OTTERY FEOFFEE CHARITY

Registered Charity Number 202095

RESIDENTS' HANDBOOK

Revised November 2026

THE ALMSHOUSE CHARITY OF OTTERY FEOFFEE CHARITY

RESIDENTS HANDBOOK

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Foreword

The Ottery Feoffee Charity would like to extend a very warm welcome to you as a new resident. We hope that you will settle in quickly and be very happy here. This handbook sets out useful information about the charity and its general administration and management. It also explains your responsibilities as a resident. Please do not hesitate to speak to the clerk if you need any further information on any matters.

Please note that the conditions stated in this handbook form part of your contract with the charity and supplement the rules and regulations given in your Letter of Appointment which you signed when you accepted your appointment. It may be necessary to amend these rules and regulations from time to time, but any changes will be discussed with residents beforehand when you will be given the opportunity to express any views or concerns.

The almshouse is your home, and every effort will be made to help you remain independent, free to choose your own lifestyle, and able to benefit from the quiet enjoyment and dignity that the almshouses provide. I am sure you will appreciate the importance of everyone in the community respecting the wishes of others, allowing them their privacy if that is what they wish and ensuring rumours and gossip are not allowed to develop.

The trustees have tried to minimise these rules and regulations which have been designed for the benefit of all residents and to ensure the efficient management of the charity.

Useful contact information

Clerk to the Trustees
Tina Collins
67 Wycombe Lane, Wooburn Green, Bucks. HP10 0HD
Mob: 07865 098 253
Email: clerk.feoffee.osm@gmail.com

D.S.S.
Clarendon House, Western Way, Exeter, EX1 2DA
Tel: 01392 474 700

Housing Benefit Office
East Devon District Council, Blackdown House, Border Road, Heathpark Industrial Estate
Honiton, EX14 1EJ
01395 571770

Age Concern
14 Lace Walk, High Street, Honiton, EX14 1LR
Tel: 01395 571 770

Citizens Advice Bureau
Library& Information Centre, 48 - 50 New Street, Honiton, EX14 1BS
Tel: 01404 44213

Ottery Help Scheme - Emily Lezzeri, Chief Officer
11 Silver Street, Ottery St Mary, EX11
Tel: 01404 813 041

History of the Charity and its Management

History

Meaning of "Feoffee"

The word "Feoffee" is of ancient origin being derived from Anglo-French. A Feoffee was a person entrusted to hold land and apply the rents and profits for the relief of poverty in a particular locality.

Early History

The earliest record of this charity is a Deed dated 18th January 1440, whereby John Lawrence gave four houses and certain lands in the parish of Ottery St. Mary to be held by twelve Trustees upon trust for the benefit of needy people.

On the 17th of March 1590, Henry Beaumont vested land near Ilminster, Somerset, in the Feoffees. This has since been sold and the proceeds applied towards the costs of building new flats for the elderly and disabled.

Flats

Early in the reign of Elizabeth I, six almshouses were built in Sandhill Street by Robert Hone, whose daughter Joan was the mother of Sir Thomas Bodley, the founder of the famous Bodleian Library at Oxford.

About 1562, William Sherman of Knightstone, Ottery St. Mary, who was a very wealthy merchant, founded almshouses in Yonder Street. This property being in a very dilapidated state in 1837, was rebuilt by the Feoffees at a cost of £410!

Today there are 26 flats, which provide accommodation for 27 people.

Sherman House, Yonder Street consists of 12 flats, modernised in 1972
Yonder Corner, Chapel Lane being 6 ground floor flats, built in 1970
Robert Hone House, Sandhill Street being 4 flats built in 1974
Feoffee Rise, Brook Street, purpose built in 2026 block of 4 one-bedroom flats.

Trustees

The Charity is administered by a maximum of twelve volunteer trustees, including two representatives nominated by the Town Council.

The charity is run in accordance with schemes prepared by the Charity Commission. A comprehensive scheme was sealed on 22nd February 1980 and subsequent schemes made minor alterations to it.

Day to day administration is carried out by the clerk.

The Almshouses

The charity manages unfurnished dwellings which are often designed with the needs of older people in mind.

