

TITLE OF REPORT: Corporate Complaints and Compliments Procedure - Annual Report 2016/2017

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 2016/17.

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 2016 to 31 March 2017.
3. Appendix 2 to this report details:
 - The number of complaints recorded in the year 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017
 - 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 2016 to 31 March 2017
 - 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 2017)
 - 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 2016/17.
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 2016 to 31 March 2017 be agreed.

Recommendations

11. It is recommended that the Cabinet
 - (i) Agrees the Corporate Complaints and Compliments Procedure Annual Report for 2016/17 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.

APPENDIX 1

Policy Context

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

Background

2. The Council aims to respond positively to complaints, put things right that have gone wrong, and ensure that it learns 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 the corporate complaints system to handle complaints and compliments to: make it easier for members of the public to raise issues of concern; ensure that such complaints are responded to quickly and in a consistent manner and to enable the Council to learn from the issues raised and amend procedures and practices as necessary.
4. The 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 – to try and sort it out quickly and informally by providing information or taking appropriate action
 - Step 2 - investigation – the complaint is recorded and investigated by a Senior Manager who will aim to respond within twenty working days
 - Step 3 - review – the Chief Executive (or Managing Director of the Gateshead Housing Company) to look again at complaint and aim to 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 structures 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 Corporate Complaints Procedure and the system as a whole under the responsibility of the Chief Executive. This includes the collation and analysis of the statistics for the Council 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
 - Through social media

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.

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.