review this policy at least every three years or following significant regulatory or organisational changes.

7. Monitoring and Reporting

7.1. We will:

- Track performance against this policy through customer satisfaction including:
 - TP06 Satisfaction that Cottsway listens to your views and acts upon them.
 - TP07 Satisfaction that Cottsway keeps you informed about things that matter to you.
 - TP08 Agreement that Cottsway treats me fairly and with respect.
 - TP09 Satisfaction with Cottsway's approach to complaints handling.
- Benchmark against other housing providers and good practice.
- Share performance with customers and stakeholders through our annual report and other channels.

8. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

8.1. We will treat all customers with fairness and respect and will act within the scope of our equality and diversity framework when applying this policy. We recognise that we have an ethical and a legal duty to advance equality of opportunity and prevent discrimination on the grounds of age, sex and sexual orientation, disability, race, religion or belief, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership.

8.2. We also:

- Ensure our larger customer satisfaction surveys achieve a balanced response from the various sections of our customer demographic, so all voices are heard. Our independent research provider ensures this for all perception surveys.
- Monitor levels of satisfaction among the key equality strands (age, disability, ethnicity, gender and sexuality) to ensure no demographic group is receiving a poorer quality service
- Monitor the profile of our customers and the local population against staff and board members to ensure that we reflect the communities we serve as much as possible.

9. Review

9.1. We will review this policy at least every three years or following significant regulatory or organisational changes.

10. **Associated Documents Policies and Procedures**

- Cottsway’s Corporate Plan 2023-2028.
- Customer Engagement Plan 2025-2028.
- Complaints Policy and Procedure.
- Data Protection Policy and Procedure.
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.
- National Housing Federations Together with Tenants Charter.

List of changes

Date	Change