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MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE ADJUDICATION AND REVIEW COMMITTEE Town Hall, Main Road, Romford 16 August 2016 (7.00 - 7.40 pm)

Present:

COUNCILLORS

Conservative Group	Roger Westwood (Vice-Chair, in the Chair) and Meg Davis
Residents' Group	John Mylod (Vice-Chair) and Julie Wilkes
East Havering Residents' Group	Alex Donald and Linda Van den Hende
UKIP Group	David Johnson
Independent Residents Group	Michael Deon Burton

Apologies were received for the absence of Councillors Garry Pain.

All decisions were taken with no votes against.

The Chairman reminded Members of the action to be taken in an emergency.

19 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 12 May 2016 were accepted and signed by the Chairman.

20 CORPORATE COMPLAINTS QUARTERLY UPDATE

Members were provided with a presentation from the Senior Complaint and Investigation Officer. The number of complaints dealt with at Stages One and Two of the Corporate Complaints process to 30 June 2016 was 604 with 594 (98%) completed within the 15 working days allowed. This compared with 814 complaints to 30 June 2015 of which 674 (83%) were completed within 15 working days. There were no escalations to Stage Three.

The Committee was provided with a number of charts with data showing how these statistics were apportioned across the Council's services and these are appended to the Minute.

The Senior Complaint and Investigation Manager informed Members that changes had been made to the way in which complaints were recorded and

this had had some impact on the figures. Members expressed their satisfaction with the way in which the process appeared to be working.

In response to a question from a member, the Senior Complaint and Investigation Officer confirmed that all requests for a complaint to be escalated to Stage Two was reviewed by the Chief Executive (CE) and if he considered that the response at Stage One had addressed the matter, the complainant was informed that their request had been declined and that the complaints process had been completed. If they remained dissatisfied, they could approach the appropriate Ombudsman. She also confirmed that the CE checked every response at Stage Two before it was sent and this ensured that the matter remained consistent and compliant with the procedure – as evidenced recently when the LGO complimented the Council on its complaints procedure.

The Committee thanked the Senior Complaint and Investigation Officer for her presentation.

21 MEMBER ENQUIRIES QUARTERLY UPDATE

The Senior Complaint and Investigation Manager provided the Committee with a presentation concerning MP and Member enquiries for the period 1 April – 30 June 2016. She emphasised that the figures only represented those enquiries received and posted on CRM and added that since the previous year efforts had been made to identify and strip out complaints so that only enquiries were recorded. These efforts would continue.

Members were informed that during the quarter there had been 882 enquiries of which 855 had received answers within the 15 working days and this compared with 504 enquiries for the same period in 2015 of which 433 (86%) had been completed within the response period. The low figure for enquiries during the previous year could – in part – be attributed to a good number of them being recorded as “complaints” and whilst Members could – and did – complain on behalf of their constituents, mixing them with enquiries skewed both data sets.

Members expressed their satisfaction with the efforts being made to ensure that the information being provided was as accurate as possible and were pleased that the direction of travel of completions was positive.

The Committee thanked the Senior Complaint and Investigation Manager for her presentation.

22 LGO AND HOUSING OMBUDSMAN ANNUAL REVIEW UPDATE

The Senior Complaint and Investigation Manager provided Members with a presentation concerning the Annual Statement from the LGO.

Members were informed that during the year 1 April 2015 – 30 March 2016, the LGO had recorded 97 complaints against the Council. Of these 23 resulted in an investigation. Of the 23 investigations, 14 were upheld. This represented 61%, but only 14% of the total recorded by the Ombudsman.

To put this into a broader perspective, Members were informed that neighbouring boroughs – such as Barking and Dagenham (147 cases with 30% upheld), Newham (248 cases of which 63% were upheld) and statistical neighbours: Croydon (212 – 51% upheld) and Bromley (169 – 60% upheld).


In more detail, Members were informed that of those cases upheld, five were for Adult Care Services – and in answer to a question, this was focused primarily on charging and care home provision. Housing Services (not covered by the jurisdiction of the Housing Ombudsman but more to do with homelessness etc.) had three complaints upheld, Highways had two and Environmental Services, Planning, Education/Children's Services and Benefits and Tax each had one case upheld. In answer to an enquiry from Members, the Senior Complaint and Investigation Manager stated that the education complaints were mostly from parents dissatisfied with the results of school appeals whilst the benefits/tax issues were largely to do with the involvement of bailiffs or NNDR matters.