The principle behind everything that the charity does is that residents should enjoy independence and the freedom to come and go as they please while living in comfortable and secure accommodation. Residents should feel confident in the knowledge that support will always be available whether from the charity itself or from outside agencies, should the need arise. Above all, the charity respects the residents' privacy.

Residents may expect to continue in occupation for as long as they need the accommodation provided, they continue to qualify as a beneficiary, are able to look after themselves, and their appointment as a beneficiary is not set aside. If a resident's health deteriorates, they must be willing to accept advice and guidance, either from their own doctor or a medical consultant appointed by the clerk/trustees. The clerk/trustees will also consult next of kin, Social Services, and other agencies if necessary.

Policies

All the OFC policies can be downloaded from our website www.ottery-feoffee.org or can be requested from the Clerk.
Residents are expected to familiarise themselves and with policies and adhere to them.

Health and Safety

Electricity Meters
Neither meters nor their locks and fittings may be altered without first asking the trustees' permission. If the supply is disconnected for any reason, please tell the clerk at once.

Emergency Call System
We ask that all residents read our Independent Living policy.

We no longer have an emergency call system on-site and encourage all residents to make their own arrangements for a call system if required.

There may be some parts of the old emergency call system in the properties, but these should not be relied upon as the system was decommissioned in May 2024.

Emergency Contact Details
If you become ill or are in difficulties, please contact your friends or family to assist you in the first instance.

Please provide the trustees with the written authority to contact your doctor and next of kin directly in the event of an emergency by signing the "GP Authorisation Form" and "Resident Welfare Form" which may be obtained from the charity.

It is important that you let the clerk have details (names, addresses, and telephone numbers) of these essential contacts. If the details change from time to time, please remember to inform the charity.

Fire Precautions
The almshouses comply with the appropriate fire regulations.

Where a fire alarm has been installed, the trustees will arrange with the Fire Officer for a fire drill from time to time and it is in everyone's interest that you should co-operate fully on these occasions, e.g., the clerk will show you the assembly points in case it is necessary to evacuate the buildings.

Please make sure you know the location of the Fire Points and can find them in the dark. The Fire Assembly Points are as follows:

The assembly point for:

FEOFFEE RISE
is the car park in Brook Street.

ROBERT HONE HOUSE
is the garden area behind Robert Hone House.

SHERMAN HOUSE
is the layby to the side of Yonder Corner in Chapel Lane.

YONDER CORNER
is the layby to the side of Yonder Corner in Chapel Lane.

In the case of a fire:

Please DO

- Evacuate the building by the nearest route to the fire assembly point.
- Stay calm and help other residents to leave the building.

Please DON'T

- Attempt to fight the fire yourself
- Wedge fire doors open; they prevent fire and smoke from spreading

General fire safety guidance:

Please DO

- Dispose of any flammable items or sources of ignition safely

Please DON'T

- Wedge fire doors open
- Leave pans (especially chip pans) unattended.
- Smoke in any of the common areas.

Legionella
The risk of contracting Legionnaire's Disease from a domestic property where the water services are regularly used is very low. However, the risk increases if the water services have not been used for an extended period. Residents are advised to adopt the recommended procedures:

Any hot or cold tap that is not used within a seven-day period should be flushed through for at least two minutes on a weekly basis. Avoid splashing to minimise the release of water droplets/aerosols.

Any shower that has not been used for a seven-day period should be flushed through for at least two minutes at both maximum and minimum temperatures. Avoid the release of water droplets/aerosols by either securing a plastic bag over the showerhead with a corner cut off to allow water to escape or by removing the shower head and placing the showerhead over the drain outlet.

Any toilet that has not been used within a seven-day period should be flushed on a weekly basis with the lid down to prevent contact with the water droplets/aerosol.

Showerheads should be cleaned regularly to ensure no scale or algae build-up.

Location of

Water Stopcock – can be found

Electricity Mains Switch & Fuse Box - can be found

Master Key
Nominated trustees hold a master key that can open the front door, but it will only be used in an emergency or with your permission. You must not fit locks and chains without the trustees' consent as these may delay helpers in an emergency.

