

Complaints Procedure – Scoping Report

Purpose of Report

1. To advise the Standards Committee on the proposed scope of a forthcoming review of the council's arrangements for handling customer complaints.

Background

2. The Standards Committee has constitutional responsibility for oversight of Wiltshire Council's arrangements for handling customer complaints. Following a presentation from the Deputy Ombudsman at their last meeting, the Committee has asked officers to bring a report on the scope of proposed changes to the arrangements for managing customer complaints.
3. Following the transition to a unitary authority the council has undergone some fundamental changes: in size, in complexity, in the range of services it delivers and in culture. All of these have, to a greater or lesser extent, had an impact upon customer complaints procedures. The procedures and structures for handling complaints have been in place for over a decade and, while they were fit for purpose when they were first introduced, may no longer be as effective as they should be.
4. The timing of this review of the complaints arrangements, while not prompted by the senior management restructure that has just taken place, will nevertheless be informed by changes to departmental structures and responsibilities resulting from that restructure. It is therefore particularly timely to be conducting the complaints review now.

Main considerations for the Committee

5. The corporate leadership team (CLT) is aware of the proposal to review the complaints procedure. They are supportive of a review, recognising that complaints handling is a key factor underpinning service performance and customer satisfaction.

6. The review is still at a very early stage. In general terms, the scope of the review will be a consideration of:
 - a. Complaints that may result in a claim on the council's insurance policy
 - b. Complaints that may be subject to litigation
 - c. Complaints received via MPs
 - d. Role of senior officers in complaints resolution
 - e. Racist complaints
 - f. Complaints to or about contractors and sub-contractors
 - g. Complaints involving voluntary sector organisations
 - h. Complaints about Area Boards
 - i. Councillors' involvement in complaints in their ward
 - j. Handling of vexatious complaints
 - k. Workflow and process
 - l. Arrangements for logging complaints
 - m. Learning from complaints to improve services
7. The review will also look at the structures in place for complaints handling, how to increase capacity and improve effectiveness within existing resource envelopes, training arrangements and service improvement.
8. The Corporate Leadership Team will maintain oversight of the progress made with the review.

Recommendation

9. Members are asked to note the contents of this report.

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The following unpublished documents have been relied on in the preparation of this report: None