

CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AGENDA

Monday, 13 February 2017 at 10.00 am in the Bridges Room - Civic Centre

From the Acting Chief Executive, Mike Barker

Item	Business
1	Apologies
2	Minutes (Pages 3 - 8) The Committee is asked to approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 28 November 2016.
3	Work Programme Review (Pages 9 - 12) Report of Acting Chief Executive
4	Gateshead Communities Together Strategy: Shaping a Review of the Strategy (Pages 13 - 20) Report of the Strategic Director, Communities and Environment
5	Performance Monitoring: Agreement with Newcastle CVS (Pages 21 - 32) Report of the Strategic Director, Communities and Environment
6	Corporate Complaints Procedure - Annual Report 2015-16 (Pages 33 - 56) Report of the Strategic Director, Corporate Services and Governance

Contact: Neil Porteous

Tel: (0191) 433 2149

Date: Friday, 3 February 2017

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GATESHEAD METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING

Monday, 28 November 2016

PRESENT: Councillor P Foy (Chair)
Councillor(s): J Wallace, R Beadle, D Bradford, S Green, M Henry, B Oliphant and M Ord

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor(s):

APOLOGIES: Councillor(s): John Eagle, L Caffrey, T Graham, J Green, M Hall, A Thompson and N Weatherley

CR24 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 17 October 2016 be approved as a correct record.

CR25 CORPORATE ASSET MANAGEMENT - DELIVERY AND PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Committee received an update report on the progress made against the Council's Corporate Asset Strategy and Management Plan and the performance of the property portfolio.

The report outlined the proactive approach being taken to the management of the property portfolio and the outcomes were welcomed by the Committee.

It was commented that Councillors have continued to challenge the use of the Dryden Centre and that it should be an area for future focus. It was confirmed that the site could potentially be used for housing, however, it was reported that the Council trades from the Dryden Centre therefore work is underway to identify an alternative site which will safeguard this income stream.

The Committee suggested that the Dryden Centre could be closed if the trading activity was relocated to Gateshead Town Centre, either at the Civic Centre or in partnership with Gateshead College. It was commented that parking facilities exist within the town centre and that the location would be more accessible by public transport.

It was commented that there is space available within the Civic Centre and it was queried whether the building is being used effectively.

It was reported that office staff based at the Dryden Centre can be accommodated within the Civic Centre but that an alternative location to trade from has yet to be

identified.

It was queried whether the reduction in energy consumption takes into account the reduction in the number of buildings held by the Council. It was confirmed that property rationalisation has contributed to the reduction in energy consumption in addition to the energy efficiency works. It was agreed that a breakdown of the factors be provided.

Business cases were prepared and assessed prior to energy efficiency works being approved and carried out. Once the works have been completed, the same process will be followed for energy generation schemes. This approach was welcomed by the Committee.

In respect of carbon emission monitoring, the use of weather corrected figures was queried. It was clarified that changes in weather can result in a 15% variance in gas consumption figures therefore the weather correction calculation deducts this variability.

It was commented that there is much evidence of borough-wide energy efficiency schemes and this was praised. It was suggested that activity could now focus on energy generation schemes, such as the installation of solar panels on properties within the Council's housing stock.

It was recognised that centralisation will generate savings, however, it was commented that the Council should seek to maintain a public interface with residents in localities. The Committee was pleased to note that work is being undertaken to maintain the delivery of some services from within local communities, by linking with schools, GP practices and other partner organisations.

It was agreed that a performance report be received in respect of the Council's Music Service which is based at the Dryden Centre.

Information was sought on the operation and performance of the Civic Centre heating system along with timescales for maintenance works. It was noted that a survey has been carried out on both the Civic Centre heating system and switchgear and that works will be carried out as part of the Strategic Maintenance Programme, however, works to the heating system can only be carried out in the summer season when the system is not in use. A separate update will be provided to the Committee in relation to this.

The Committee requested information in respect of the Public Sector PLC including performance information for monitoring purposes.

- RESOLVED:
- i. That the information be noted.
 - ii. That the Committee was satisfied with the level of progress made to date. The Committee highlighted the use of the Dryden Centre as an area for future focus.
 - iii. That a visit to the Gateshead Town Centre District Energy Scheme be organised (when operational) and that an

- invitation be extended to all Councillors.
- iv. That a performance report be received in respect of the Council's Music Service.
- v. That a breakdown of the factors contributing to the increased energy efficiency of properties be provided.
- vi. That an update be provided to the Committee in respect of planned works to the Civic Centre switchgear and heating system.

CR26 THE COUNCIL PLAN - SIX MONTH ASSESSMENT OF PERFORMANCE AND DELIVERY 2016/17

The Committee received a report on performance and delivery for the period April to September 2016 in relation to the Council Plan 2015-2020.

The achievements, key actions and areas for improvement were set out in the report.

A presentation was also delivered outlining the performance of Customer Services and updating on the progress of the digital projects which are underway.

The Committee welcomed the opportunity to consider, in more detail, the results of both the Resident and Employee Surveys. It was agreed that this be added to the Committee's current Work Programme.

It was queried whether the Council is resourced to respond to emails and calls that may be generated by the content of the Gateshead Now Newsletter. It was reported that content to date has not generated a significant number of queries or requests, however, it was highlighted that within 1 hour of the Green Waste Scheme being featured in the newsletter there was a noticeable increase in online payments being made for this service.

A request was made by and for the Committee to consider the issues related to digital inclusion along with potential interventions by the Council and its partners, particularly as many residents without access to ICT can often require the Council's services the most.

It was commented that the reduction of cash desks will have contributed to the increase in online transactions, therefore performance data was requested in terms of cash collected overall.

It was suggested that features could be included in Gateshead Now to help increase voter registration and improve the overall turnout at elections (potentially by promoting postal vote sign up).

One Councillor commented that the significant increase in residents responding that roads and pavements need improving and that traffic congestion is an issue, could be attributable, in part, to the Council's Transport Strategy and the recent implementation of some contentious schemes. It was requested that the Transport

Strategy be reviewed.

It was requested that the Resident Survey analysis includes information by ward.

- RESOLVED:
- i. That the Committee was satisfied with the activities undertaken during April – September 2016 in relation to the Council Plan 2015-2020.
 - ii. That the report be endorsed for submission to the Cabinet at its meeting on 24 January 2017.
 - iii. That the Committee's Work Programme be updated to include a separate opportunity for the Committee to consider, in more detail, the results of both the Resident and Employee Surveys.
 - iv. That the Resident Survey analysis be compiled to include information by ward.

CR27 CASE STUDY - EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENTS AND THE COUNCIL PLAN - PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee received a report on the work undertaken to monitor the impact of spending proposals over the period of the 2011/12 to 2016/17 budgets, that were identified as potentially having a significant impact in terms of the protected characteristics determined by the Equality Act 2010.

The report included an assessment of the impact that occurred following implementation, along with mitigating activities.

It was clarified that there was a typographical error in the report and that 24 budget decisions were monitored and not 27. All 24 were listed in the report.

- RESOLVED:
- i. That the approach to identify and monitor potential equalities impact of budget decisions (and any mitigating actions) be continued.
 - ii. That the recommendations of Service Directors, as outlined in the report, be approved.
 - iii. That a further report be received in autumn 2017, on proposals where the impact is considered not to have been fully mitigated.

CR28 REVIEW OF ABSENCE IN THE COUNCIL - MONITORING REPORT

The Committee received the nineteenth update on progress to reduce absence within the workforce. The statistics included in the report related to the period 1 November 2015 to 31 October 2016.

The previous figure reported to the Committee for average sickness days per Full

Time Equivalent (FTE) was 10.25 days' absence for the period 1 January 2015 to 31 December 2015. The same calculation for the period 1 November 2015 to 31 October 2016 was 8.83 day's absence per FTE which indicates that absence levels are falling.

The report detailed the many and varied actions to reduce absence since the last report.

The Committee was satisfied with the actions taken and considered it appropriate to continue to receive separate monitoring reports specifically on the management of sickness absence.

It was suggested that future reports should make clear whether absences within service areas are made up of many employees being absent for short periods or individual employees being absent long term. It was clarified that 63% of recorded absence is employees who are absent for four weeks or more.

In response to the finding that stress, depression and mental health issues continue to be the largest cause of absence, it was queried whether any assessment is being carried out at the point of recruitment or promotion, to ensure employees can manage the demands of the roles they are placed into.

It was put forward that the resource could be targeted to services where absence due to stress is most pronounced or by targeting training to employees who may find moving into new roles more demanding. Activity could be piloted in areas or situations before wider implementation.

- RESOLVED:
- i. That the actions to reduce sickness absence within the workforce are appropriate.
 - ii. That the scope of the data included in the reporting of sickness absence management is as required, with the additional future inclusion of tables to show absence within service areas.
 - iii. That the separate reporting of the management of sickness absence be continued.
 - iv. That the newly appointed Senior Occupational Health Advisor be invited to address the Committee when it next considers the management of sickness absence within the workforce.

Chair.....

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TITLE OF REPORT: Review of Annual Work Programme

REPORT OF: Mike Barker, Acting Chief Executive

Summary

The report updates and seeks the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's views on the current position with regard to the annual work programme.

Background

1. At its meeting on 11 April 2016, the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed its work programme based on the Council's policy framework. This work programme was then agreed by the Council as part of the policy planning process.
2. In line with the process agreed by all OSCs this OSC selected its case studies using a process designed to help make linkages between potential topics and the Council's policy framework.