Your privacy will be respected. The trustees have strict instructions only to enter your home:

- If you ask her or him to do so
- If you have given permission for work to be done in your absence
- In an emergency

Please do not give out any extra keys without first asking the trustees, as this endangers security.

Security
Please bear in mind the following:

DO

- Keep your front door locked at all times.
- Use any spy hole and chain to identify callers before opening the door.
- The chain should only be used to open the door a few inches when identifying callers and not be kept in permanent use.

DON'T

- Allow a stranger to enter your home without proof of identity; if you're in doubt, please contact the clerk or a family member/friend or use an emergency call system.
- Leave ground-floor windows open so that intruders can gain access.
- Keep cash or valuables in your home.

Slips, Trips, and Falls

The trustees wish to draw your attention to the need to exercise care when using the footpaths in wet, snowy, or icy weather. Whilst reasonable precautions will be taken to keep them hazard-free residents are reminded to take care.

Services Provided

Cleaning
You are responsible for keeping your almshouse clean. If this is difficult, please tell the clerk who will help you arrange for cleaning help.

You are responsible for cleaning the inside of the windows in your almshouse, but the trustees employ a window cleaner who cleans the outside of all windows and the insides of windows in communal parts.

The trustees also arranges the cleaning of any communal areas. The cost of this may be included in your Weekly Maintenance Contribution.

Communal Facilities
The almshouses do not have any communal rooms, but you are encouraged to maintain with your neighbours any small garden area adjoining the almshouses.

Insurance
The Charity insures the buildings. You should insure the contents of your home. Please do not keep more cash in your home than you need for your day-to-day expenses. Please put the rest in a bank or building society. Do not ask the clerk to take care of money for you, as he or she is not allowed to.

Repairs and Decorations
The trustees are responsible for both external repairs and decoration and the internal repairs to your home and any communal parts. You are responsible for interior decoration. Please report any necessary work to the clerk, who will arrange for it to be carried out. You will be consulted in advance about arrangements for redecoration. Workmen will not be allowed to enter whilst you are out unless you have agreed to satisfactory arrangements. An exception will have to be made if an emergency arises, or access is required to rectify an urgent problem. Please do not let anyone into an almshouse unless you know who they are; when in doubt, call the clerk.

Routine Visits
Residents will be visited in their homes at least once per year, by two trustee's or representatives of the charity to conduct welfare and premises check.

A mutually convenient time will be arranged beforehand.

Television

Residents need a television licence to use any television-receiving equipment including TV set, set-top box, video or DVD recorder, PC or mobile phone to watch, stream or record programmes as they are being broadcast. This includes foreign broadcasts.

Please be considerate to your neighbours in the use of TVs, radios, stereos, and musical instruments, particularly between 11pm and 7am.

The Clerk

Please contact the clerk to:

- Advise of any repairs required
- Update your personal details
- Signposting for benefits and entitlements
- Report any complaints
- Pass along any information to the trustees.

Terms of Occupancy

Letter of Appointment
Your Letter of Appointment, of which you have a copy, is personal to you and explains that you occupy the almshouses as a beneficiary of the charity. This means that neither you nor any relation or guest of yours is a tenant with the security of tenure that a tenancy offers. No other person is allowed to live at the property unless they have formally applied to the charity and been granted beneficiary status in their own right and you have been jointly allocated the same dwelling.

In exceptional circumstances, the trustees could ask you to find alternative accommodation and leave the almshouse (setting aside your appointment). In practice, this occurs very rarely when the trustees believe they have no alternative.

Examples of such circumstances are if:

- A resident is no longer able to look after themselves safely or is not able to live independently.
- The resident consistently fails to pay weekly maintenance contributions (WMC) without good reason.
- The behaviour of the resident is deemed to be unreasonable and anti-social, either in respect of other residents, trustees, or members of staff.
- The resident's circumstances change significantly to the extent they were no longer qualified to live in the almshouses as a beneficiary or did not have the required qualification when first appointed.
- The resident fails to comply with the rules and regulations made by the charity.
- The resident provided untrue or misleading answers or information in his/her application to be appointed a beneficiary of the charity.

