<u>Minutes</u>

Corporate Services and Partnerships Policy Overview Committee Wednesday 29 October 2014 Meeting held at Committee Room 4 - Civic Centre, High Street, Uxbridge UB8 1UW



	Members Present: Councillors Richard Lewis (Chairman), Richard Mills (Vice-Chairman), Lynne Allen, Wayne Bridges, Tony Burles, Nick Denys, Carol Melvin, Jane Palmer and Robin Sansarpuri.			
	Apologies: Councillors Narinder Garg (Councillor Lynne Allen substituting) and Ray Graham (Councillor Jane Palmer substituting).			
	Officers: Ian Anderson (Complaints and Service Improvement Manager - Administration), Michelle Gleeson (Customer Liaison Manager - Residents Services), Dan Kennedy (Head of Performance and Improvement) and Khalid Ahmed (Democratic Services Manager).			
	Witness: Richard Shaw (Investigator from Local Government Ombudsman Office).			
20.	MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 16 SEPTEMBER 2014			
	Agreed as an accurate record.			
21.	EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC			
	It was agreed that all items of business would be considered in public.			
22.	MAJOR REVIEW - THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE Action By: COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE			
	For this meeting, the Committee was provided with evidence from Richard Shaw, an Investigator for the Local Government Ombudsman Office.			
	The Committee was provided with a summary of the key components of a good complaints procedure:-			
	 To enable residents to make officers and the Council accountable 			
	 Where complaints have been justified, to enable Councils to address poor working practice and to improve services 			
	 To have a clear and transparent process which enables a quick resolution to residents' complaints 			

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	 Dealing quickly with a complaint for the benefit of a complainant 	Action By:
	 The less stages of a complaints process would eliminate repetitiveness and bring about a quicker resolution 	
	 Service requests and appeals should be dealt with separately and outside the complaints process The focus should be on resolving complaints at the participat expertunity. 	
	 earliest opportunity There should be consideration given to the costs of dealing with complaints 	
	 The key focus should be on customer care and customer satisfaction for residents 	
	 A complaints process needs to be understood and publicised and accessible for residents 	
	 There should be a common procedure to cover contractors 	
	 Managers should be made responsible for dealing with complaints and should be empowered to proactively resolve complaints 	
	 Managers should be given discretionary powers to remedy failures and to make apologies to complainants where necessary 	
	 Officers should be given discretionary powers to offer compensation to remedy a failure 	
	 Failures which have been highlighted by a complaint provided an opportunity to make improvements to services 	
	 Regarding Council policy - caveats should be contained in complaints procedures which clearly stated that a complaint about Council policy which had been correctly applied should not be taken through the complaints procedure. Complaints could be advised to submit their complaint direct to the Local Government 	
	 Ombudsman Directors should have sight and knowledge of complaints 	
refer Cou and were rega itself	ussion took place on aspects of the evidence provided and rence was made to the various complaints which the ncil received in relation to the Housing Allocation Policy Housing Benefit and Council Tax decisions. Members e informed that complaints should still be considered rding the application of policies, but not the actual policy f. The importance was stressed of officers ensuring they ectly applied policies.	

 Members were informed that these complaints did escalate through the present complaints procedure, but if changes were made to the complaints procedure, these types of complaints could be resolved at Stage 1 or be referred direct to the Ombudsman. The LGO Investigator confirmed that complaints had to have gone through at least one stage of a local authority complaints procedure before being considered by the LGO. The communication of Council policies was important and these should be clearly pointed out to residents. Relevant policies and the rules relating to Housing Benefit and Council Tax should be explained to complainants to ensure they understand the reasoning behind the decisions taken which have resulted in the complaint. As previously mentioned at an earlier witness session, the Committee was informed that extra training would be provided for officers to enable a greater focus on resolution of complaints. A move to a two stage complaints procedure, with a longer timeline for Stage 1, would enable intervention work to take place and give officers an opportunity to try to resolve the complaint to the satisfaction of the resident. Members were informed that there were cost implications for dealing with complaints to resolve complaints would be beneficial for the Council and for the complaint. Reference was made to a number of local authorities which had moved to two stage complaint procedure which consisted of flexible first stages whereby contact was made with the complainant with the focus on resolving the issue which had been raised. 	Action By:
been raised. The Committee asked that officers provide a paper at the next meeting setting out all the evidence presented during the review thus far, together with details of the potential implications of moving to a two stage complaints procedure.	
RESOLVED -	
1. That the presentations and the information provided be noted and officers be asked to report back to the next meeting of the Committee providing details as outlined above.	Dan Kennedy / lan Anderson / Khalid Ahmed

23.	MEMBERS ENQUIRI	ES		Action By:
	details on the Merr	bers Enquiries pro Enquiries received	eport which provided ocess, together with across the Council's 14.	
	attended the meeting Member Enquiry (M	and gave an overv E) was a question	Residents Services iew of the process. A which a Councillor ents or other local	
	and Administration a provided an efficien Enquiries were logge	nd Finance, dealt v t link for this, en d, processed and p	h Residents Services with such queries and suring all Members' progressed with Lead a dedicated timescale	
	Members agreed that resource and enabled advice to their constitu	Members to provide	•	
	The success of the se usage over the last tw	• •	d by the increased	
	Service Areas	2012/13	2013/14	
	Housing Service	862	1,134	
	Housing Benefit	79	105	
	Council Tax	55	88	
	Education Services	44	39	
	Residents Services	4,591	5,444	
	Total	5,631	6,810	
	their appreciation at t Officers were asked	he efforts of the Mei that, where possible	Members expressed mber Liaison Officers. e, Members Enquiries opied to the resident	

	 That the report and the presentation given be noted and officers be thanked for the excellent service given to Members on behalf of residents. 	
24.	WORK PROGRAMME 2014/15	
	Noted. Members asked that the scheduled next meeting of the Committee be re-arranged.	
25.	CABINET FORWARD PLAN	
	Noted.	
	Meeting commenced at 6.30pm and closed at 8.30pm Next meeting: 11 December 2014 at 7.30pm	

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.