Proposals

OSC Review Topics for 2017/18

3. In advance of the OSC agreeing its work programme for 2017-18, members of the OSC have been invited to identify any issues which may potentially be appropriate for a detailed review by 14 December 2016. Any issues put forward by members have been added to the list of potential review topics for consideration by the OSC at the start of the municipal year, unless the issue was already being, or would more appropriately be, dealt with through other processes within the Council. Members have been notified if this is the case and advised as to how their issue has been dealt with.

Case Studies

4. Case studies have been included within OSC work programmes to provide an additional means of examining specific issues of concern or carrying out more detailed work on a particular topic.

5. The case studies for 2016/17 are :

- Workforce Strategy (Oct 2016)
 - Implementation and Roll out of Universal Credit (27 February 2017)
6. Each OSC has identified specific issues to be considered through the case study method and it was agreed that in view of the timing of case studies within the 2015-16 work programmes that feedback on their effectiveness be sought during its work programme review in 2016/17.
7. During 2015/16 the OSC considered the following case studies :-

- **Implementation of Universal Credit (30 November 2015)**

The OSC focused on:-

- the main findings of the pilots in the North West and the progress made towards implementation in Gateshead.
- The impact of Universal Credit on Gateshead residents.
- Action taken to mitigate the impact of Universal Credit on Gateshead residents.
- Three separate case studies highlighting the impact of Universal Credit on individuals.

Having examined the issues the OSC :

- raised concerns about sanctions, in particular the sanctioning of claimants who were on DWP training courses and the 55% success rate of appeals against decisions to sanction claimants, suggesting that sanctions were unfairly imposed
- raised concerns about the demand on Council resources to help those affected by Universal Credit and
- requested that the cost to the Council be measured. The OSC noted that the Council's Partnership arrangement with the DWP secures a small amount of funding but this might cease in April 2016.

In light of the above the Committee:-

- requested that their serious concerns about the rollout of Universal Credit be recorded and invited the Minister for Work and Pensions to attend the February 2016 meeting of the OSC.

- **Council's use of powers under Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (29 February 2016)**

The OSC focused on :-

- The types of covert surveillance the Council can use and the types of circumstances in which it might be used / restrictions on usage.
- specific case studies and outcomes.

Having examined the issues the OSC indicated that it was satisfied that the Council's use of its powers under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act has been appropriate.

Recommendations

8. The Committee is asked to

- (i) Note that any issues identified by members of the OSC as potential review topics by 14 December 2016 have been included in the list of review topics to be considered by the OSC at the start of the municipal year unless such issues are being or would more appropriately be dealt with via other Council processes.
- (ii) Give its views on the review monitoring process carried out so far.
- (iii) Give its views on the effectiveness of the case studies carried out in 2015/16.

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13 February 2017

TITLE OF REPORT: Gateshead Communities Together Strategy:
Shaping a Review of the Strategy

REPORT OF: Paul Dowling, Strategic Director, Communities and
Environment

SUMMARY

This report outlines a context and a set of suggested principles to inform a review of the Gateshead Communities Together Strategy.

1. Background

The Gateshead Communities Together Strategy was agreed by Gateshead Strategic Partnership Steering Group and Cabinet in May 2012.

The Strategy sets out how partners work together to address the five priority areas identified within the Strategy:

- Community engagement & participation
- Community capacity building
- Information & communication
- Involving children, young people & schools
- Supporting positive community relationships.

An annual review has been carried out since 2012 to look at how various actions and activities have been carried out to achieve these priorities.

The Strategy was agreed at a time when Central Government's deficit reduction programme was in to its second year; five years on and with reduced service provision, the need for strong and resilient communities has never been greater. The Council has though continued to prioritise its support for community groups and organisations in Gateshead, with the support provided to over 200 groups by the Neighbourhood Management & Volunteering team, the funding of services provided by Newcastle CVS to the voluntary and community sector in Gateshead, and funding organisations growth and development through the Gateshead Fund (both the Local Community Fund and the Capacity Building Fund).

It is therefore timely to review the Gateshead Communities Together Strategy, with a view to establishing a framework of principles that support the development of active citizenship, connected communities that make the most of the assets at their disposal, and through a growth in capacity and social capital enriching the life chances and quality of life of Gateshead residents.

A refreshed strategy will help address the following challenges:

- How can Gateshead's communities become more empowered, resilient and vibrant?
- How can Gateshead's communities identify and communicate issues and ideas for change, and be better able to take collective action?
- What needs to happen to bring about empowered and connected communities in Gateshead?

2. **The importance of resilience for Gateshead's communities, and its key features**

The communities residents live in and the relationships and networks they belong to are important features of resilience. To succeed, most people need supportive relationships and the ability and opportunity to link to a wider group of people with different knowledge, talents and resources at their disposal.

A resilient community is a well networked one, and one where there are positive social norms and challenges to negative and potentially destructive behaviour. Personal and community resilience are interconnected, because support networks are stronger when made up of resilient individuals, and forming meaningful relationships takes confidence and other personal capabilities.

The majority of residents in Gateshead are likely to have emotionally supportive networks already. These might be friends and family or community or faith groups. They know people they can turn to in difficult times for help, advice and guidance.

However for other residents these relationships may be weaker or less supportive, and are therefore more vulnerable to experiencing adversity and ill health. Structures and support networks that can help residents build the relationships they need are important for Gateshead.

Broad networks of weaker ties (contacts with people we don't know as well) can help residents to access a range of advice, skills, knowledge and connections. So for example in resilient communities people are more likely to know someone who can give them advice about how to apply to university, how to do some DIY or how to influence local decision making. The greater the level of interaction between residents, the more resources and potential support they have at their disposal.

Essential to building a resilient community is understanding the power of networks in spreading positive behaviours, knowledge and social norms, and challenging those that undermine this. Having a broad and diverse set of networks and relationships is good for individual well-being and life chances, but is also good for the community as a whole. A community with vibrant and diverse networks is better able to respond to local challenges that public services cannot, or should not, be involved in.

For example, residents are perfectly capable of organising the school run or helping out an elderly neighbour with the shopping, and it is better the council does not get involved. These relationships are the building blocks around which residents and communities can become stronger, more connected and resilient, and forms the starting point for giving communities the resources to be more involved in meeting local need.

3. **The importance of connected communities**

In a programme funded by the Big Lottery Fund, the RSA (Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce) has been working in seven different UK locations since 2010 to test how interventions at a local level might encourage deeper social connections that would help improve a community's resilience and wellbeing. Researchers found that:

- There is evidence that investing in interventions which build social relationships can improve employability, improve health (and thereby employability) and create savings in health and welfare expenditure.
- Social connectedness is the characteristic most consistently associated with wellbeing, rather than characteristics such as long term illness, unemployment or being a single parent. In a survey of 2,840 people found that the issue most consistently associated with having higher subjective wellbeing was 'feeling part of a community'.
- 60 per cent of the people surveyed could not name anybody they knew who had the power or influence to change things locally. But by facilitating connections between people and supporting them to feel like socially included citizens, supporting these connections can provide people with new skills and improve their employment prospects.
- Concentrating resources on networks and relationships, rather than on the 'troubled' individuals or groups most at risk as an end-user can have beneficial effects which ripple out through social networks, having positive effects on people's children, partners, friends and others.

4. **Tackling health and wellbeing inequalities**

According to the Report of the Commission for Health and Social Care Integration published by the North East Combined Authority (NECA), overcoming the entrenched health inequalities in the NECA area will require a strong, collective focus on key issues with greatest impact on health and wellbeing outcomes, such as:

- early resilience – providing a best start in life for all children
- greater control for individuals over their life and circumstances
- fair employment and good work for all
- health at work and play, action to address social isolation and loneliness, and concerted action to achieve an age-friendly environment for all ages
- strengthening the role and impact of ill health prevention, including through low-cost, community based approaches (secondary prevention).

The Marmot Review (2010) stated that health inequality could be narrowed by improving the amount of community capital, and reducing the level of social isolation.....strong and effective community organisations delivering local activities is a key requirement for this to take place.

5. **Pursuing an asset based approach to achieve empowered, resilient communities**

Assets can be described as the collective resources which individuals and communities have at their disposal, which protect against negative health outcomes and promote wellbeing. Although health assets are a part of every person, they are not necessarily used purposefully or mindfully.

According to the LGA publication “A Glass Half Full”, the asset approach is a set of values and principles and a way of thinking about the world. It:

- identifies and makes visible the health-enhancing assets in a community
- sees citizens and communities as the co-producers of health and well-being, rather than just the recipients of services
- promotes community networks, relationships and friendships that can provide caring, mutual help and empowerment
- values what works well in an area
- identifies what has the potential to improve health and well-being
- supports individuals’ health and well-being through self-esteem, coping strategies, resilience skills, relationships, friendships, knowledge and personal resources
- empowers communities to control their futures and create tangible resources such as services, funds and buildings.

Strong communities are built by recognising, celebrating and harnessing the community assets that are already present within communities. These assets can include:

- the skills, knowledge and connections of local residents
- the collective power of community groups and clubs
- the resources of public, private and non-profit institutions
- the physical and economic resources of local places
- the shared stories, culture and heritage of local places

The potential benefits of this approach for residents include:

- more control over their lives and where they live
- the ability to influence decisions which affect them and their communities
- the opportunity to be engaged how and as they want to be, and
- to be seen as part of the solution, not the problem.

This in turn may then lead to increased wellbeing for residents through a strengthened sense of control, increased knowledge, raised self-esteem and an increase in social contacts, giving skills for life and work.

