

## Notice of KEY Executive Decision

<b>Subject Heading:</b>	Update to the Corporate Complaints Policy and Procedure
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Damian White
<b>SLT Lead:</b>	Andrew Blake-Herbert
<b>Report Author and contact details:</b>	Carol Ager Extn 4389
<b>Policy context:</b>	To improve customer satisfaction
<b>Financial summary:</b>	No financial implications
<b>Reason decision is Key</b>	The Council's Corporate Complaints Policy and Procedure is relevant to all staff and residents within the borough. The changes will therefore affect all Wards.
<b>Date notice given of intended decision:</b>	04 September, 2018
<b>Relevant OSC:</b>	Overview and Scrutiny
<b>Is it an urgent decision?</b>	No
<b>Is this decision exempt from being called-in?</b>	No

### The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives

Communities making Havering	[X]
Places making Havering	[X]
Opportunities making Havering	[X]
Connections making Havering	[X]

## Part A – Report seeking decision

### DETAIL OF THE DECISION REQUESTED AND RECOMMENDED ACTION

- To note a review of the Council's Corporate Complaints Policy and Procedure;
- To agree the revised timescales for handling complaints at each stage

### AUTHORITY UNDER WHICH DECISION IS MADE

Section 3: 2.5 (q) To agree minor matters and urgent or routine policy matters.

### STATEMENT OF THE REASONS FOR THE DECISION

On 1st April 2015, Cabinet agreed a revised Corporate Complaints procedure. This was to aid and improve performance in both timescale and quality.

Clarification was given as to what the Council considers a complaint as opposed to the issues that could better be described as service requests:

*A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction about the Council's provision of, or failure to provide, a service for which it has responsibility and when it has not put right any service failure in a reasonable timescale.*

In addition, greater clarity was set out with regard to issues that could not be dealt with under the Policy because they need to follow a statutory process.

The timescales for resolving complaints are publicised as 3 days for an acknowledgement and 15 days for a full response at Stage 1; 20 days for Stage 2 and a calendar month for Stage 3.

Performance for dealing with complaints is reported quarterly to Adjudication and Review Committee. Improvements were clearly evidenced in the first two years of the life of the procedure, in both quality and timescales.

The Complaint Policy and Procedure was due for review within 18 months of its introduction, but this did not occur due to some senior management restructures, including the appointment of a new Chief Executive. A revision to the Policy at that time was deemed inappropriate.

However, recent changes to performance and complexity of some complaints have prompted consideration of the complaint timings and the need to bring the Policy up to date.

The merits of three stages to the council's process have been considered, including whether Stage 3 should be removed. However, given the fact that just seven Stage 3 complaints have been received in the three and a half years since April 2015

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compared to 15 in the year leading up to the introduction of the Policy, it is believed the process at Stage 2 is sufficiently robust to deal with, and resolve, complaints without the need for further escalation. In addition, it gives Members the opportunity to be involved with, and directly assist in, the resolution of escalated complaints prior to any referral to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

It is worth noting that the timescale for the receipt of a Stage 3 complaint to completion is a calendar month. In a recent case, as the complaint was received during the local election period, it was not possible to convene a Member Review Panel within the required timescales and as a result, the case was reported late.

As mentioned previously, performance improved a great deal since April 2015. However, there has been a noticeable change in the quality of investigations undertaken at Stage 1 of the process, causing an impact on the depth and complexity of Stage 2 complaints. Generally speaking, Stage 1 complaints are still meeting the prescribed timescale for 95% completion within 15 days, but this does not reflect the quality of the investigation.

New CRM system - the current Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system will soon become obsolete. Scoping work is being undertaken to determine the requirements for a new viable system. The introduction of a new system will provide an opportunity for all staff to be trained, or re-trained on both the use of a new complaint management system and the requirements of the Council's Complaint Policy and Procedure. A full training programme will be rolled-out across the authority, and will include mandatory online training on the complaints process.

It is proposed that the following changes are made to timescales for the Corporate Complaint Policy and Procedure.

- Stage 1 to be amended to 10 working days
- Stage 2 to increase to 25 working days, to allow for increased pressure caused by more complex investigations
- Stage 3 to be brought in line with working day reporting and to allow a little additional time for Members to make themselves available for a Member Review Panel
- It is proposed to keep the performance indicator targets at the same level.

The Policy and Procedure has been updated slightly to reflect current practice.

## **OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

No other options considered.

## **PRE-DECISION CONSULTATION**

There has been no formal consultation on this proposed decision. The purpose of the amendments to the Complaints process is to provide improved customer service.

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**NAME AND JOB TITLE OF STAFF MEMBER ADVISING THE DECISION-MAKER**

Name: Andrew Blake-Herbert

Designation: Chief Executive

Signature:

Date:

## Part B - Assessment of implications and risks

### **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS**

There are no legal implications or risks relating to the proposed decision.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS**

There are no financial implications or risks relating to the proposed decision.

### **HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS (AND ACCOMMODATION IMPLICATIONS WHERE RELEVANT)**

There are no Human Resources implications or risks relating to the proposed decision.

### **EQUALITIES AND SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS**

There are no equalities and social implications or risks relating to the proposed decision.

The changes will not have a significant impact on any of the “protected characteristics”, as the review and update to the Policy relates only to the council’s internal handling of complaints and the timescales in which this is delivered.

### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None

Revised Corporate Complaint Policy and Procedure - attached

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**Part C – Record of decision**

I have made this executive decision in accordance with authority delegated to me as the Leader of the Council and in compliance with the requirements of the Constitution.

**Decision**

Proposal agreed

**Details of decision maker**

Signed

Name: Councillor Damian White

Leader of the Council

Date:

**Lodging this notice**

The signed decision notice must be delivered to the proper officer, Debra Marlow, Principal Democratic Services Officer in Democratic Services, in the Town Hall.

**For use by Committee Administration**

This notice was lodged with me on 20/9/2019

Signed 