

**TITLE OF REPORT:** Corporate Complaints and Compliments Procedure - Annual Report 2017/18

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

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### **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 2017/18.

### **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 2017 to 31 March 2018.
3. Appendix 2 to this report details:
  - The number of complaints recorded in the year 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018
  - 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 2017 to 31 March 2018
  - 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 2018)
  - 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 provides information about the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and the Housing Ombudsman.

### **Proposal**

7. It is proposed that the analysis provided for the period 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018 be agreed.

## **Recommendations**

8. It is recommended that the Cabinet
  - (i) Agrees the Corporate Complaints and Compliments Procedure Annual Report for 2017/18 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.

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**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. The Council aims to respond positively to complaints. 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 current procedure enables people to express their views and register their complaint or compliment in person at a Council office, by telephone, letter, fax, e-mail or complaints/compliments form. It can also be done through a Councillor, someone acting on their behalf, with the assistance of other organisations or social media.
6. The procedure has the following 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. 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. The officer is also the Council's link officer with the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and the Housing Ombudsman.

The current corporate complaints system is to be replaced. It is proposed to implement the case management features of the Digital Platform to handle corporate complaints. The Digital Platform hosts and delivers the Council's website, intranet, Go Gateshead and other websites plus key online services such as the report fly tipping facility.

Increasingly, members of the public now prefer to submit complaints via an online form. Currently that information then needs to be inputted into the corporate complaints system along with information received via the other ways outlined in section 5 above which can be time consuming.

The aim would be to encourage residents to submit complaints via 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.

One of the benefits of capturing the information via an online form is to ensure the Council has all the information needed to proceed without having to request further information from the complainant.

In addition, both residents and staff will receive e mail notifications on information and updates, reminders when actions need to be completed and the Council's response to the complaint through the new corporate complaints system.

The website will be updated to direct people to service requests wherever appropriate eg. to report fly tipping or a missed bin collection to ensure only genuine complaints are submitted to the designated officer through the corporate complaints system.

For staff managing the corporate complaints process, it will be easier to track and monitor the process and stage of each complaint, manage all the system users and provide performance data and statistics on complaints received and in which service areas.

### **Consultation**

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

### **Alternative Options**

9. There are no alternative options.

### **Implications of Recommended Option**

10. **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.
11. **Risk Management Implication** – Potential failure to act on complaints received is minimised through regular monitoring.
  12. **Equality and Diversity Implications** – The corporate complaints and compliments procedure contributes to the implementation of the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy.
  13. **Crime and Disorder Implications** – There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.
  14. **Health Implications** – There are no health implications arising from this report.
  15. **Sustainability Implications** – There are no sustainability implications arising from this report.
  16. **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.
  17. **Area and Ward Implications** – None.
  18. **Background Information** – Corporate complaints and compliments policy and procedure.