It is a condition of occupancy that residents provide the charity with accurate and complete information of their financial circumstances and that residents inform the charity if their circumstance change. The charity may review the residents' financial circumstances from time to time. However, residents are assured that only in the most unusual circumstances would this lead to someone being asked to leave.

The charity would only set aside an appointment as a last resort after every reasonable effort had been made to resolve the issues. If, having been asked to leave, a resident felt aggrieved, they have the right to have their case heard in the county court. If the decision to set aside the appointment was upheld, they would be given every assistance to find alternative accommodation.

Absence from Home
If you go away for any period, please inform the clerk in case of emergency. It may be advisable to take precautions against frost by turning off and draining the water system. Please tell the trustees and get their agreement if you plan to be away for more than 28 days.

Background Heating and Hot Water
In some properties, heating is provided by electric storage heaters and wall-mounted electric fires. Free-standing electric heaters and paraffin or calor gas heaters are not allowed as they pose a fire risk.

Some additional heaters have been installed in some properties, which will be the responsibility of the resident.

Consulting Residents
The trustees usually meet every quarter to discuss the running of your almshouses. You can also talk to a trustee in private by asking the clerk to arrange this. Consultation and involvement of the residents in the day-to-day running of the charity's almshouses is a form of participation that will benefit all concerned. Residents cannot, under charity law, become trustees and do not, therefore, take part in decision making but trustees welcome their views on matters affecting the quality of life at the almshouses.

The trustees will consult you:

- Before any changes are made to the rules and regulations applicable to residents.
- Before any work is done on your almshouse (except in an emergency).
- Before making changes to the communal facilities, including the gardens.
- Before making changes to the amount of weekly maintenance contribution payable.
- Before anyone enters your home.
- If you raise a difficulty with them.

In the event of a pandemic, the clerk/trustees may decide to implement temporary rules for the safety and protection of residents. Where such rules go beyond those implemented by the government or local authority, residents will be consulted on those rules.

Employment
With the permission of the charity, residents may be allowed to work from their almshouse, however they must guarantee that this will not be disruptive for other residents and that it will not involve delivery or storage of items and/or visitors to the buildings.

Hoarding
It is a condition of your residency that the property is kept clear of any fire hazards which might cause injury to oneself or put other residents at risk. The Trustees have the right to inspect the property at any time if concerns are raised. Please see the separate Hoarding Policy.

Improvements to your Home
Please put any requests in writing to the clerk so that the trustees can consider the proposed improvements. In some cases, the Charity will pay for the work. Permission may be refused if the trustees consider that the alteration is structurally unsound, will reduce the amenities for subsequent occupants, or will increase future maintenance costs. If you live in part of a listed building, some alterations will be forbidden by law.

Moving Out
If you wish to move from the almshouse you must give the trustees written notice of at least four weeks. During this notice period, you will be liable for your WMC payments even if you have already moved out.

Residents, or in the event of death, their personal representatives, are responsible for WMC until the premises are cleared of personal possessions and the keys are returned.

If you become unwell, the trustees may suggest you move to more suitable accommodation, and they and their clerk will help you and your family to make suitable arrangements.

Pets
Please see the Pets Policy for full information. If you wish to keep a pet, you must first obtain the written permission of the trustees. All applications will be considered on an individual basis and will depend upon the considered suitability of the pet/property in question.
Please tell the clerk about arrangements you have made for the care of your pet if you are away on holiday or become ill.

Policies
It is the resident's responsibility to ensure they are familiar with all the policies for the Charity and to adhere to them.

Copies of the policies can be downloaded from the Charity website www.ottery-feoffee.org or requested from the Clerk.

Re-Housing

Residents who wish to change their accommodation within the complex may apply to the clerk for the matter to be considered by the trustees.

The trustees may require you to move to another of the Charity's almshouses when major repair work is being carried out. Where possible you will be given at least three months warning.

Relatives and Visitors

The clerk cannot take the place of your relatives or friends. We hope they will give you just the same support as they would if you were living in ordinary housing. With their help and co-operation, and support from social services, if necessary, we hope you will be independent for as long as you wish.

Your home is suitable as housing for older or disabled people and is not suitable to accommodate extra people. If you do have a friend or relative to stay with you the clerk must be informed in case of fire. Under no circumstances can additional people live with you on a permanent basis.