Meaningful engagement and collaboration with everyone

Asset based activities ensure that engagement with individuals is meaningful and empowering rather than tokenistic and consultative. It helps the community identify what they can do for themselves, what they need a little assistance with, and what public services can do to improve the things that matter most to residents and their neighbourhoods. Asset based working also strives to engage with individuals who would not usually get involved, and values the contributions of everyone involved.

The Gateshead Communities Together Strategy will provide the framework by which Gateshead’s residents and communities can become stronger and more resilient, through enhanced local networks, communication and opportunities to get involved.

6. The approach

The Gateshead Communities Together Strategy will act as an open invitation and opportunity for residents, communities, public and private sector organisations to work together to explore how to improve Gateshead and to meet the aspirations in Vision 2030 and the Council Plan.

The Strategy will provide an overall context of Gateshead's values, what it does well, illustrated with case studies. It will set out a suggested way to support the establishment of community plans, based around the principles of an appreciative inquiry, and featuring 5 key questions:

- Thinking about your work, and your life within your community what difference are you making and what are you most proud of?
- What could help you to do more of the work you think is important – or do it better?
- What are your dreams and ambitions for your community / the community you work in?
- What things could get in the way of achieving positive change for your community / the community you work in?
- What are the most important messages for ALL those involved in communities? Research carried out in East Sussex in 2016 suggests these might include making it easier and “normal” to volunteer and that everybody has a responsibility for improving life in their community.

These questions help to shape how things could be done differently, and will also help identify how things could start to happen and reshape the nature of relationships and roles.

In many communities in Gateshead the foundations are already in place to kick start this approach. A number of community hubs, clusters of activity, and proactive organisations acting as “leaders of place” already exist to help grow assets based approaches. Examples of these organisations in Gateshead include:

- Big Local Gateshead
- Community Partnerships such as Birtley and the Low Fell Forum
- Kibblesworth Parish Council
- Bensham & Saltwell Alive
- Dunston Activity Centre
- Lobley Hill Community Centre
- Edbert's House
- Deckham Village Hall

7. Supporting the delivery of the Strategy

Delivering the Strategy will draw upon the learning so far from the work associated with Achieving More Together, the ABCD workshop sessions delivered by Nurture Development in 2016, and the Members' and Council employees ABCD training sessions provided by Asset Based Consulting over the last 18 months.

From within the Council, it should be quite straightforward to identify a group of 100 “early adopters” to act as a pool of in house employee champions to embed an asset based approach within services, and to help support communities with the implementation of the Strategy. In addition, there are a number of further resources that will help realise the delivery of the Strategy.

The Neighbourhood Management and Volunteering Team

This team will provide residents with advice and support on steps to put a community plan together, such as capturing and mapping assets, helping with the identification of ideas and ambitions for change, and support for new and existing community groups.

The Spatial Planning and Environment Service

This service offers advice and support to communities looking to develop a Neighbourhood Plan, which is a shared vision identified for their neighbourhood that shapes the development and growth of a local area.

Economic and Housing Growth Service

The Service can provide advice on employment and enterprising pathways that can arise out of asset based working within communities.

Support, advice and representation for community organisations

A CVS service will be jointly commissioned with Newcastle City Council from September 2017 providing technical expertise, advocacy and sector representation to complement the services provided by the Council. Gateshead Council currently contracts with Newcastle CVS for this role on an interim basis.

Ward Councillors as community champions

Councillors will be supported to further develop their understanding of the characteristics of their wards, the active community groups and organisations within them, identifying their key ward priorities and establishing a ward plan to address them. The role of ward visits will also be considered

Access to finance to support community groups' activities and facilities and capacity building The Gateshead Fund provides a valuable resource that supports the growth and development of Gateshead community groups and organisations. A revised Fund could be a single point of access for several funding components, including the Capacity Building Fund and the neighbourhood component of the Community Infrastructure Levy, and possibly shaped further by the research currently underway by the Community Foundation Tyne & Wear and Northumberland. The Local Community Fund may also have a role as a source of microfinance for communities.

A funding and investment strategy for Gateshead's communities

The aim of this would be to look at developing a more structured approach to maximising funding and investment opportunities for Gateshead's communities, including coordinated dissemination of funding advice, funding training workshops, and approaches to securing investment through partnership collaboration. This would also include an assessment of commissioning and contracting activities, to ensure Gateshead organisations are in a better position to access such opportunities and that commissioning approaches actively consider approaches that maximise the potential for local delivery.

A volunteering support and advice service that is simple to access and helps maximise the impact of volunteering within the Borough's communities

By supporting the availability and delivery of a wide range of volunteering activities, and an effective volunteer advice and support service, the chances of an increase in active citizenship and the growth of social capital in Gateshead has a greater chance of succeeding.

Effective and viable operation of community facilities as accessible assets for communities and groups to use

The Council currently administers a Community Centre Network which provides an opportunity for learning and dissemination of best practice. This has the potential to develop further and could look at the benefits of a formal membership structure, becoming constituted and acting as a means to secure better deals on utilities, procurement, insurance etc.

The roles and responsibilities of these support services to help deliver assets based approaches and activities will be further outlined in the final Strategy.

8. **The Outcomes: measuring the impact**

Implementation of an asset based approach to community wellbeing is likely to lead to the following outcomes:

- More resident – led initiatives and activities
- Greater influence by residents over the delivery of Council services they receive
- Increased level and range of volunteering
- A voluntary and community sector that has greater capacity to operate effectively

An outcomes based framework will be developed to capture the impact and change that materialises as asset based approaches develop across the Borough under the auspices of the Gateshead Communities Together Strategy. The framework could include the following measures:

- Community organisations are flourishing in Gateshead
- Community networks are vibrant across the Borough
- Residents have access to a wide range of community groups and activities
- Residents are more active in their community
- The level of satisfaction and wellbeing expressed by residents

9. **Next steps**

It is proposed that under the auspices of the Place Board:

- An approach to embed an assets-based culture within the Council, supported by Organisational Development, is identified including the establishment of a pool of Assets champions to support the roll out of assets based work with communities
- A draft Strategy, adoption and implementation timeline and outcomes based framework are produced

A further report will be presented to Committee outlining progress on these steps.

10. **Recommendations**

Overview and Scrutiny Committee is requested to: -

- (i) Comment on the suggested principles and proposed next steps to implement a review of the Gateshead Communities Together Strategy

Contact: Ian Stevenson

Extension: 2812

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TITLE OF REPORT: **Performance Monitoring: Agreement with Newcastle CVS for the provision of support, development, networking and representation to the voluntary and community sector in Gateshead**

REPORT OF: **Paul Dowling, Strategic Director, Communities and Environment**

Summary

This report provides an overview of the performance of Newcastle Council for Voluntary Service (NCVS) associated with the Agreement it entered into with the Council in June 2016 for the provision of support, development, networking and representation to the voluntary and community sector in Gateshead.

Introduction

1. Council agreed, in April 2016, to enter into an Agreement with NCVS for the provision of support, development, networking and representation to the voluntary and community sector in Gateshead. The Agreement covers the period until 31st March 2017 and was established as an interim arrangement following the demise of GVOC to ensure there was continued provision of support for the Borough's voluntary and community sector (VCS).
2. With an interim arrangement in place, the Council is now looking at options for the provision of support and representation for the VCS in Gateshead for 2017/18 and beyond, which involves discussions with Newcastle City Council and Newcastle Gateshead CCG with a view to a jointly commissioned approach. This was agreed as an approach to explore by Cabinet in December 2016, together with an extension to the Agreement with NCVS until September 2017 to enable a procurement process to take place, with Gateshead Council acting as lead partner.

The provision of support, development, networking and representation to Gateshead's VCS 2016/17

3. A resilient and effective VCS is vital in ensuring Gateshead residents enjoy a high quality of life with opportunities to improve their own health and wellbeing, together with their fellow residents and the communities they live in. To achieve this, the Borough's VCS ideally needs to:
 - be effectively represented
 - be in possession of key skills to provide activities in an effective manner
 - be engaged in influencing and delivering services where appropriate
 - be able to engage in key decision-making processes
 - be championing excellence, continuous improvement and innovation, and
 - move towards greater self-sustainability where possible

4. Shaped by NAVCA (National Association for Voluntary and Community Action) Performance Standards the Agreement between NCVS and the Council addressees three core elements; these are set out below together with key activities provided through the Agreement by NCVS to deliver them.
- Networking and Representation of the VCS
 - provide a lead representative and influencing role for the Borough's VCS by engaging with key strategic partnerships and boards as required, and with Gateshead based organisations / service providers
 - Support and Development of the VCS
 - work on a prioritised basis with micro (up to £10,000 annual income) and small (annual income between £10,000 and £100,000) community organisations based in Gateshead
 - provide advice and guidance to community organisations to help develop their capacity and skills
 - provide funding advice
 - organise training and workshop activity
 - support the development of organisations with annual income over £100,000 as and when appropriate
 - gather and share information on the health and viability of the VCS in Gateshead
 - Engagement, marketing and communication
 - establish a dedicated online presence on their website for Gateshead's VCS
 - administer the Council's OurGateshead website.
5. The report attached at Appendix 1 has been provided by NCVS and sets out the activities they have provided within Gateshead since entering into the Agreement with the Council. By way of historical reference, an example quarterly monitoring report provided by GVOC under the terms of their SLA with the Council is included in Appendix 2.

Recommendations

6. Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to:
- Comment on the attached report with reference to the performance and activities delivered by NCVS since the commencement of the Agreement with the Council.

