

**REPORT TO: POLICY COMMITTEE ON 5 MARCH 2008**

**SUBJECT: COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE – MONITORING REPORT**

**BY: CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

**1. REASON FOR REPORT**

- 1.1 The Committee is asked to scrutinise the Complaints Procedure Monitoring Report for the third quarter of the 2007/8 financial year and note our performance against targets.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section A(37) of the Council's Administrative Scheme relating to formulating and supervising the implement of and review as necessary the policies and practices of the Council.

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to scrutinise the Complaints Procedure Monitoring Report for the period 1 October 2007 – 31 December 2007 and note our performance against targets.**

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 A number of measures to improve overall performance were introduced from 1 April 2007 which included revised targets for acknowledgement and response times. These had been set at 95% and 85% respectively and are the targets for this third quarter report.

However following a further review the Policy Committee approved, as a measure of performance reporting, that with effect from 1 January 2008 targets be adjusted upwards as follows to bring them in line with Customer Care Policy

Acknowledgements 100%

Responses 85%

- 3.2 During the annual review of complaint handling it was highlighted by the working group that the procedures did not fully satisfy the statutory requirements for handling Social Work Complaints. These have now been reviewed and approved by Committee and have been incorporated into the Council Complaints procedures.

- 3.3 The software used to capture complaints data relies heavily upon manual analysis to produce meaningful performance information. A replacement system is required and a number of options have been evaluated. A cost effective option that will produce reports and reduce the duplication of effort currently involved has been identified. The target date for the system replacement is 31 March 2008 and work is currently on schedule to meet this deadline.

#### **4.0 COMPLAINT ANALYSIS 1 OCTOBER 2007 – 31 DECEMBER 2007**

- 4.1 The Committee is asked to scrutinise the analysis of complaints received throughout the Council during the period 1 October 2007 – 31 December 2007 contained in **Appendix 1**. The main issues can be summarised as follows:

##### 4.1.1 Stage One Complaints - carried out by Service Directors - Table 1

Stage one complaints are reported in detail to Service Committee. However overall totals are provided for reference and figures show a return to first quarter levels. Distribution of complaints across services remains constant and work is ongoing to improve and, in particular, identifying areas of possible under reporting.

The target for acknowledgements is 95% against an actual performance of 91%. Similarly the target for responses 85% was missed, actual performance was 79%. Whilst performance does vary between Services a number of reasons have been identified which helps understand why targets have been missed. It is also the case that not all services are affected. However problems created by holidays, peak leave periods, staff shortages and internal staff moves indicate that services do have issues maintaining continuity. The Complaints Officer is currently working with those Services most affected to help improve performance.

##### 4.1.2 Outcomes

3 complaints were upheld during the quarter and 10 partly upheld. The remedy offered to the majority of the upheld and part upheld complaints was an apology and together with an offer to put right what had gone wrong. One minor service improvement has been introduced to improve recording of telephone calls and providing responses during holiday periods within Educational Services.

##### 4.1.3 Complaints Stage Two - Table 2

The missed target for acknowledgements is 60% with the actual against target of 95% is a mail handling issue and is currently under review. The main focus for this year is to improve handling procedures to meet acknowledgement and response targets. Whilst responses

achieved 100% a problem for complex stage 2 appeals to the Chief Executive is to complete the appeal within the twenty day deadline. Where this deadline is unlikely to be met interim responses are sent out however the potential to provide more detailed updates is currently being explored.

#### 4.1.4 Outcomes

There were 5 stage two appeals in this quarter. None was upheld by the Chief Executive.

There were six referrals to the Chief Executive that have remained at stage one. These involve other procedures but still have the potential for resolution at Director level – their response dates have been extended beyond the 20 working day deadline.

There was one referral to the Complaint Review Committee – Statutory Social Work Complaints. This was the first time the Committee had met in over four years.

#### 4.1.5 Enquiries made through MP/MSP - Table 3

These continue to represent a significant proportion of work for complaints. To avoid duplication these have now been incorporated into the overall complaint management system. Of the 50 received one was part upheld but had not been through the complaints system previously.

#### 4.1.6 Ombudsman Cases - Table 4

The Ombudsman considers complaints once they have exhausted the Council's Complaints procedures. There are currently 14 cases in this quarter which have been, or are being, considered by the Ombudsman. One service improvement has been agreed as a result of a report laid before the Scottish Parliament. The Development Services Manager is to produce a Planning Enforcement Protocol for submission to Committee by 31 March 2008

#### 4.1.7 Restricted Access - Table 5

These cases involve unacceptable behaviour on the part of a complainant and where it has been deemed necessary to restrict their contact with the Council. The cases are reviewed regularly by senior staff and the Corporate Complaint Officer with a view to normalising contact at the earliest opportunity without compromising our commitment to staff.

5. **SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

- (a) **Corporate Development Plan/Community Plan/Service Improvement Plan**  
This report relates to working principle 10 (Accountability) in the Corporate Development Plan.
- (b) **Policy and Legal**  
There are no policy implications arising from this report.
- (c) **Resources (Financial, Risks, Staffing and Property)**  
There are no resource implications arising from this report.
- (d) **Consultations**  
All departments have been consulted in the preparation and collation of data for this report.

6. **CONCLUSION**

6.1.1 **The Committee is asked to:-**

**Scrutinise the Complaints Procedure Monitoring Report for the period 3 – 1 October 2007 – 31 December 2007 and secondary to note our performance against targets.**

Author of Report: I Augustus, Corporate Complaints Officer

Background Papers: Held by Author

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