

TITLE OF REPORT: Corporate Complaints and Compliments Procedure - Annual Report 2020/21

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 compliments and Step 3 complaints recorded by the Council during the year 2020/21.

Background

2. This report focuses on compliments and Step 3 complaints dealt with by the Council under its Corporate Complaints and Compliments procedure for the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021.
3. Appendix 2 to this report details the number compliments and Step 3 complaints that required a Chief Executive Review or Managing Director of the Gateshead Housing Company Review received from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021.
4. Appendix 3 provides information about the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and the Housing Ombudsman.

Proposal

5. It is proposed that the Corporate Complaints and Compliments Procedure – Annual Report 2020/21 be agreed.

Recommendations

6. It is recommended that the Cabinet agrees the Corporate Complaints and Compliments Procedure Annual Report for 2020/21 as detailed.

For the following reason:

To have an effective and timely complaints procedure.

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APPENDIX 1

Policy Context

1. The corporate complaints and compliments procedure supports Thrive in that it helps the Council to assess its service provision and improve where necessary.

Background

2. The Council aims to respond positively to complaints. The corporate complaints and compliments procedure is publicised across the Borough through a complaints and compliments form which is available at Council facilities and on its website. 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 and compliments procedure to make it easier for members of the public to submit compliments and raise issues of concern, ensure that 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 a statutory system of appeal/redress eg planning
 - most complaints about schools
5. The current procedure enables people to express their views and register their complaint or compliment in person at a Council office, by telephone, letter, e-mail, complaints and compliments form or online. It can also be done through a Councillor, someone acting on their behalf, with the assistance of other organisations or via social media.
6. The procedure has the following three steps: -

Step 1 - problem solving – by Services trying to 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 within Services 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 a complaint and aim to respond within twenty working days.
7. A designated officer oversees and monitors the operation of the corporate complaints procedure and system on behalf of the Chief Executive who has ultimate responsibility. This includes the collation and analysis of the statistics for the Council and the conduct of the Step 3 reviews. The officer is also the Council's link

officer with the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and the Housing Ombudsman.

8. Residents are encouraged to submit complaints via a form on the Council's website, while still retaining the ability to submit complaints in the other ways outlined for those that do not have internet access. The website has been updated to direct people to service requests wherever appropriate eg. to report fly tipping or a missed bin collection so that only genuine complaints are submitted to the designated officer through the corporate complaints system. The complainants after registering on the system can view the progress of their complaint, submit further information and they will receive e mail notifications on information and updates and the Council's formal response to their complaint.

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, Resources and Digital confirms that there are no new financial implications arising from this report.
 - b) **Human Resources Implications** – There are no human resources implications arising from the report.
 - c) **Property Implications** – 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. **Climate Emergency and 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. **Ward Implications** – None.
19. **Background Information** – Corporate complaints and compliments policy and procedure.