In conclusion, Members were informed that a recent training day with the LGO had been very well received. Positive relations were being developed with the staff there and that the LGO had been very complimentary, not only about the Council's complaints procedure, but of its persistent and vexatious complaints policy (modelled on its own guidelines) and that this positive relationship augured well for the future.

The Committee thanked the Senior Complaint and Investigation Manager for her presentation, noting the positive application of the processes under her management and the encouraging feed-back from the LGO. The Committee urged her and her team to continue developing and refining the process and felt confident that this would be done.

Chairman

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Quarter 1 Overview

Corporate Complaints and Members/MP Enquiries


Carol Ager
16th August 2016

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Corporate Complaints

April to June 2016


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How many complaints have we received?

From 1st April to 30th June 2016
604 complaints were logged (Stage 1 and Stage 2)
Of those 594 (98%) were completed in 15 working days


From 1st April to 30th June 2015
814 complaints were logged (Stage 1 and Stage 2)
Of those 674 (83%) were completed in 15 working days

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Service breakdown - April to June 2016


	Stage 1	No in time	%	Stage 2	No in time	%
Asset Management	1		100%			
Benefits (A-K)	2		100%			
Benefits (L-Z)	9					
Business Rates	2	1	50%			
Businesses	1		100%			
Communications	5		100%			
Council Tax	25		100%	1		100%
Crematorium	4		100%			
Customer Services	42		100%			
Development & Trans Planning	1		100%			
Enforcement	0			1		100%
Housing - Anti social behaviour	2		100%			
Housing - Other	114		100%	8	7	88%
Housing - Repairs	35		100%	6	5	83%
Learning & Employment	6	4	83%			
Legal & Governance	2		100%			
Leisure Centres and Sport	2		100%			
Library Services	13		100%	2		100%
Parks and Open Spaces	16		100%			
Planning & Building Control	13	9	69%	3		100%
Public Health	0					
Public Protection	16	14	88%	1		100%
Regeneration	1		100%			
Registrar Services	7		100%			
Roads and Pavements	36		100%	7		100%
Social Care Adults	1		100%			
Social Care Children's	1		100%	1		100%
Street Cleansing	34		100%	7		
Traffic and Parking Control	87		100%	5		100%
Transactional Services	1		100%			
Waste and Recycling	78		100%	5		100%
Totals	557			47		

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Complaints escalated to Stage 2 between April and June 2016			
	Stage 1 Complaints Logged	Stage 2 Complaints Logged	Escalated to Stage 2 (%)
April	148	11	7.43%
May	188	10	5.31%
June	221	26	11.76%
Total	557	47	8.44%

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Lessons learned	
Situation	Lesson learned
Very late reporting of missed green waste collection by customer who does not have internet access.	Information on Council's web page clearly advises missed green waste collections are to be reported no later than 4.30pm the day after a scheduled collection day. This information is not available anywhere other than on the internet.
Neighbours were not included in advisory letters of a planned development next door to them.	Terms and Conditions of green waste contracts to be amended to reflect this. Whilst the Planning decision is likely not to have been any different if the complaint had the opportunity to make their objections, the Service has been asked to review the checking process when sending notices to neighbouring properties.
Customer was cutting a tree on behalf of a neighbour and was visited by an enforcement officer following a complaint.	Customer did have a letter from the Council allowing him to carry out maintenance on the tree, but officers were unable to trace it at the time of the visit. Detailed procedures have now been put in place to ensure records are available to those investigating allegations of unauthorised work on trees.
Customer signed an authority for the Council to deal with a 3 rd party but only for one of our services. Delays were then caused when the customer's representative wanted to discuss issues within other service areas and information could not be given without further signed authority.	One joined up authority form should be used by all services across the Council. SLT team to lead on the design and implementation of this in liaison with the Access to Information team.

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What Next?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue working with service areas, especially those experiencing increased requests for Stage 2 complaints • Promote use of the Complaint Forum for staff to use as a vehicle for sharing working practices, issues etc • Continue to identify and challenge through audits • Review the Corporate Complaints Policy in October/November • Build and develop relationships with Ombudsmen – recent training from LGO was well received 	


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Questions / Comments ?	
Carol Ager	

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Member/MP Enquiries

April to June 2016


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How many enquiries have we received?

