

REPORT TO: POLICY & RESOURCES ON 30 AUGUST 2016

SUBJECT: COMPLAINTS ANNUAL REPORT

BY: CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 The Policy & Resources Committee is asked to consider the Complaints Annual Report 2015/16.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section III (A) (51) of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to developing and monitoring public relations, public reporting, publicity and corporate communications.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 **The Council is invited to consider the content of the Complaints Annual Report, seek clarification on any points arising and otherwise approve the report. The Annual Report will then be submitted to the Scottish Public Sector Ombudsman (SPSO).**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The first Complaints Annual Report 2014/15 was approved by The Moray Council on 3 February 2016 (item 5 of the minute refers).
- 3.2 The Complaints Annual Report 2015/16 provides analysis of the council's complaints handling performance in the 2015/16 reporting period. All councils are required to publish their performance against the national performance indicators set by the SPSO. The attached report presents our performance against the performance indicators. **(Appendix)**
- 3.3 Complaints handling is part of the Council's Performance Management Framework. Members receive six-monthly updates on complaints performance through routine reports to service committees. Compared to the 2014-15 figures, there has been a reduction of around 6% in the number of complaints received and a slight rise of around 1% in the population size. Consequently, the number of complaints per 1,000 population has reduced by 7.2% compared to 2014/15. This reduction can be seen as positive and reflects public confidence in reporting complaints; however it had been hoped to see an increase in complaint recording.

- 3.4 To put these figures in context the average number of complaints received by local authorities in Scotland was 13.06 per 1,000 population in 2014/15 (the latest published data). However, due to differences in how councils categorise and record complaints, this is not a definitive comparison.
- 3.5 Due to legislation, statutory social work complaints operate through the existing three stage complaints process. As this process is at a variance with the model CHP, Social Work Policy complaint figures are not included in great detail in this report. Social work complaints will align with the model CHP on 1 April 2017 and will be included in the 2017/18 annual report.
- 3.6 During the year our ratio of complaints dealt with at front line resolution stage one compared to those dealt with at the investigation stage two showed a marked improvement from 2014/15. This year more than half the complaints were resolved at the front line stage (51.7%), whereas in 2014/15 fewer than half of all complaints were resolved at this stage (45.7%). While the overall performance for the year has fallen short of our aim of resolving the majority of complaints at the front line resolution stage, there are indications that progress has been made during the year.
- 3.7 For all the complaints closed during 2015/16, at both stages one and two, 43% were fully 'upheld' or 'partially upheld' overall, compared to 33% in 2014/15. This would suggest that many customers are raising genuine concerns with service provision, and a greater proportion of all complaints require us to review and improve the way services are being delivered.

4. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Moray 2026: A Plan for the Future and Moray Corporate Plan 2015 - 2017

This report supports the Scottish Government's national outcomes, in particular the commitment to be accountable to the community as stated: "Our public services are high quality, continually improving, efficient and responsive to local people's needs."

Effective handling of complaints is used to ensure the efficient and sustainable delivery of services to meet the Council's priorities in 'Moray 2023: A Plan for the Future.' Within the Moray Council Corporate Plan, it has been identified that "we will talk to our customers and see how they would like services improved" that is a core part of the process of learning from complaints.

(b) Policy and Legal

There is a statutory requirement to report to the SPSO annually on the performance indicators. The SPSO anticipates that the statutory 'Social Work' complaints procedure will be aligned into the model Complaints Handling Procedures by 1 April 2017.

(c) Financial implications

It is not anticipated that there will be any financial implications as the recommendations in this report relate to publicising performance information.

(d) Risk Implications

Performance reporting is a statutory requirement of the SPSO's Complaints Handling Policy. Failure to report may result in SPSO making a declaration of non-compliance against the Council. Non-compliance with the statutory duty relating to national standards being adopted would present risk in terms of reputational damage and a loss of public confidence in our ability to deliver quality improvements based on complaints analysis, and ultimately to maintaining and improving service standards.

(e) Staffing Implications

There are no staffing implications related to this report.

(f) Property

There are no property implications related to this report.

(g) Equalities

The Equal Opportunities Officer has been consulted in the preparation of this report and the equalities impact has been identified as uncertain.

The Equal Opportunities Officer has recommended that where services are experiencing high volumes of complaints, the management of respective services should arrange to identify common complaint issues and any learning arising. This will help to ensure that complaints are not arising from situations where customer diversity needs have not been considered or addressed, e.g. disability or cultural issues.


(h) Consultations

The Corporate Management Team has been consulted on the contents of annual report. The Performance Management Officer and Equal Opportunities Officers have been consulted in the preparation the Complaints Annual Report.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The Complaints Annual Report presents our performance against the national performance indicators set by SPSO. There is a general improving trend which is encouraging although the continuing absence of benchmarking is a source of some frustration and hopefully their production will future assist council in this continuing improving trend.**

Author of Report: Bridget Mustard, Corporate Policy Unit Manager
Background Papers: SPSO Pls
Ref:

Signature:  _____

Date : 22 August 2016

Designation: Chief Executive

Name: Roddy Burns