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## **COMPLAINTS ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT**

**Report by Service Director Neighbourhood Services**

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### **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

**9 June 2015**

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#### **1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report presents the Council's Complaints Annual Performance Report in a format guided by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO), who requires the annual report to be submitted to the SPSO and for the Council to publish the report.**
- 1.2 The SPSO requires all Scottish Local Authorities to present their annual performance on complaints in a publicly available annual report.
- 1.3 Scottish Borders Council's Complaints Annual Performance Report for complaints handled in 2014-15 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:
  - The eight SPSO Performance Indicators are included in the Council's performance management framework;
  - The Council works with the SPSO and other Local Authorities to develop benchmarking of complaints performance indicators;
  - Work to enhance service delivery and improve complaint response times.

#### **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 I recommend that the Committee:-**
  - (a) notes the performance of handling complaints for the period 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015;**
  - (b) endorses the identified improvement actions including the continued provision of statistics to the Complaint Handlers Network outlined in 4.9 throughout 2015-16;**
  - (c) note the intention to review data collected from the complaints handling surveys outlined in 4.11, the results to be made available in the 2015-16 Complaints Annual Performance Report;**
  - (d) note the commitment to benchmarking outlined in 4.12**
  - (e) approves the annual report to be submitted to the SPSO and for the Council to publish the report**

### **3 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 gave the Scottish Public Services 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 to 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. Scottish Borders Council's 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 complaints be formally presented in an annual report across eight specified key performance indicators. It was later confirmed that this report should be published.
- 3.5 Scottish Borders Council's first Complaints Annual Performance report was published in January 2015. This is the second such report and covers 2014-15 performance.

### **4 COMPARISONS**

- 4.1 Scottish Borders Council's Annual Complaints Performance Report (Appendix 1) has been drafted to reflect previously agreed good practice and details the complaints handled by Scottish Borders Council between 1 April 2014 and 31 March 2015.
- 4.2 A set of comparative tables comparing 2014-15 performance against 2013-14 performance is attached at appendix 2.
- 4.3 The total number of complaints received excluding those classed as invalid increased by 62 in 2014-15 to 619, representing an 11% increase. The total number of complaints recorded excludes those classified as invalid based on current guidance from the SPSO. Where the basis of that information differed in the 2013/14 report additional figures have been provided for both years to allow comparisons to be made.
- 4.4 There were various changes in the ways customers complained resulting in a 3.3% channel shift from face to face and letter to electronic and telephony methods of making complaints.
- 4.5 Indicator 1 – The total number of complaints received per thousand of the population. The population of the Scottish Borders increased in 2014-15 to a mid-year estimated figure of 114,030 and the number of complaints to 619. This measure indicates the average number of Scottish Borders residents registering a complaint about our services. It shows a significant movement in the figure from 2013/14 from an average of 1 in 204 to 1 in 184 however this is in part due to invalid complaints now being excluded from the 2014/15 calculation. In the absence of national benchmarking statistics it is not possible to draw any conclusions on relative performance.
- 4.6 Indicator 2 – Complaints closed at Stage One and Stage Two as a percentage of all complaints closed reports on complaints received between

1 April 2014 and 31 March 2015 and closed within the same period. Table 4 of appendix 2 indicates an improving performance in dealing with complaints at Stage One despite an increased number of complaints compared to 2013/14. This has also contributed to a reduction in the number of complaints being dealt with directly at Stage Two. There has been an increase in complaints overall and an increase of 1.3% in the number of complaints escalated to Stage Two.

- 4.7 Indicator 3 – The number of complaints upheld/not upheld at each stage as a percentage of complaints closed in full at each stage indicates an increase in the number of complaints upheld at Stage One of 3% in 2014-15 against an increase of 3% in the number of complaints received in the year and handled at that stage. There has also been a reduction of 9.6% in the number of complaints upheld at Stage Two against a 3.2% reduction in the number of complaints handled at that stage. Overall, there has been a 6.6% reduction in the total number of complaints upheld
- 4.8 Indicator 4 – This measures average time spent in working days for a full response to complaints at each stage and shows that while the average time spent responding to a complaint at all stages has marginally increased it still remains well within the timescales set of 5 and 20 working days at Stage One and Stage Two respectively.
- 4.9 Indicator 5 – This measures the number and percentage of complaints at each stage which were closed in full within set timescales of 5 and 20 working days and indicates that performance in responding to complaints within our timescales has fallen. The percentage of complaints closed at Stage One within the timescales fell by 3.3%, although the total number of complaints handled at this stage increased by 75 (3%). The percentage of complaints closed at Stage Two within the timescales fell by 8.2%, but there was also a fall of 3 cases in the total number of complaints handled at Stage Two. Improvements in this area will be achieved by reviewing the guidance, providing additional coaching and training to individual staff, providing monthly statistics and reviewing individual departmental and team processes.
- 4.10 Indicator 6 – This details the number and percentage of complaints at each stage where an extension to the 5 or 20 working day timeline has been authorised. Analysis shows that there is an increase in the number of complaints granted an extension evenly spread between departments. Improvement is required by all departments in this area therefore these cases will be reviewed individually for potential lessons to be learned.
- 4.11 Indicator 7 - This indicator covers measurement of customer satisfaction with the complaints service provided. The Councils revised complaints handling survey is being rolled out from April 2015 and results from that will be included in the next Complaints Annual Performance Report for 2015-16.

4.12 Indicator 8 – Includes information outlining the changes or improvements to the services or procedures made as a result of the considerations of complaints. In addition as part of a national approach to benchmarking the Councils annual complaint indicators were submitted to Aberdeen City Council for collation and analysis. The outcomes of this analysis are not yet available to allow a comparison of the Councils performance across Scotland however this will be reviewed as soon as it is available and on an ongoing basis.

## **5 IMPLICATIONS**

### **5.1 Financial**

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

### **5.2 Risk and Mitigations**

This report satisfies the requirements as set down by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) in respect of complaints handling performance monitoring and reporting. Approval of the report, its submission to SPSO and publication of the report will mitigate the risk of non-compliance with required practice

### **5.3 Equalities**

Data began being collected in April 2015 in order to evaluate possible adverse equality implications. Analysis of this information will be available in the 2015-16 Complaints Annual Performance Report.

### **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 Administration or Scheme of Delegation required.

## **6 CONSULTATION**

6.1 The Chief Financial Officer, the 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 any comments received have been incorporated into the final report.

6.2 Others consulted –

- Corporate Transformation and Services Director
- Complaints Officer Education & Lifelong Learning
- Complaints Officer Place
- Complaints Officers Social Work
- Complaints Officer Chief Executive

**Approved by**

**Jenni Craig**

**Service Director Neighbourhood Services**

**Signature .....**

**Author**

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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. Claire Tracy can also give information on other language translations as well as providing additional copies.

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**Appendix 1**

**Appendix 2**