Smoking

Smoking is prohibited in all common areas including hallways, corridors, and stairwells.

Weekly Maintenance Contribution (WMC)

WMC is due each Monday in arrears, and we would be grateful if you could please pay by direct debit. Please contact the Clerk with your bank details and she can arrange it for you.

If you receive Housing Benefit, arrangements can be made for it to be paid to the Charity's account. You will be given a minimum of a month's notice of any increase.

The amount you pay covers the cost of running the almshouse and includes:

- Heating and Hot Water (in some properties)
- Water and sewerage charges (in some properties)
- Repairs and maintenance
- Insurance
- Cleaning of communal areas (in some properties)

The level of WMC is usually reviewed annually but the charity reserves the right to review this more frequently if it is in the charity's best interests.

General Information

Attendance Allowance
Attendance Allowance helps with extra costs if you have a disability severe enough that you need someone to help look after you.

You could get extra Pension Credit, Housing Benefit or Council Tax Reduction if you get Attendance Allowance.

You do not have to have someone caring for you in order to claim.

Communication
If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the clerk in the first instance, who can then contact the most appropriate person for you.

We will circulate a newsletter to the residents whenever we have important news to share, usually following the quarterly trustee meetings.

Council Tax
Each resident is responsible for paying his or her Council Tax. Please contact the local council as soon as you move in to make arrangements to pay the council tax.

Doctor
The name of your doctor must be given to the clerk so that help may be obtained in an emergency.

You have every right to see your doctor, nurse, or other carers alone, and to keep your medical affairs entirely to yourself if you wish. However, if you have a chronic health problem, you may feel safer if the clerk knows about it so that sensible action may be taken in an emergency. Anything you tell the clerk will be kept confidential.

Emergencies and Sickness
If you are ill or in difficulties, please contact your family or friends for assistance. The clerk and trustees will make every effort to contact them on your behalf.

Please make sure the clerk is kept informed of any change of contact details for your next of kin.

Please make sure the clerk is notified if you are ill. This is particularly important if you are going into the hospital or returning home after admission.

If you have a disability or become disabled while living in the almshouse, it may be possible to obtain equipment or to make alterations to your home to help you live an independent life; ask the clerk about this. Please do not make any structural alterations to your home (e.g. fitting ramps or stair lifts) without consultation with the charity.

Gifts and Legacies
It is the trustees" policy that no one involved in the running of the charity should accept any gift or legacy from a resident. If you wish to donate anything to the charity, please contact the clerk to the trustees. All such matters will be dealt with in confidence.

Housing Benefit
If your income consists of the basic retirement pension and you have little or no capital, you will almost certainly be entitled to Housing Benefit to help with your housing costs. To claim Housing Benefit, you should ask for a form at your local Benefits Office or Housing Department. If you do have some additional income to your basic retirement pension you may still be entitled to some help with housing costs. Again, forms to claim this are available as above.

The clerk will help you if you are unsure of your entitlement or need help in completing the form.

Lasting Power of Attorney
It is strongly recommended that you arrange a Lasting Power of Attorney, which allows you to appoint someone to look after your finances and to make welfare and healthcare decisions on your behalf in the event of your mental incapacity. Again, you should seek legal advice from a solicitor.

Mobility Scooters
Due to the layout of the properties, we are unable to grant permission to store mobility scooters at any of the properties.

Next of Kin
The name and address of your next of kin, or a nominated representative, should be supplied to the charity. He or she may be contacted should the trustees have concerns about your well-being.

Parking of Vehicles
There are no spaces for visitors' cars. Please do not park in any space adjoining your almshouse block, or allow your visitors to do so, as they may block the way for ambulances or fire engines in an emergency.

Personal Problems
If you have any personal concerns regarding your finances or any other matter and you have no family or friend who you feel able to consult, the clerk or trustees will be glad to give you whatever help or advice they can. Please contact the clerk in the first instance.

Rubbish
Rubbish bins are provided. Please make sure that the rubbish area is kept clean and tidy. All kitchen refuse should be wrapped before putting it into the bins.

Please make every effort to use the correct bin for waste and recycling.

