

COPROPRATE SERVICES & PARTNERSHIPS POC - MAJOR REVIEW - COUNCIL'S CORPORATE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

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REASON FOR ITEM

To hear from witnesses who will provide evidence for this Committee's review on examining the effectiveness of the Council's Corporate Complaints Procedure and to provide information as requested at the last meeting of the Committee.

OPTIONS OPEN TO THE COMMITTEE

- 1. To question the witnesses who are providing the Committee with evidence for the Committee's review.**
- 2. To receive further information on areas of the review which were requested at the last meeting.**

BACKGROUND

1. At the last meeting of the Committee, Members were provided with statistics for complaints received in the last two years to enable Members to identify any trends and patterns of complaints. Officers provided Members with the reasoning behind these increases in the number of complaints and the Committee identified a number of other areas where additional information and views were sought.

WITNESSES

2. For this meeting, the following will provide evidence for the review:
 - Dan Kennedy - Head of Performance and Improvement
 - Ian Anderson - Complaints and Service Improvement Manager (Administration)
 - Richard Shaw - Investigator for Local Government Ombudsman Office.
3. The areas to be covered will include:
 - The opinion of the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) on what constitutes a good complaints procedure
 - Comparisons and best practice 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?
4. For Members information reference will be made to the Complaints Procedure at the London Borough of Hackney which is a two stage process and discussion can take place on whether such a process could be applied to Hillingdon.
5. For Members' information, Hackney has a two stage process which consists of a Resolution Stage where the following is considered:-
- When a residents raises an issue officers check to see if it can be handled as a complaint.
 - Acknowledge receipt of the complaint, by email, post or phone.
 - An assessment is made on how long it will take to resolve the complaint - on average, this is around 15 working days, but the complainant is told if this will be longer.
 - A senior officer from the service the resident is complaining about will oversee an investigation, which will focus on resolving the issue(s) which have been raised.
 - The complainant is contacted on the outcome of the investigation and the action taken to resolve the complaint.
6. If the complainant is dissatisfied with the response given at the resolution stage, the complainant can request that the corporate director responsible for the service commissions an independent review by specialist officers. Hackney responds within an average of 20 working days.

PAPERS WITH REPORT

APPENDIX A - Scoping Report for the Review.