
COMPLAINTS ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

Report by Service Director Neighbourhood Services

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

20 January 2015

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report presents the Council's first Complaints Annual Performance Report in a format guided by the Scottish Public Sector Ombudsman (SPSO), who requires the Annual Report to be submitted to the SPSO and for the Council to publish the report.**
- 1.2 Following guidance from the SPSO (May 2012) on how to handle complaints, the SPSO asked in August 2014 that all Scottish Local Authorities present their annual performance on complaints in a publicly available annual report.
- 1.3 The first SBC Complaints Annual Performance Report for complaints handled in 2013-14 is drafted to reflect the good practice as agreed with the SPSO.
- 1.4 A number of areas for improvement in complaint handling are committed to in the Annual Report, notably:
- (a) The eight SPSO Performance Indicators are included in the Council's performance management framework;
 - (b) The Council works with the SPSO and other local authorities to develop the benchmarking of complaints performance indicators;
 - (c) Work to reduce complaint volumes, improve complaint response times and enhance service delivery

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that:

- (a) The performance of handling complaints, for the period 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014, is duly noted by the Executive Committee and the annual report is made publically available via the Council website;**
- (b) The Complaints Guidance review in 4.4 is completed by the end of January 2015;**

- (c) The commitment to implement a complaints handling survey in 4.5 is delivered as soon as possible, and that the results of which are available for the forthcoming 2014-15 Complaints Annual Performance Report in Spring/Summer 2015;**
- (d) The eight SPSO Performance Indicators in 4.3 are included in the monthly/quarterly performance reporting to CMT and Council Executive committee;**
- (e) The benchmarking activity outlined in 4.8 and 4.9 is fully supported and any commitments agreed are subsequently delivered.**

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 gave the Scottish Public Sector Ombudsman (SPSO) the authority to lead the development of a model of complaints handling procedures across the public sector.
- 3.2 In May 2012, the SPSO issued guidance on the handling of complaints, 'Local Authority Model Complaints Handling Procedure'.
- 3.3 In November 2012, Scottish Borders Council approved a 'Complaints Handling Procedure' (CHP) that centred on the guidance detailed by the SPSO. Our CHP was then used to train staff and was also made publicly available.
- 3.4 In August 2014, the SPSO issued guidance stating that the annual performance of Local Authorities handling of complaints be formally presented in an annual report. It was later confirmed (4th December 2014) that this annual report should be published.

4 PROPOSAL - COMPLAINTS ANNUAL REPORT 2013-14

- 4.1 Following a discussion between Scottish Borders Council and the SPSO on 4 December 2014, a copy of South Ayrshire Council's Annual Complaints Performance Report 2013-14 was cited as an example of good practice.
- 4.2 As a consequence the Scottish Borders Council's Annual Complaints Performance Report (Appendix 1) has been drafted to reflect this good practice and details the complaints handled by Scottish Borders Council between 1st April 2013 and 31st March 2014.
- 4.3 Our report looks across eight specified key performance indicators, devised by the SPSO in conjunction with all 32 Scottish Local Authorities:

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| Indicator 1 | The total number of complaints received per thousand of the population |
| Indicator 2 | Complaints closed at stage one and stage two as a percentage of all complaints closed |
| Indicator 3 | The number of complaints upheld/partially upheld/not upheld at each stage as a percentage of complaints closed in full at each stage |
| Indicator 4 | The average time spent in working days for a full response to complaints at each stage |
| Indicator 5 | The number and percentage of complaints at each stage which were closed in full within set timescales of 5 and 20 working days |
| Indicator 6 | The number and percentage of complaints at each stage where an extension to the 5 or 20 working day timeline has been authorised |
| Indicator 7 | A statement to report customer satisfaction with the complaints service provided |
| Indicator 8 | A statement outlining the changes or improvements to services or procedures as a result of the considerations of complaints |

- 4.4 The report highlights that continued improvements need to be made to handling complaints within the 5 or 20 working days timescale. As such we are currently reviewing the Complaint guidance to ensure the appropriate Council Officers are authorising extensions when a complaint is likely to exceed the 5 or 20 working day timescale.
- 4.5 The report also commits the Council to implementing a complaint handling survey to improve reporting on customer satisfaction. It is expected that results from this survey will be evidenced in the next Complaints Annual Performance Report 2014-15.
- 4.6 The eight SPSO Performance Indicators will be included in future quarterly reports to Corporate Management Team and Council Executive committee, where appropriate.
- 4.7 Regular internal Complaint Handler meetings will continue to be held to highlight issues surrounding complaints and work will be undertaken as part of these meetings to establish a formal procedure for reviewing complaints and implementing any actions necessary to prevent reoccurrence. These meetings will also be used to share best practice so that lessons learned are disseminated throughout the Council.
- 4.8 The Council is currently working with the SPSO and other Scottish Local Authorities on a benchmarking exercise to compare complaint performance nationally across all local authorities.
- 4.9 The Scottish Complaint Handlers Network agreed to submit annual complaint indicators to Aberdeen City Council by 30 June each year for benchmarking purposes.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial

There are no costs attached to any of the recommendations contained in this report.

5.2 Risk and Mitigations

The report fully describes all the elements of risk that have been identified in relation to this project and no specific additional concerns need to be addressed.

5.3 Equalities

Currently the data collected does not permit an evaluation of possible adverse equality implications however work is being undertaken to ensure this information is collected from April 2015.

5.4 Acting Sustainably

There are no economic, social or environmental implications.

5.5 Carbon Management

There are no effects on carbon emissions.

5.6 Rural Proofing

This is not a new or amended policy or strategy.

5.7 Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation

There are no changes to the Scheme of Delegation required.

6 CONSULTATION

- 6.1 The Chief Financial Officer, the Service Director Regulatory Services as Monitoring Officer, the Chief Legal Officer, the Service Director Strategy and Policy, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Chief Officer HR, and the Clerk to the Council have been consulted and their comments have been incorporated into the final report.
- 6.2 The Waste Manager - Ross Sharp-Dent, the Neighbourhood Operations Manager - Kenny Hastings, the Service Director Children & Young People - Carol Kirk, the Chief Officer Children & Young People Ann Blackie, the Complaints Officer Education & Lifelong Learning - Lisa Anderson, the Complaints Officer Place - Jacqueline Whitelaw, the Complaints Officer Social Work - Sylvia Mendham have also be consulted and their comments have been incorporated into the final report.

Approved by

Jenni Craig
Service Director Neighbourhood Services

Signature

Author(s)

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Background Papers: none

Previous Minute Reference: none

Note – You can get this document on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats by contacting the address below. Clare Easson can also give information on other language translations as well as providing additional copies.

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