Social Media
Those residents using social media such as Facebook and Twitter are asked to respect the fact that no views should be expressed via social media about the charity, its trustees, other residents or staff.

Wills
You are strongly advised to make a Will. If you wish to leave personal property to a relative or friend a Will is essential. Please tell the clerk where the will is kept and who is the executor.

A solicitor is the best person to help you make a will, and if you require assistance in finding one, we suggest you contact your local Citizens Advice Bureau. Ask the clerk if you find this difficult.

COMPLAINTS POLICY & PROCEDURES

Introduction
This policy applies to the trustees of Ottery Feoffee Charity (the Charity) and seeks to ensure that the Charity's complaints process is flexible and responsive to the needs of individual complainants.

The Charity complies with the Complaint Handling Code (the Code) issued by the Housing Ombudsman Service. All complaints dealt with under this policy will be dealt with in a manner consistent with the Code and the Charity will maintain all records as required by the Code.

In dealing with complaints the Charity will ensure that:

- individuals who complain are listened to and treated with courtesy and empathy.
- residents will never be disadvantaged as a result of making a complaint.
- complaints will be investigated promptly, thoroughly, honestly and openly and
- in dealing with complaints the Charity will comply with confidentiality and data protection policies.

For the purposes of this policy:

The Complaints Officer is:

Name:	Tina Collins
Telephone number:	07865 098 253
Address:	67 Wycombe Lane, Wooburn Green, Bucks. HP10 0HD
Email address:	clerk.feoffee.osm@gmail.com

The Appeals Officer is:
An impartial trustee to be appointed specific to the complaint.

A complaint is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction, however, made, about the standard of service, actions, other residents, or lack of action by the Charity, its trustees, its contractors, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents. The word "complaint" does not need to be used expressly for the matter to be considered a complaint.

A request from a resident to act to put something right (e.g., to carry out routine maintenance etc.) is considered to be a service request and not a complaint.

Service requests should be dealt with in accordance with the Residents' Handbook. Failure to deal appropriately with a service request may lead to the matter being dealt with as a complaint.

Complaints made by residents may be made by the resident's carer, family members or a representative of a resident.

Complaints made by individuals affected by the Charity, who are not residents, must be made by the individual themselves or a legal representative.

Exclusions
The Charity will not be able to deal with an issue through the complaints process if: a complaint relates to a legal matter that is already being dealt with by a solicitor or where legal proceedings have been issued.

- the complainant is anonymous, unless there is sufficient documentary evidence to substantiate the complaint.
- the issue giving rise to the complaint occurred over six months ago, unless relating to safeguarding or health and safety issues; or
- the matter has already been considered under the complaints policy and a decision issued.

If a complaint is not accepted, a detailed explanation will be provided to the Complainant setting out the reasons why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process and their right to take that decision to the Ombudsman (see details below). The Ombudsman may direct the Charity to take on the complaint, in which case this policy will apply.

Accessibility
Complaints will be dealt with in a manner that is consistent with the Charity's Equality & Diversity Policy.

If any individual making a complaint wishes the Charity to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate an individual's particular needs, they, or their representative, should contact the clerk by phone, email, or in person to discuss what adjustments may be possible.

Dealing with minor complaints
Where appropriate individuals should consider raising minor complaints informally in the first instance with the clerk, either in person or by phone, as this can lead to better understanding and very often to a quick resolution of the issue.
The clerk will keep a record of minor complaints that are dealt with in this manner.

Stage One of the Complaints Process
Complaints should be made either in writing or by email to the clerk.

The initial complaint should include sufficient detail, and where appropriate supporting documentation, to enable the Charity to investigate the matter.

The clerk will acknowledge the complaint and make a record, within 5 days. The acknowledgement will:

- summarise the Charity's understanding of the complaint;
- summarise the Charity's understanding of what the Complainant is seeking as an outcome;
- raise any questions that require clarification from the Complainant; and
- set out the next course of action and anticipated timescale.

In most cases, the Charity will aim to resolve complaints within 10 working days from the receipt of the complaint. In exceptional cases, if the Clerk anticipates that the particular complaint will take longer to resolve, this should be explained and a clear timeframe set out for the resolution of the complaint which should not exceed a further 10 working days, without good reason.

