

## Minutes

Corporate Services and Partnerships Policy

Overview Committee

Wednesday 16 September 2014

Meeting held at Committee Room 4 - Civic

Centre, High Street, Uxbridge UB8 1UW



HILLINGDON

LONDON

	<p><b>Members Present:</b> Councillors Richard Lewis (Chairman), Richard Mills (Vice-Chairman), Wayne Bridges, Tony Burles, Nick Denys, Narinder Garg, Raymond Graham, Carol Melvin, and Robin Sansarpuri.</p> <p><b>Officers:</b> Ian Anderson (Complaints and Service Improvement Manager - Administration), Nigel Dicker (Deputy Director - Public Safety &amp; Environment (Residents Services), Dan Kennedy (Head of Performance and Improvement) and Khalid Ahmed (Democratic Services Manager).</p>
15.	<p><b>MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD ON 16 JULY 2014</b></p> <p>Agreed as an accurate record.</p>
16.	<p><b>EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC</b></p> <p>It was agreed that all items of business would be considered in public.</p>
17.	<p><b>MAJOR REVIEW - THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE</b></p> <p>For this meeting Members were provided with copies of Annual Complaints reports for Children &amp; Young People's Service and Housing Services and Adults' Services for 2013/14.</p> <p>In addition, the Committee was provided with a breakdown of the last two years of complaints statistics to enable Members to examine if there were any trends which had developed.</p> <p>The main issues raised were:-</p> <p>For 2013/14 there had been a significant increase in the volume of both Stage 2 and Stage 3 complaints compared to the previous year (Stage 2 from 41 to 99, Stage 3 from 14 to 50).</p> <p>Members were informed that the increase in complaints had been mainly from within the Housing and Council Tax services. The reasons for this sharp increase had been because of the changes in the Housing Allocation Policy, increases in housing repairs as a result of the poor weather and in relation to</p> <p><b>Action By:</b></p>

Council Tax complaints, the introduction of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

**Action By:**

Reference was made to the large increase in the number of service requests within the Housing service and the need for officers to actively resolve some of the minor issues which had been registered as complaints. It was acknowledged that improvements were required to improve the complaint handling process.

Members were informed that some of the improvements which had been and would be introduced included:

- The sending of prompt reminders from the Complains Team to ensure that complaints were responded to on time
- Providing monthly workshops for managers and relevant staff on tips on how to handle complaints and on the resolution of complaints at an early stage
- Better use of the intranet which would provide advice and guidance to officers on handling customer dissatisfaction and complaint procedures

Reference was made to the types of complaints which the Council received and the need to differentiate between simple service requests (example - the collection of refuse which had been failed to be collected) and more complex issues. This would be emphasised at training workshops to ensure all Council staff provided a consistent service to residents.

In relation to complaints about housing services, it was acknowledged that the number of complaints received was small when the number of residents who used the service was taken into consideration. For example on complaints regarding housing repairs, Members were informed that there were around 400 housing repairs carried out each work which put into perspective the number of complaints received.

Reference was made to complaints in relation to Council policy. An example would be whereby a resident had clearly not complied with the Council's Housing Allocation Policy and yet a complaint in this area would still proceed through the three stage complaints process.

The Committee was also reminded that the LGO had received 93 enquiries / complaints about Hillingdon last year which had been less than the average for London (151 enquiries / complaints on average - nearly 40% less in Hillingdon than

average). In addition, Members were informed that the LGO received a similar numbers of enquiries / complaints about adult social care and benefits/tax about Hillingdon to other London Boroughs, but much fewer than the London average for housing, transport and education / children's services.

For the next stage of the review Members asked that the following areas be covered:

- The opinion of the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) on what constitutes a good complaints procedure
- Comparisons with other local authorities complaints procedures
- Moving to a two stage process and the implications of this in relation to the number of complaints referred to the LGO
- Complaints in relation to Council policy, whereby the complaint did not dispute a decision as they had failed to meet policy, and whether these constituted complaints
- To review the Compensation which was paid out for complaints where the Council had admitted a failure in its service provided
- To look at the working day targets for each stage of the complaints procedure and to assess their appropriateness
- To assess, if possible, the costs to the Council in dealing with complaints i.e. the time spent by officers in all three stages during the process
- How well were the Council's policies such as the Housing Allocation Policy communicated in literature produced by the Council.

The Committee thanked officers for their evidence and it was agreed that the issues outlined above be examined at the next meeting of the Committee.

**RESOLVED –**

- 1. That the presentations and the information provided be noted and officers be asked to explore the areas outlined above.**

**Action By:**

**Dan Kennedy  
/                   lan  
Anderson     /**

		<b>Khalid Ahmed</b>
<b>13.</b>	<b>WORK PROGRAMME 2014/15</b>  Noted.	
<b>14.</b>	<b>CABINET FORWARD PLAN</b>  Noted.	
	<b>Meeting commenced at 7.30pm and closed at 8.55pm</b> <b>Next meeting: 14 October 2014 at 6.30pm</b>	

These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information on any of the resolutions please contact Khalid Ahmed on 01895 250833. These minutes are circulated to Councillors, Officers, the Press and Members of the Public.