Lindsay Murray ext. 2794

Appendix 1

AGREEMENT BETWEEN GATESHEAD COUNCIL AND NEWCASTLE CVS PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

1) Introduction

This report gives a nine month update on performance and delivery for the period 20 April 2016 to 13 January 2017 against the outcomes of the agreement. It is monitored on a quantitative basis (performance measures) and a qualitative basis (impact reports), against the three key functions of this Agreement, namely:

- Networking and Representation of the VCS
- Support and Development of the VCS
- Engagement, Marketing and Communication

There are also the obligations under contract monitoring:

- Reports are produced each quarter (31 July, 31 October and 31 January)
- Regular meetings held with the Service Director
- Regular meetings held with responsible officer

The performance measures and targets are outlined in the table below, followed by some further detail regarding the 3 key functions, in paragraphs 3-5.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES AND TARGETS 2016/17

Indicator	Baseline Position March 2016	March 2017 Target	Position at Q3 (20th April 2016 to 16th January 2017)
Number of community groups directly engaged	109	200	249 individual groups
Increase the number of community groups accessing support for the first time	No baseline	Baseline to be established	249 individual groups
Provide advice and guidance to organisations to enable them to submit funding applications for a combined total value of	£56,028	£500,000	£677,940

between £500,000 and £1 million			
Number of Gateshead VCS organisations provided with funding advice	29	50	57 individual groups
Increase the number of groups actively using Our Gateshead website	2030	2,250	No way of recording accurately how many groups use OurGateshead
Number of pages viewed of OurGateshead website per year	66,682 website visits	120,000 website visits	98,860 website visits
Maintain and update a database of community and voluntary organisations in Gateshead	184,486 page views	300,000 page views	254,150 page views
Provide performance management reports for the Partnership Board, to include feedback from service users, emerging intelligence and progress on meeting the performance framework targets	n/a	Ongoing management	Provided on 9 th November 2016
Produce a State of the Sector report for Gateshead	n/a	1 (by December 2016)	Initial information provided on 13 February 2017
Produce and present a performance management report to the Council's Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee			Will take place on 13 th February 2017
Increase number of consultation and community engagement events	0	10	14
Councillor feedback process		tbc	tbc
Service users feedback		tbc	tbc

2) Background

In Spring 2016, Newcastle CVS was invited by Gateshead Council to provide support, development, networking and representation to the voluntary and community sector in Gateshead. The contract started on 20 April 2016, and also included management of the provision of OurGateshead, the online resource used for community groups, events and activities, which includes support for health and wellbeing. At the same time GVOC, the previous provider, was being closed down and there was no transfer of resources from GVOC to Newcastle CVS. A single worker was transferred across under the TUPE process and the OurGateshead website, but this was not current.

As soon as the contract was agreed, premises were sought in Gateshead and staff dedicated to supporting groups in Gateshead were employed. At the same time, the CVS core team was enhanced and extended its support into Gateshead. This meant the offer to Gateshead organisations began in summer 2016. Close working with Gateshead Council officers eased the process and provided local knowledge. The Council's Neighbourhood Management and Volunteering Team arranged a series of 'show and tell' visits around different communities; these were very helpful. A series of 'Meet and Greet' events were established across the five areas to get the CVS Gateshead Team out into local communities.

3) Networking and Representation of the Sector

Although there are three separate functions, the reality is they are all inter-related. The community intelligence that comes from the support and development work, feeds directly into the representation of the sector, and enables CVS to tailor more appropriate services.

Throughout the summer, following a marketing campaign, CVS staff went and visited a range of Gateshead-based voluntary organisations. This enabled CVS to put together a more accurate picture of what was happening on the ground. During the visits, organisation leads spoke about what they did, the current issues facing the organisation, their current funding, and their relationships and how CVS could help them. A pattern soon emerged of a number of (medium-sized / larger) organisations, mainly providing social care and wellbeing support, not knowing what was happening in the local Council and NHS, and losing contacts.

A Voluntary Sector Leaders Group was established; this has now met three times. It provides information about the sector, encourages networking with each other, and provides access to key decision-makers e.g. Director of Public Health, Chair of the CCG.

A workshop on campaigning was organised at Gateshead Citizens Advice, funded through the Millfield House Trust, and this was run by a trainer from the Sheila McKechnie Foundation and a representative from Parliamentary Outreach.

Invitations have been sent out to Gateshead groups engaged in children and youth work, mental health, disability to come together about particular issues, policies,

Government consultations. This will increase and enhance not just the knowledge, but their positive relationships with each other, which could lead to partnership working in the future.

An example of this networking approach was the budget consultation meeting hosted by Newcastle CVS. Information on the Council Budget was circulated through a number of different media to voluntary organisations. The Neighbourhood Manager organised for key Gateshead Council officers to attend, the CVS Chief Executive chaired the meeting, Gateshead Council officers did presentations and answered questions, there was a lively discussion. There was a follow-up meeting, for the voluntary sector only. The comments from these meetings and from discussions with officers enabled the CVS Chief Executive to write a comprehensive response to the budget.

The representation of the sector, the provision of its voice and advocacy, comes mainly through representation at key meetings. The Health and Wellbeing Board has a Voluntary Sector Health and Wellbeing Advisory Group the day beforehand. An invitation is sent out to around fifteen key voluntary organisations to attend. The meeting is chaired by the CVS Chief Executive, who is the voluntary sector representative on the Board. The Gateshead Council Officer leading on Health Policy attends and briefs the group, taking it through the Health and Wellbeing Board agenda. This mechanism enables voluntary sector organisation leads to be very well-briefed on local health issues, to feed into the process and to inform the CVS Chief Executive to reflect the opinions at the Board meeting.

The Chief Executive is a member of the Gateshead Strategic Partnership Working Group. She has attended meetings, contributed to the review process and participated in the LGA Peer Review Process. CVS Policy Officers are on the Community Safety Partnership and the Children's Trust Board and regularly engage with voluntary organisations so their views on reflected on these boards.

This has been a year of change for Gateshead Council's partnership boards and groups, so CVS has tried to keep voluntary and community organisations up to date with what is happening. In a number of instances it is more relevant to have provider organisations directly involved as they have knowledge of the current issues.

There are regular meetings with senior Gateshead Council officers, quarterly meetings with the Leader of Council, meetings with Gateshead Cabinet Portfolio Holders and there was a display outside the September Gateshead Council meeting.

The Chief Officer is also a member of the Newcastle Gateshead CCG Joint Integrated Care Programme Board/ STP group in which she aims to reflect the views of the voluntary and community sector in Gateshead on health issues. She has tried to promote social prescribing, and the value and benefit of community organisations in improving health and wellbeing. She has been critical of the STP process – both the engagement and the lack of detail in the initial plan. There have been meetings with the Gateshead Care Partnership and with the Gateshead Healthcare Trust Chair and Chief Executive.

There are a number of key strategic discussions which focus on bringing external resources into Gateshead where there has been CVS involvement. The Well

Newcastle Gateshead project, which is awaiting final sign-off from Public Health England, involves Public Health, arts organisations and the Bluestone Consortium; once finally agreed it will bring in an additional £1m into Gateshead and Newcastle. The Blue Stone Consortium is a separate charity, operating Gateshead and Newcastle and is currently managing the Fulfilling Lives contract and will manage the Well Newcastle Gateshead work.

There have been other sources of external funding that CVS has applied for to bring additional resources into Gateshead. There is a strong likelihood of a small amount of money from the Home Office, but this is waiting for central approval.

The CVS Chief Executive meets with external funders such as staff from Big Lottery, Virgin Money Foundation, Community Foundation and others and highlights the good work that is going on in Gateshead.

There has been a study carried out on key issues affecting the voluntary and community sector in Gateshead and the early findings will be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The full results will be incorporated into a document that will provide a comprehensive insight into the key issues facing voluntary and community organisations in Gateshead.

4) Support and Development of the Voluntary and Community Sector

The majority of the CVS resource is focussed on this part of the contract. This enables small and local organisations to thrive, develop and become more sustainable. The three support and development staff (Gateshead Support Team) are based in the Age UK Gateshead office. Each staff member relates to the specific five areas of Gateshead, as well as working to themes, based on their individual experience. They are backed up by the full CVS staff including Funding Advice, Governance Support, Policy, and Marketing and Communications.

This work itself involves:

- setting up local charities, community groups or social enterprises
- helping organisations identify the resources they need to develop
- supporting organisations with funding applications
- providing advice on appropriate funders
- advising on governance – how to run an organisation properly
- discussing policies and procedures and working with organisations so they understand and own these
- identifying and providing appropriate training
- connecting groups together, particularly in local areas

There has been a Gateshead Support and Training Programme, based on the needs identified through this work. Although each group is individual, there are common needs and themes that keep emerging. Local groups often have strong relationships, and in some cases dependence, on Gateshead Council support. As the Council Budget is decreased further, CVS are working with groups to make them more resilient than ever, as there is less support in the whole system.

In November a Funders Fair was organised for smaller organisations. This was done in partnership with the Funding Manager from Culture, Communities, Leisure and Volunteering and over fifty people from local, small organisations attended, as well as key funders.

The CVS Gateshead Support Team has used an outreach approach and visited organisations within their local communities, where possible. The approach has developed from the initial 'meet and greet' sessions to going to other organisations' and community events, to make best use of resources.

