

Report to: **Overview & Scrutiny Panel**
Date: **17 March 2016**
Title: **REVIEW OF CORPORATE COMPLAINTS POLICY**
Portfolio Area: **Cllr Wright**
Wards Affected: **All**
Relevant Scrutiny Committee: **N/A**

Urgent Decision: **N** Approval and clearance obtained: **N/A**

Date next steps can be taken: **Executive 7 April 2016**

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RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Panel RECOMMEND that the Executive:

- 1. adopt the revised Corporate Complaints Policy (as attached at Appendix A to this report); and**
- 2. delegates any minor amendments to the Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Portfolio holder for Support Services.**

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 To consider a revised Complaints Policy as attached at Appendix A, and to recommend its adoption to the Executive.

2. Background

- 2.1 This report asks Members to consider and recommend adoption of the revised Corporate Complaints Policy attached at Appendix A. The Complaints Policy also incorporates a revised 'Unreasonable Customer Behaviour and Vexatious Complaints Policy'.
- 2.2 A review of the Complaints Policy ensures that it reflects current business practice following the T18 restructure and also ensures that it is customer focussed.

3. Outcomes/outputs

- 3.1 The revised Complaints Policy confirms that the Council is committed to delivering high quality, value for money services to the standard that the Customer expects. However, the Council also realises that sometimes things can go wrong and that Customers are not always happy with the service they receive from the Council.
- 3.2 The attached Policy sets out what comprises a complaint and how the Council will deal with that complaint. The Policy also includes a revised policy on how the Council will deal with the few occasions where complainants exhibit unreasonable or vexatious behaviour.
- 3.3 The main changes from the existing policy include:
 - 3.3.1 emphasis on early informal resolution of complaints
 - 3.3.2 clarity on which issues cannot be resolved under this Policy but with signposting to where assistance can be sought instead
 - 3.3.3 contacting the complainant to identify the specific concerns and focus investigation
 - 3.3.4 emphasis on proactive resolution of complaints and not defensive actions
 - 3.3.5 extended target response dates to ensure appropriate response is given in a realistic timescale
 - 3.3.6 clarity on how the Council will report and learn from complaints
- 3.4 The Policy includes a section on reporting and learning from complaints in order to provide an opportunity to put matters right and to improve the Council's services. This includes:
 - 3.4.1 summary and outcome of anonymised complaints to be available on the Council's website
 - 3.4.2 regular reports to SLT where there are learning points for the future
 - 3.4.3 regular reports to Members on the number and types of complaints received together with information on complaints outcomes, lessons learnt, measures taken to prevent recurrences and (where relevant) how we have improved services as a result of the complaint.

4. Options available and consideration of risk

- 4.1 The Council could choose not to review its Policy with the risk that it is not customer focussed and does not reflect the Council's existing business practice. A review of the Policy would ensure that these risks are mitigated and provide clarity and commitment to the Customer.
- 4.2 We have consulted the Ombudsman and a selection of Customers who have complained previously and who indicated they were happy to be contacted by the Council

4.3 Officers involved in Customer complaints have also been consulted and had the opportunity to input into the revisions to the Policy.

5. Proposed Way Forward

5.1 That Members consider the attached Complaints Policy and recommend its adoption.

6. Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal / Governance, and Risks	Y	<p>Overview & Scrutiny is responsible for an overview of complaints which relates to the Council's performance.</p> <p>Adopting an up-to-date complaints policy will ensure that the Council deals with complaints openly and consistently. If complaints are not handled correctly or expediently the council may not be fulfilling its duties and as a result may not be providing high quality services. If complaints are not resolved they may result in referrals to the Ombudsman which may ultimately result in financial penalties.</p>
Financial	N	There are no direct financial implications to this report.
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Equality and Diversity		This is considered in the revised policy.
Safeguarding		These will be dealt with as required in any specific complaint
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder		N/a
Health, Safety and Wellbeing		N/a
Other implications		N/a

Supporting Information

Appendices:

Appendix A: Revised Complaints Policy

Background Papers:

None