If the clerk believes that the complaint will take longer than 20 working days to resolve then the clerk will seek to agree the timeframe with the Complainant. If no agreement can be reached with the Complainant, the Complainant should be advised to raise the matter with the Housing Ombudsman (see details below).

The clerk will investigate the complaint in an impartial manner permitting all relevant parties to provide information. The Complainant and any third parties involved in the complaint should be given the opportunity to set out their position before any final decision is made. The Clerk may delegate the management and investigation of the complaint to another individual.

If the clerk is conflicted, or the complaint relates to the clerk, the complaint should be directed to the Chair of the Trustees whose details are in the Residents' Handbook.

The clerk will:

- deal with all complaints on their merits;
- act independently and have an open mind but may consider reports of previous complaints that relate to the same issue being complained about;
- take appropriate measures to address any actual or perceived conflict of interest (which may include asking another trustee to investigate the complaint);
- consider all information and evidence carefully; and

- keep the details of the complaint confidential as far as possible, with information only being disclosed if necessary to properly investigate the matter.

If the complaint involves questions relating to the Charity or the Complainant's legal obligations, the clerk will set out clearly their understanding of the respective legal obligations and may seek legal advice before doing so.

The clerk will provide the Complainant with a response to the complaint at the earliest opportunity, which will be copied to all of the trustees.

If the clerk identifies that further actions are required to address the complaint these may be carried out after the response has been given and should not delay the Complainant receiving a response to the complaint.

In responding to the complaint, the clerk will:

- address all issues that have been raised, provide clear reasons for any decisions and, where appropriate, refer to relevant policy, law, and good practice;
- give a clear decision; and
- if appropriate, set out any steps that will be taken to remedy the issue.

If new issues are raised by the Complainant during the stage one process, these should be dealt with as part of the process if they are relevant. However, if the issues relate to a different issue and/or are raised after the response has already been issued, the issues will be dealt with as a separate complaint.

Stage Two

If the Complainant is not satisfied with the response from the clerk they have 5 working days to submit an appeal in writing or by email to the Appeals Officer, who will be a nominated Trustee.

The Appeals Officer will acknowledge the appeal within 5 working days of the receipt of the appeal. The acknowledgment may include any requests for clarification that relate to the appeal.

The Appeals Officer will arrange a meeting with the Complainant to be held within 10 working days of the appeal being submitted. The Appeals Officer will be assisted by two trustees at the meeting.

The Appeals Officer will respond in writing to the complainant within 20 working days of the appeal being submitted, informing them of the outcome of the appeal process and the decision of the Appeals Panel.

If the Appeals Officer believes that the appeal will take longer than 20 working days to resolve, then this should be agreed with the Complainant. If no agreement can be reached with the Complainant, the Complainant should be advised to raise the matter with the Housing Ombudsman (see details below).

In responding to the appeal, the Appeals Officer will:

- address all issues that have been raised, provide clear reasons for any decisions and, where appropriate, refer to relevant policy, law, and good practice.
- set out the clear decision of the Appeals Panel; and
- if appropriate, set out any steps that will be taken to remedy the issue.

The decision of the Appeals Panel will be final.

Circumstances in which a complaint may be closed:
If a complaint is pursued unreasonably or where a Complainant's actions or behaviours are deemed to be unreasonable, the Charity reserves the right to close the complaint.

If a Complainant displays threatening or abusive behaviour or language (whether verbal or written), that causes trustees or related third parties to feel threatened, abused and/or continues to contact the Charity with unreasonable demands during/following a complaint investigation a complaint may be closed and, if the Complainant is a resident, this may be grounds for their appointment to be set aside.

In cases where the trustees to bring the complaint to an end in accordance with this section of the policy, they will inform the Complainant of their reasons.

Housing Ombudsman Service
The contact details for the Housing Ombudsman Service are:

Telephone:	0300 111 3000
Email:	info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk
Website:	www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk
Address:	Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 152, Liverpool, L33 7WQ.

Review
This policy will be reviewed regularly.
The Charity will carry out an annual self-assessment in accordance with the Code.