Clearly this work has been happening during a time of change, and a number of organisations were confused about the status of GVOC and the role of Newcastle CVS. At the same time there have been changes in Gateshead Council officers, external funding sources, and the general uncertainty around austerity, budgets, Brexit etc. Although very few organisations received funding from European sources, the EU debate just added to the feeling of uncertainty about the future. Where possible the CVS Support Team has offered assurance and certainty and direct support to organisations to help make them more sustainable.

The CVS Support Team has worked in partnership with Gateshead Council staff, recognising that scarce resources should not be duplicated, and there are some gaps that could be filled. The experience from the team is that some organisations, particularly the small, local community organisations rely a lot on Gateshead Council staff, and indeed Councillors, and have not managed to develop their own capacity. As Gateshead Council support is further withdrawn over the next few years, it cannot be assumed that all of the current organisations will be sustainable and active and able to operate truly independently. This is position is reflected across many organisations in the North and in areas of need.

There are concerns that in areas where there are reductions in council and health services, there is an expectation from the Government that volunteers will 'step up' or step in to fill the gap previously occupied by paid, professional staff. Although Newcastle CVS does not have volunteering as part of the contract, it is clear that the role and purpose of volunteers is not to substitute for paid staff.

The following case study illustrates how the CVS team works with Gateshead Council staff, to make best use of the respective skills and experiences.

Case Study: Birtley Hub (Birtley Community Partnership)

The CVS Gateshead Support Team has had an ongoing relationship with the Partnership since June 2016. This began initially with meeting with the incoming Chair of the Management Committee, who is the spouse of a local Councillor, and the previous worker. This was initiated through one of the Council's Neighbourhood Management and Volunteering Team's introductory 'Show & Tell' meetings for the Gateshead South area.

The work has consisted of meeting at about monthly intervals to support the Hub's progress in becoming 'Fundraising ready'. A large part of this has been in setting milestones and marking progress towards unearthing /constructing /updating a suite of the basic documents that any external funder would see as the basic essentials. Namely:

- Clear documentation of the legal status / type of organisation
- A concise 'outcome focussed' business plan (2 sides of A4) summarising:
 - the local demographic / social need

- the core strengths, infrastructure, assets and viability of the project
 - five broad project areas to focus on in the next 2 to 3 years
- Establishing an updated library of core policies relevant and essential to securing funding and safely operating within the law and best practice
 - Updating web presence, and addressing any breaches and risk issues
 - Retrospectively documenting progress /reporting / budgeting of existing funded projects
 - Strengthening governance, including skilling up new Management Committee Members and helping identify potential candidates for some officer roles.
 - Helping identify and develop a number of useful tools in preparation for making future funding bids less onerous and more practically focussed – both to increase likely success and to ensure budgets are based on proper costings

In parallel, the Gateshead Council Neighbourhood Management and Volunteering Team has been helping identify potential tenants (start-ups) for under-used upstairs spaces. This will further increase the financial stability, cash-flow and the Hub's aim to achieve stability and enhanced viability of their core project.

The key thing to note in this relationship it has been a mentoring and motivational approach to help the Management Committee members to develop the skills and confidence to be able to produce the above outcomes themselves. This ensures they truly understand, own and feel confident about implementation. The CVS officer role has been in setting direction, ongoing guidance, and regular review.

In this way, there is a built-in legacy of increased skills and capacity in the organisation for the future. The next steps before March 2017 are to support the Hub in identifying a range of potential funding sources and put all of the above into practice by making some strong bids to implement the five project areas identified in their Business Plan.

5) Engagement, Marketing and Communication

A key strand to the work has been to underpin it with a strong marketing, communication and engagement approach. As soon as the contract was awarded, a communications plan was implemented. Letters and emails went out to local Councillors, key strategic partners, voluntary and community organisations across Gateshead, Council officers and key people elsewhere. Gateshead Council included information in their communications. Where possible and appropriate, local meetings were set up with key contacts.

Gateshead Council provided Newcastle CVS with a list of nearly 400 organisations, as no information was transferred from GVOC. There have been regularly attempts to increase and enhance the contacts of community and voluntary organisations in Gateshead.

Management of the Council's OurGateshead website was also transferred as part of the contract, and the worker formally at GVOC was transferred through the TUPE transfer process. The website had been allowed to deteriorate for some time, and

additional resource was made available from the Gateshead Public Health Department to improve and update the website so that it is now active, current and well-used, both by members of the public and staff.

A dedicated website was established, with Facebook and Twitter accounts focussing on Gateshead. Social media is actively updated.

The key e-newsletters, the fortnightly e-inform, and monthly On the Hoof, are edited to include Gateshead information and profile Gateshead activities and events. Inform, the CVS quarterly newsletter, includes Gateshead organisations and the information is appropriate for them. There is a dedicated Gateshead flier, business cards, banner stands. All the material makes it clear that CVS supports Gateshead organisations and activities.

Each Gateshead Councillor has received initial information and receives the quarterly newsletter and e-inform. Some councillors have signed up to On The Hoof. An information pack went out initially to every councillor, and a welcome pack has gone out to Gateshead councillors who have been elected since May.

There have been multiple communications aimed at voluntary and community organisations in Gateshead; letting them know about the services offered, contact details, and specific information e.g. safeguarding, ensuring Gateshead contacts and groups are highlighted in our general communications. There have been tailored communications on other resources – Ellison Services, the Bluestone Consortium, Specialist Services and others which could be of value to local organisations.

There have been regular meetings with Gateshead Council officers as appropriate, not just for monitoring purposes. The CVS team has met with the Neighbourhood Management and Volunteering Team. There is regular contact and discussions between members of all the teams.

Following the initial letters and emails, CVS staff met with Gateshead partners and established relationships to encourage engagement. As described earlier, there was series of visits to Gateshead-based organisations to make an introduction and as the basis for future engagement.

The NHS locally went through major changes at the beginning of April. The Chief Executive has met with the CCG Chair, Chief Officer, Clinical Director and is has monthly meetings with the Director of Delivery and Transformation. She has met with Healthwatch Gateshead, Gateshead Care Partnership and done a presentation to the Gateshead PUCPI meeting. She represents the voluntary sector in Gateshead on the Joint Integrated Care Programme Board. She has done a response on the Sustainability and Transformation Plan (STP). The connection with the NHS is important as many groups focus on wellbeing and are funded through NHS contracts and / or Innovation Fund grants.

The last nine months have been busy, hectic, energising, challenging and rewarding. There is a vibrant voluntary and community sector in Gateshead. Newcastle CVS hopes it can continue to contribute to the activity in the future.

Sally Young
Chief Executive, Newcastle CVS

Example performance report from GVOC (May-July 2014)

Topic	Indicator	Baseline	Target	Current	SLA Performance Assessment	Explanation
Community Engagement and Empowerment	No. of consultations and community engagement	4	10	22	Green	Work on the Land of Oak and Iron has increased the consultations possible in this period.
Establishing new groups	No. of new community groups established	37	75	22	Green	On track
Groups sustained	No. of community groups sustained (where support has been provided and community groups have continued to operate/thrive)	300	270	4	Amber	This indicator is a long term reporting requirement. GVOC will carry out an annual sample study of groups supported
Our Gateshead	No. of groups on OurGateshead website	803	1200	924	Green	OurGateshead is performing well on this indicator
Support with funding	Funding secured for community and voluntary groups	875,865	1,000,000	8385	Red	This indicator will be assessed on an annual basis due to lead times for funding applications.
Total groups support	No. of community groups supported	99	300	348	Green	The performance on this indicator encompasses the many types of support provided.
Volunteering	No. of volunteers	1926	2300	448	Red	This area is underperforming due to limited resources in the team. Promotion activities are planned for the coming period.

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TITLE OF REPORT: Annual Report - Corporate Complaints and Compliments Procedure 2015/16

REPORT OF: Mike Barker, Strategic Director, Corporate Services and Governance

Summary

The report provides an analysis of complaints and compliments recorded by the Council and the Gateshead Housing Company in the year ended 31 March 2016.

Background

1. The Cabinet has referred the report to the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee as part of the performance management process, in order to ensure that the process is operating satisfactorily.
2. The Council sees comments, complaints and compliments as an important part of performance management. To make it easier for people to express their views we have a corporate complaints and compliments procedure and it is publicised in the Council News, posters in council facilities and on both the internet and intranet. The Gateshead Housing Company has its own complaints and compliments procedure.

Procedure

3. The procedure has three steps, the first of which 'problem solving', relies on the quick resolution of complaints by employees and their managers and does not require the complaint to be recorded. At the second step the complaint is recorded, there is a formal investigation into the complaint and a written response is sent to the complainant usually within twenty working days. The final step enables those complainants who remain dissatisfied to request the Chief Executive (or Managing Director of the Gateshead Housing Company) to carry out an independent review of the matter.
4. The report focuses upon recorded complaints and compliments with information about the distribution of complaints and compliments across the Council and the categories of complaints.

5. This does not include complaints about statutory Social Services and Children's Services matters which are investigated under their own separate legal requirements.

Complaints Received

6. Over the year 1 April 2015 – 31 March 2016:
 - 387 complaints were recorded
 - 723 compliments were recorded
 - 32 complaints were the subject of an independent review by the Chief Executive of the Council and the Managing Director of the Gateshead Housing Company undertook 14 reviews.

