

CABINET

**CUSTOMER COMMENTS, COMPLIMENTS AND
COMPLAINTS POLICY AND GUIDANCE
6th Nov 2012**

Report of Head of Environmental Services

PURPOSE OF REPORT

That Cabinet approve the recommendations of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee with regard to the revised Customer Comments, Compliments and Complaints policy.

Key Decision

Non-Key Decision

Referral from Officer

X

This report is public

RECOMMENDATIONS OF HEAD OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

- (1) That Cabinet approves the revised Customer Comments, Compliments and Complaints Policy.
- (2) That Cabinet approves the recommendations of Overview and Scrutiny Committee with regard to direct Elected Member involvement.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 At its meeting on the 10th October 2012 the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee were presented with a revised Customer Comments, Compliments and Complaints policy and a covering report. (SEE APPENDICES)

1.2 The covering report recognised that Elected Members have a role to play in acting as advocates and this is reflected in the revised Policy and Guidance. The report also set out options for more direct involvement in dealing with complaints.

1.3 These were -

OPTION 1- The first of these is direct involvement in the investigation/review process via a member panel at Stage 2. Should members wish to pursue this option considerable staff resource will be required to service the panel. This includes advice from the Service Head concerned to advise the panel, the Stage 1 investigating officer to answer any technical issues and Democratic Services to arrange meetings, call any witnesses and advise the complainant on the process and their rights to attend. If such a panel were to

be set up a Constitutional update may be required and the approval of Full Council needed. Clearly this option complicates the process and would likely add to the time spent handling complaints. This in turn increases the risk of failing to meet the LGO's expectation that the complaints process (all stages) will be completed within 12 weeks. As outlined it would also require considerable additional resource. At this stage no indication of additional cost is available.

OPTION 2- is for Elected Members to review complaints data on a regular basis, (eg through Performance Review Team meetings) which could give an indication of overall performance – i.e. complaints trends could indicate service areas in need of improvement. Reports could be provided to the relevant committee at agreed intervals. This would provide an overview of the types of issues that were being complained about and then allow for Elected Members the opportunity to explore these areas further if required.

1.4 The Council's Overview and Scrutiny committee recommended approval of the revised Policy and Guidance relating to Customer Comments, Compliment and Complaints.

1.5 With regard to the options for more Elected Member involvement Overview and Scrutiny recommended the following-

(1) That Cabinet be recommended to approve option 2 as set out in the report.

(2) That Budget and Performance Panel be requested to undertake performance monitoring of the complaints procedure.

(3) That sample complaints be reviewed on a regular basis.

2.0 Proposal Details

2.1 If the number and type of formal complaints received from each service area is added to the reporting that takes place through the Performance Review Team process the recommendation made can be managed within existing resources. This will provide Elected Members with much more information than is currently provided.

2.2 Based on these reports if members of Budget and Performance Panel or relevant Portfolio holders wanted further information based on trends or particular areas of concern then that could be requested.

2.3 Therefore, it is proposed that Cabinet –

- Approve the revised Customer Comments, Compliments and Complaints Guidance.
- Approve the recommendations of Overview and Scrutiny with regard to Elected Member involvement.

3.0 Details of Consultation

3.1 As set out in the report

RELATIONSHIP TO POLICY FRAMEWORK

There are no direct implications as a result of this report

CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT

(including Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)

There are no direct implications as a result of this report

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications as a result of this report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications as a result of this report. If, however, Cabinet did not agree with the recommendations of Overview and Scrutiny then further financial appraisal would need to take place.

OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**Human Resources:**

None

Information Services:

None

Property:

None

Open Spaces:

None

SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Section 151 Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

As set out in appendices

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