Issues Arising

7. A number of points can be noted arising from the statistics for 2015/16:
 - 387 complaints were recorded in 2015/16 compared with 477 in 2014/15 a decrease of 90.
 - 723 compliments were recorded for the year 2015/16 compared to 779 in 2014/15 – a decrease of 56.
 - The number of complainants requesting a review of their complaint by the Chief Executive increased by eleven to 32 in 2015/16. The Managing Director of the Gateshead Housing Company carried out 14 reviews in 2015/16 compared to 15 in 2014/15.
 - 78.8% of all complaints were recorded against the category of quality of service.
 - The proportion of complaints found to be fully justified increased from 21.1% in 2014/15 to 41.6% in 2015/16.
 - In addition, the proportion of complaints found to be partially justified increased from 12.4.0% in 2014/15 to 13.6% in 2015/16.
 - Most importantly, the Council's managers used the information gained through the monitoring of complaints to improve the provision of services.
 - The computerised recording system made it easier to track and respond to complaints. However, this system now requires an upgrade that reflects the new structure of the Council and provides improved statistical interrogation and analysis.
 - There has been a decrease in the number of complaints recorded by the Council during 2015/16. Additionally, there has been a decrease in performance of the percentage of complaints resolved within target timescales for the both the Council and the Gateshead Housing Company from 88% in 2014/15 to 82.7% in 2015/16.

Local Government Ombudsman

8. During the course of 2015/16, the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) investigated 24 complaints. Of these 17 were closed following a detailed response from the Council, 5 were not upheld and 2 were upheld partially or fully. Councillors will note that a summary of those cases upheld has been

presented to the Cabinet. Each case has provided learning opportunities in terms of reviewing policy, maintenance of records, the operation of systems and the provision of guidance and training to staff. The Council maintains a good working relationship with the LGO and all cases have now been settled to their satisfaction and the complainants.

Supporting Local Scrutiny

9. Councillors may be aware that throughout the year the LGO has produced a number of focus reports. These highlight particular subjects or systemic issues coming from casework. They draw on lessons learned from complaints and have included recommendations on good practice. These reports have been used to inform reviews and case studies undertaken by the Council's overview and scrutiny committees. The LGO has also established a new Councillors' Forum that brings together councillors from across the political spectrum to help the LGO better understand the needs of Councillors and to help them act as champions when undertaking their scrutiny roles. They have also, in consultation with the Local Government Association, produced a workbook for Councillors that can be accessed via the LGA's website.

Future Developments at the LGO

10. In 2015, the LGO and Parliamentary and Health Services Ombudsman set up a joint team who are trained to work in both health and social care investigations to enable a more streamlined investigative approach. A report on its first year in operation has been published.
11. The Government published its response to its consultation on a public service Ombudsmen in December 2015 on its proposal that a single Ombudsman scheme should be created for all public services in England. The Government has indicated that it intends to publish a Draft Public Service Ombudsman Bill as soon as reasonably possible.

The Housing Ombudsman

12. From 1 April 2013 the Localism Act 2011 extended the jurisdiction of the Housing Ombudsman to cover all social landlords, including Councils. The Housing Ombudsman is able to consider complaints in so far as they relate to the provision or management of housing. The Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) continues to investigate complaints about allocations and the lettings policy.
13. Details of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme have previously been reported. As Councillors are aware, if a tenant wishes to escalate a complaint to the Housing Ombudsman he must do so via a 'designated person' or wait a period of eight weeks prior to direct submission. The scheme envisages that 'designated persons' will promote and assist in the resolution of complaints.
14. During 2015/16, the Council has been contacted by the Housing Ombudsman in respect of 12 cases. Of these six are ongoing, one has been resolved

without the need for a full investigation by the Housing Ombudsman, two had not exhausted the Housing Company's complaints procedure, one was an enquiry which was referred back to the Housing Company as a complaint had never been registered, one was transferred to the Local Government Ombudsman as it was deemed not to be in the remit of the Housing Company and one was fully investigated and the Housing Ombudsman concluded that the Council had taken reasonable steps to address the complaint.

Recommendation

15. The Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to endorse the information in the Annual Report and satisfy themselves that the Corporate Complaints and Compliments Procedure is operating satisfactorily.

TITLE OF REPORT: Corporate Complaints and Compliments Procedure - Annual Report 2015/2016

REPORT OF: Mike Barker, Strategic Director, Corporate Services and Governance

Purpose of the Report

1. The report asks the Cabinet to consider and endorse an analysis of the complaints and compliments recorded during the year 2015/16.

Background

2. This report focuses on complaints and compliments that the Council deals with under its Corporate Complaints and Compliments procedure. It provides a statistical analysis of the complaints and compliments received for the period 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016.
3. Appendix 2 to this report details:
 - The number of complaints recorded in the year 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016
 - The categories of complaints (note: a complaint may fall into more than one category).
4. Appendix 3 to this report details:
 - The number of complaints resolved in the year 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016
 - The number of complaints resolved within the target time of twenty working days
 - The number of complaints closed (ie dealt with as issues other than complaints)
 - The number of complaints open (ie unresolved at 31 March 2016)
 - The number of resolved complaints that were found to be justified or part justified.
5. Appendix 4 provides an analysis of the compliments received and complaints recorded and resolved across all Council services and the Gateshead Housing Company.
6. Appendix 5 details examples of where complaints have been used to improve practice and performance across the Council and the Gateshead Housing Company.
7. Appendix 6 provides examples of compliments that have been recorded in the year 2015/16.
8. Appendix 7 provides information about the Local Government Ombudsman and the Housing Ombudsman.

9. Previous annual reports have provided a three year comparison of complaints and compliments recorded. Fundamental changes to the structure of the Council's services preclude the inclusion of this comparison year's annual report. It is intended that comparative data will be reintroduced in future reports.

Proposal

10. It is proposed that the analysis provided for the period 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016 be agreed.

Recommendations

11. It is recommended that the Cabinet
 - (i) Agrees the Corporate Complaints and Compliments procedure Annual Report for 2015/16 as detailed.
 - (ii) Notes the report will be considered by the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

For the following reason:

To have an effective and timely complaints procedure.

CONTACT: Brian Wilson extension 2145

APPENDIX 1

Policy Context

1. The Corporate Complaints and Compliments Procedure supports Vision 2030 and the Council Plan.

Background

2. Reflecting the Council's promises we aim to respond positively to complaints, put things right that have gone wrong, and ensure that we learn from the experience to deliver continuously improving services to the people of Gateshead. The Corporate Complaints and Compliments procedure is widely publicised across the Borough. The Gateshead Housing Company operates its own procedure as the body responsible for the day to day management and maintenance of council housing in Gateshead.
3. The Council operates one common system for handling complaints and compliments:
 - to make it easier for members of the public to raise issues of concern with the Council
 - to ensure that such complaints are responded to quickly and in a consistent manner
 - to enable the Council to learn from the issues raised and amend procedures and practices as necessary.
4. This report focuses on complaints that the Council deals with under its Corporate Complaints Procedure. Excluded from the procedure are:
 - most Social Services and Children's Services matters - for which there are separate statutory procedures
 - matters for which there is an existing system of appeal/redress
 - most complaints about schools.
5. The aim of the procedure is to resolve complaints as quickly and fairly as possible at as low a level of formality as possible.
6. The procedure has three steps:
 - Step 1 problem solving – sorting it out quickly
 - Step 2 investigation – recording the complaint and responding within twenty working days
 - Step 3 review – Chief Executive (or Managing Director of the Gateshead Housing Company) to look again at complaint and respond within twenty working days.
7. Computerised recording of Step 2 complaints was designed to ensure a consistent method of response to complaints across the Council. The system now requires an upgrade that reflects the new structure of the Council's services and provides improved statistical interrogation and analysis and options for this are being considered. Also, the monitoring and reporting of corporate complaints and compliments should be aligned to the Council's performance management framework.

A designated officer oversees and monitors the operation of the procedure, and the system as a whole is developed and monitored by the Chief Executive. This includes the collation and analysis of the statistics for the Council as a whole and the conduct of the Step 3 reviews.

8. The procedure enables people to express their views and register their Complaint or compliment:
- In person at a Council office
 - By telephone
 - By fax
 - By e-mail
 - By a complaints/compliments form which is available at council facilities and on our website
 - By letter
 - Through a councillor
 - Through someone acting on their behalf
 - With the assistance of other organisations.

Consultation

9. There has been no external consultation undertaken in the preparation of this report.

Alternative Options

10. There are no alternative options.

Implications of Recommended Option

11. Resources:

- .a) **Financial Implications** – The Strategic Director, Corporate Resources confirms that there are no new financial implications arising from this report.
- b) **Human Resources Implications** – The Strategic Director, Corporate Services and Governance confirms that there are no human resources implications arising from the report.
- c) **Property Implications** – The Strategic Director, Corporate Services and Governance confirms that there are no property implications arising from this report.

12. **Risk Management Implication** – Potential failure to act on complaints received is minimised through regular monitoring.

13. **Equality and Diversity Implications** – The Corporate Complaints and Compliments Procedure contributes to the implementation of the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy.

14. **Crime and Disorder Implications** – There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

APPENDIX 1

15. **Health Implications** – There are no health implications arising from this report.
16. **Sustainability Implications** – There are no sustainability implications arising from this report.
17. **Human Rights Implications** – There may be human rights implications in a number of complaints made to the Council. Therefore having a Corporate Complaints Procedure will assist the Council in carrying out its duties under the Human Rights Act 1988.
18. **Area and Ward Implications** – None.
19. **Background Information** – Corporate Complaints and Compliments Policy and Procedure.

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Complaints Recorded: 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016

APPENDIX 2

Service Area	Category of complaint						
	Total No of Complaints	Quality of service	Access to service	Employee	Policy	Damage/Injury	Other
Communities & Environment							
Waste Service & Grounds Maintenance	19	13	2	-	4	-	15
Facilities Management, Catering	1	1	-	-	-	-	1
Construction Services	3	2	-	2	-	1	-
Development & Public Protection	15	5	2	1	1	-	10
Transport & Highways	18	17	1	7	4	3	-
Economic & Housing Growth	1	-	-	1	-	-	-
Spatial Planning & Environment	1	1	-	-	-	-	1
Culture, Communities, Leisure & Volunteering	43	20	10	7	4	1	7
Corporate Services & Governance							
Development Law & Democratic Services	1	-	-	1	-	-	-
Property Services	5	3	-	-	1	-	2
Corporate Resources							
Customer & Financial Services	15	13	-	3	2	-	-
Care, Wellbeing & Learning							
Housing Services	18	12	1	5	7	-	1
Gateshead Housing Company							
East	43	39	2	4	4	6	1
West	53	48	7	6	3	4	2
Central	52	42	1	6	1	7	4
Inner West	22	21	1	2	-	4	-
South	77	68	2	16	2	6	3
TOTAL	387	305	29	61	33	32	47

Please note that a complaint may fall into more than one category

Complaints Resolved 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016

APPENDIX 3

Service Area	Number of Complaints resolved	No. resolved within 20 working days	No. of complaints closed	No. Fully justified complaints	No. of partly justified complaints	No. of unresolved complaints
Communities & Environment						
Waste Service & Grounds Maintenance	17	16	2	2	-	-
Facilities Management, Catering	1	1	-	-	-	-
Construction Services	3	3	-	-	1	-
Development & Public Protection	13	8	2	1	1	-
Transport & Highways	11	8	7	-	-	-
Economic & Housing Growth	1	-	-	-	-	-
Spatial Planning & Environment	1	1	-	-	-	-
Culture, Communities, Leisure & Volunteering	40	34	3	11	10	-
Corporate Services & Governance						
Development Law & Democratic Services	1	1	-	-	-	-
Property Services	5	2	-	-	-	-
Corporate Resources						
Financial Services	15	12	-	4	2	-
Care, Wellbeing & Learning						
Housing Services	16	12	2	-	2	-
Gateshead Housing Company						
East	41	37	2	22	5	-
West	52	48	1	32	7	-
Central	52	46	-	29	6	-
Inner West	22	20	-	9	7	-
South	77	71	-	41	9	-
TOTAL	368	320	19	151	50	-

Number of complaints

During the period 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016 the Council recorded 387 Step 2 complaints (compared to 477 during 2014/15). An analysis of these complaints reveals the following:

Communities and Environment

- Recorded 101 complaints
- Accounts for 26.1% of all complaints recorded
- Culture, Communities, Leisure and Volunteering received 42.6% of complaints in this service group
- 58.4% of complaints concern quality of service.

Care, Wellbeing and Learning

- Housing Services recorded 18 complaints
- 66.7% of recorded complaints concern quality of service.

Adult Social Care and Independent Living and Children's Services operate their own separate complaints recording system

Corporate Services and Governance

- Recorded 6 complaints
- Accounts for 1.6 % of all complaints recorded
- Property Services received 83.3% of complaints in this service group
- 50% of recorded complaints concerned quality of service.

Corporate Resources

- Recorded 15 complaints.
- Accounts for 3.9% of all complaints recorded.
- Customer and Financial Services received 100% of complaints in this service group.
- 86.7% of complaints concern quality of service.

Gateshead Housing Company

- Recorded 247 complaints
- Accounts for 63.8% of all recorded complaints
- 88.3% of complaints concern quality of service.

Category of complaints

The subject matter of complaints varies considerably. However, the resolved complaints can be broadly summarised into six categories. It must be noted, however, that a complaint can fall into more than one category.

The following table shows the total number of complaints in each category together with the proportions of the total number of complaints received by the Council.

Category of Complaint:	No Complaints 2015/16	Percentage of all Complaints
• Quality of services	305	78.8%
• Access to services	29	7.5%
• Employee	61	15.8%
• Policy	33	8.5%
• Injury/damage to person or possession	32	8.3%
• Other	47	12.1%

Closed Complaints

The total number of closed complaints is 19. These are complaints recorded on the system and subsequently identified and dealt with as issues other than complaints.

Resolution of complaints within target timescales

The Council has a target timescale to resolve step 2 complaints within 20 working days of receipt. The Council aims to resolve the majority of complaints at step 1 - sorting problems out on the spot. One of the aims of the procedure and of the recording system is to ensure that complaints are responded to as quickly as possible. The system allows service managers to review actual performance at any time and identifies those areas where improvements in response times are necessary. 320 complaints were resolved within the target timescale of 20 working days. This represents 82.7% of recorded complaints less the closed and open complaints. Of the 247 received by the Gateshead Housing Company 3 were closed and 222 were resolved within the target timescale. This represents 91% resolved within the target timescale compared with the 87.9% achieved in 2014/15. Of the 140 complaints recorded by the Council 16 were closed and 98 were resolved within the target timescale. This represents 79.3% resolved within the target timescale compared with 88.3% achieved in 2014/15.

Number of Complaints that were justified

Of the 368 complaints resolved 151 (41%) were fully justified and 50 (13.6%) were partly justified and appropriate remedies were offered to the complainants. This compares with the position in 2014/15 when of the 417 complaints resolved 88 (21.1%) were fully justified and 50 (13.6%) were partly justified.

Service Group Analysis

An analysis of the complaints resolved by each service group reveals the following:

Communities and Environment

- Of the 101 complaints recorded 14 were closed and none unresolved.
- 81.6% of the remaining complaints were resolved in target timescales
- 16.1% of resolved complaints were fully justified
- 13.8% of resolved complaints were partly justified.

Care, Wellbeing and Learning

- Of the 18 complaints recorded 2 were closed and none unresolved.
- 75% of the remaining complaints were resolved in target timescales
- 0% of resolved complaints were fully justified
- 12.5% of resolved complaints were partly justified

Corporate Services and Governance

- Of the 6 complaints recorded none were closed and none unresolved
- 50% of the remaining complaints were resolved in target timescales
- 0% of resolved complaints were fully justified
- 0% of resolved complaints were partly justified

Corporate Resources

- Of the 15 complaints recorded none were closed and none unresolved.
- 80% of the remaining complaints were resolved within target timescales
- 26.7% of resolved complaints were fully justified
- 13.3% of resolved complaints were partly justified.

The Gateshead Housing Company

- Of the 247 complaints recorded 3 were closed and none unresolved.
- 91% of the remaining complaints were resolved within the Council's target timescales
- 54.5% of resolved complaints were fully justified
- 13.9% of resolved complaints were partly justified

Reviewed Complaints

Complainants who are dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaints to individual service managers can request an independent review by the Chief Executive (or the Managing Director of the Gateshead Housing Company). The Chief Executive of the Council undertook 32 reviews across several service areas and categories of complaint in 2015/16 compared to 21 in 2013/14. The Managing Director of the Gateshead Housing Company undertook 14 reviews in 2015/16 compared with 15 during 2014/15.

Method of Submitting Complaints and Compliments to the Council

The system provides a variety of methods by which a customer can register a complaint with the Council and record compliments received by the Council and the Gateshead Housing Company. This can be done by telephone, visit in person, letter, internet form, compliment form or e mail.

An analysis of the compliments received is as follows:

Policy, Performance and communications recorded	2
Communities and Environment recorded	368
Care, Wellbeing & Learning recorded	47
Corporate Services & Governance recorded	27
Corporate Resources recorded	40
The Gateshead Housing Co recorded	239

The total number of compliments received above for 2015/16 is 723, compared to 779 received in 2014/15.

Using complaints to improve performance

The information gained through the monitoring of complaints should be used to improve the provision of the services throughout the Council reflecting the Council's overall approach to value for money and continuous improvement. There were several occasions where the resolution of a complaint led to additional instructions being given to employees to reinforce existing procedures. Changes to the provision of services have also been made as a result of complaints received or the opportunity to improve has been identified.

- The Sport and Leisure Service makes more regular checks on the website and ensures information is always updated. Also, the website has been updated to include that an induction is required before the gym can be used.
- The Libraries Service displays information regarding availability of online renewals. Also, the speed and reliability of the network connection to Whickham Library has been improved.
- Customer and Financial Services has reviewed procedures in respect of tenants who have passed away and who may have been subject to a housing benefit overpayment to ensure the appropriate information is notified to the estate.
- Housing Services have revised the procedures to include random inspections to hostels/hotels used as temporary accommodation by the Council. The procedures to inform tenants in temporary accommodation of possible bailiff action and costs if they do not vacate the accommodation voluntarily when the licence is terminated have also been revised.

In Housing a number of improvements were implemented by the Gateshead Housing Company to improve service delivery:

- To ensure that a tenant is advised before works are carried out so relevant preparations can be made.
- To ensure that contractors do not make appointments via voicemail only.
- Jobs sent to sub-contractors are to be monitored more closely to prevent delays in timescales.
- A procedure has now been agreed to check notifications of 'non Council tenant' deaths.
- Procedures and processes which will include risk assessments, method statements and customer involvement is ensured when dealing with repairs which could affect gas safety have been reviewed.

- Property size is to be included on void details so that any issues should be picked up prior to it being advertised.
- Changes have been made to the major works procedure to make sure that all surveys are carried out in target and works orders are raised appropriately to prevent delays in work being carried out.

APPENDIX 6

Compliments received by the Council

The examples below are just a small selection of the compliments and comments that have been recorded in the 2015/16. Individuals' details have been removed.

- Litigation - I am grateful to you for a clear and prompt response to my Freedom of Information enquiry about school attendance orders.
- Housing Services - I would like to commend the member of staff who had been of immense support and help when I felt lost and abandoned.
- A huge compliment to the Reablement Team. I am caring for a family friend following a stroke who was losing heart at his lack of progress and physio treatment. Physio was withdrawn and I felt annoyed at his abandonment. Then, his social worker sent the Reablement Team and the difference was noted by his doctors and I cannot praise the team enough. They have given renewed vigour, mentally and physically to us both. They are brilliant.
- Housing Strategy - I was delighted with my bathroom. The plumber who did the work was fantastic, I cannot praise him enough. It is great to have a bathroom where I can shower safely and I could not have had the work done without all the help your staff gave me.
- Neighbourhood Management - Thanks for all of your help and support in making the unveiling ceremony with Dunn Court being dedicated to a Gateshead soldier killed in action in Afghanistan a huge and very moving success. It was so humbling that so many of the Council's officers and partners gave up their time to support the unveiling ceremony.
- Sport and Leisure - Following the wellness service 12 week course Exit interview, I have had assistance to quit smoking and I have also enrolled on an adult literacy course. The member of staff involved was thanked for her very useful support and I have recommended the service to my partner. I will also look to do a healthy eating course in the future.
- Sport and Leisure - I would like to compliment the receptionist at Heworth leisure centre who took my booking for a flow rider party. She could not have been more helpful and should be commended for her customer service. She is doing a brilliant job.
- Libraries - My two boys took part in a magic circuit workshop at the library. It was run with lots of information and activities to keep both an

8 year old and 11 year old interested and able to work independently to create some great circuits. There was lots of information to further their enjoyment of the workshop, something they were both keen to do.

- Libraries - I wish to compliment the staff of Dunston Library who were most helpful and very pleasant.
- Culture - Thank you for all the help and support given to me in the run up to the Acoustic Pride event. Staff went way beyond the call of duty and made the event an absolute joy. St Mary's was the perfect venue, with perfect sound and a perfect atmosphere.
- Economic Development - Staff have been fantastic, could not be more helpful and highly organised throughout the process to help me find the right candidates for my business.
- Environmental Health - As the landlord in Swalwell, with an estate agent managing my property, I am rarely in the street. Last week I was most pleasantly surprised by the look of the place with a marked improvement in the front gardens and back lane. There was no refuse lying around and the back lane was positively clean and tidy. This is, I am sure, a direct result of the licensing scheme and the team's hard work. I congratulate you on your efforts and I hope the scheme continues with as much success as is being shown to date.
- Environmental Health - thank you for the provision of a new grab rail and hand rail installed as part of the falls prevention scheme.
- Housing Renewal - I am impressed with the service from the Council with regard to our noise complaint. We have only been in Gateshead since May, but so many things impress me. The Leisure Centre is fantastic value for money, the public art is great, and all the Council employees have been friendly and helpful.
- Trading Standards - Consumer was in the process of having a kitchen fitted when the trader went into liquidation and work was left incomplete. The Council assisted consumer in getting money refunded.
- Transport Strategy Service - staff were thanked for their swift replies and fully answering the questions in response to an enquiry regarding traffic flow and signage at Eighton Lodge Roundabout.
- Transport Strategy Service - staff were thanked for assisting Nexus and Schools Go Smarter in delivering the Metro Inductions Programme at SafetyWorks. The feedback from the schools and the children was that they thoroughly enjoyed and really benefitted from the sessions given.
- Council tax - I had spent most of the afternoon crying and stressing trying to work out my bills as I had got into arrears and didn't know

what to do. The member of staff who dealt with me spoke very nicely, clearly and very respectfully explaining how much I owed and what everything meant and looked at ways to help me. His calm, kind manner helped calm me down. It was refreshing to hear such a nice attitude. I have never emailed anyone like this before but thought I should as he was so kind and helpful.

- Benefits Section - claimant has been having trouble in getting his claim sorted out. He spoke to a member of staff who has managed to get things done. The claimant praised him for his commitment and customer service which he described as outstanding.
- Registrars – I would like to say a big thank you to all involved in my wedding at Saltwell Towers. From Registrars to catering everything was exceptional and exceeded my expectations. The day was perfect and ran smoothly thanks to the efficient team working at the Towers on the day. The member of staff who acted as our wedding co-ordinator put us at ease throughout the day and worked extremely hard with her team to get everything organised.
- Construction Services - It was planned for the school to have three toilet blocks refurbished in this one week. It was completed on time because of the unbelievably hard graft and organisation by the plumbers and joiners. The way they worked as a team was highly commendable and their attitude was always positive and understanding. Also, the surveyor worked in a calm way and was not fazed by any situation.
- Construction Services - I would like to compliment your operational staff and managers in their delivery of street lighting projects through mutual assistance. All the staff have worked really well with the Durham Council staff providing professional, efficient and effective services. The projects your teams delivered really helped Durham meet its capital spend and financial targets. The workforce and site management was of the highest order, polite, courteous and a credit to their Council.
- Waste Management - massive thank you for sorting out my request from yesterday so promptly. My new large green bin arrived this morning and the smaller one removed. That is within 24 hours. Everyone I have spoken to at or from the Council have been really helpful and polite. I am impressed.
- Neighbourhood Services - I just wanted to say that the team of gardeners have done a fantastic job of the gardens at Grove House. The team leader is great, he is always very pleasant and willing to help where he can. Please say a huge thank you to them all.
- Neighbourhood Services – I would just like to pass on my thanks to the team who emptied my bin last Tuesday. I had left a note on my garden

bin saying that I had subscribed to the garden waste service but had not received my sticker. They kindly acted upon this and emptied my bin.

- Horticultural and Technical Services – I thought I would say thank you, in this day and age people are quick to complain. The tree in our cul-de-sac has been cut back today and it looks amazing.
- Facilities Management - Our organisation held our Annual Meeting in the Civic Centre. The co-operation from all the staff involved was, as usual, exemplary. We have used the Council Chambers for our meetings for 13 years and on each occasion we have been given co-operation and service of the highest order. The dining facilities have always been more than satisfactory, our every requirement being catered for.
- Gateshead Housing Company - I had a new radiator fitted in my kitchen. It was not a very straightforward job and I was at work when the job was completed. However, the plumber had done an excellent job, even replacing carpets which he had to lift to install pipework. Well done.
- Gateshead Housing Company – I received help and support with my Universal Credit claim and was overwhelmed by the support I received from the service. The staff have been a great support for me and offered me fantastic help.
- Gateshead Housing Company – I called to thank the service for being speedy. I reported a problem with the toilet at 8:00am and the plumber attended within 2 hours. I would also like to thank the estates officer for reporting the repair, he 'really did the business'.
- Gateshead Housing Company - I reported a leaky soil pipe tonight within 1 hour two guys came rectified the problem for now and said they will put in the repair in the morning, I could honestly not ask or expect a better service. Second to none and such friendly people. Thanks so much.
- Gateshead Housing Company - I have found both caretakers to be very helpful in every situation that has occurred and would be happy to recommend them to their superiors for being polite and courteous with everything I have had the pleasure to speak to them about.

APPENDIX 7

External Review by the Local Government Ombudsman and the Housing Ombudsman

The Local Government Ombudsman (LGO)

The LGO provides a free independent and impartial service to the public. They provide an initial point of contact for those wishing to make a complaint through a telephone contact centre in Coventry, or if a person remains dissatisfied following the examination of a particular matter by the Council. Protocols are in place between the Council and the LGO that provide for the majority of cases to be considered through the Council's own procedures before any investigation is considered by their office.

Leaflets and information about the LGO are available at Council offices and all those who exhaust the Council's and the Gateshead Housing Company's procedures (where appropriate) are provided with the leaflet. The day to day management of the relationship with the LGO is vested in the Customer Services Manager who acts on behalf of the Chief Executive in this respect.

During the year the LGO investigated 24 complaints. Of these 17 were closed following a detailed response from the Council, 5 were not upheld and 2 were upheld partially or fully. For each of the two cases upheld I have detailed below a summary of the LGO's finding and the actions subsequently taken by the Council.

Case One

The Ombudsman found some fault with regards to the way in which the Council investigated this complaint.

The Council complied with the Ombudsman's request to provide an apology for this fault and the time and trouble the complainant experienced as a result in pursuing the complaint.

Case Two

The Council was at fault in the failure to ensure that a resident in its care home had access to her prescription.

The Council complied with the Ombudsman's request to provide an apology for this fault and the distress the resident suffered as a result of this.

The Local Government Ombudsman's Annual Review is available on their website at www.lgo.org.uk.

The Housing Ombudsman

From 1 April 2013 the Localism Act 2011 extended the jurisdiction of the Housing Ombudsman to cover all social landlords, including Councils. The Housing Ombudsman is able to consider housing complaints in so far as they relate to the provision or management of housing. The Local Government Ombudsman continues to investigate complaints about allocations and the lettings policy.

During 2015/16, the Council was contacted by the Housing Ombudsman in respect of 12 cases. Of these:

- Six are ongoing.
- One has been resolved without the need for a full investigation by the Housing Ombudsman.
- Two had not exhausted the Housing Company's complaints procedure
- One was an enquiry which was referred back to the Housing Company as a complaint had never been registered.
- One was transferred to the Local Government Ombudsman as it was deemed not to be in the remit of the Housing Company.
- One was fully investigated and the Housing Ombudsman concluded that the Council had taken reasonable steps to address the complaint.