From 1st April to 30th June 2016
 882 Member / MP enquiries were received (those logged on CRM)
 Of those 855 (97%) were completed in 15 working days

From 1st April to 30th June 2015
 504 Member / MP were logged
 Of those 433 (86%) were completed in 15 working days


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Number of enquiries logged per service (April to June 2016)

	Number Logged	Closed in 15 days	Closed in 15 days (%)
Asset Management	1	0	0%
Business Rates	2	1	50%
Community Safety	1	1	100%
Council Tax	2	2	100%
Culture	1	1	100%
Customer Services	4	3	75%
Environmental Health	36	36	100%
Finance	1	0	0%
Housing – Management	7	7	100%
Housing – Retained Services	242	242	100%
Learning & Achievement	15	15	100%
Legal & Governance	3	2	67%
Leisure Centres & Sport	1	1	100%


	Number Logged	Closed in 15 days	Closed in 15 days (%)
Licensing	6	6	100%
Planning & Building Control	60	56	93%
Property Services	1	1	100%
Public Health	5	5	100%
Public Protection (Inc Trading Standards, Environmental Health & Noise Nuisance)	7	7	100%
Regeneration	2	2	100%
Registrar Services (Inc Birth, Death and Marriages)	1	1	100%
Roads and Pavements (Inc Street Lighting)	159	158	99%
Social Care Adults	30	19	63%
Social Care Children	11	6	55%
Street Cleansing (Inc Trees)	115	115	100%
Trading Standards	4	4	100%
Traffic and Parking Control	117	117	100%
Waste and Recycling	48	48	100%
Total	882	855	97%

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Thank you for listening

Questions?


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Local Government Ombudsman Annual Review Letter 2016


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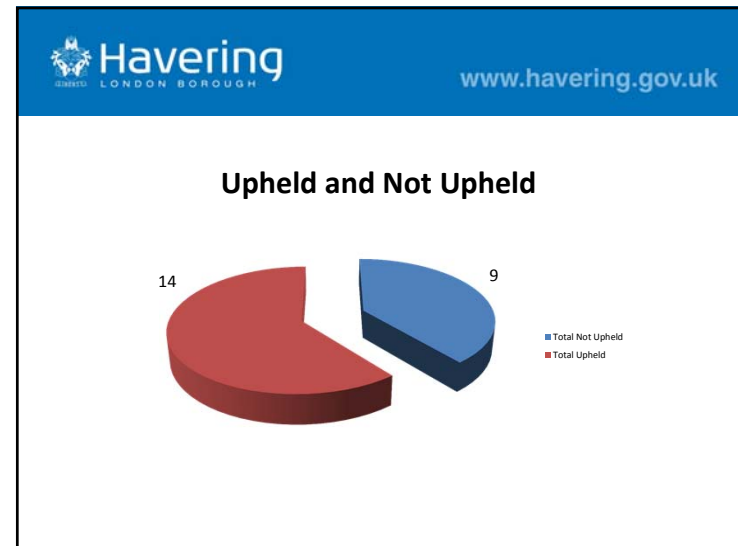
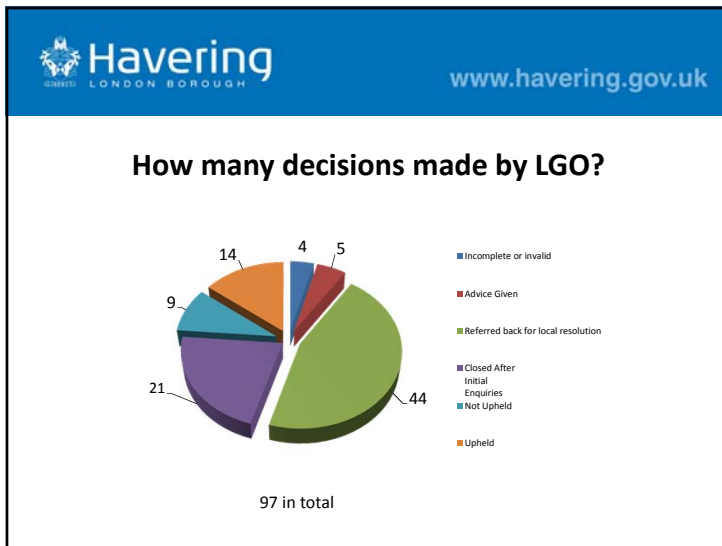
Stats in short

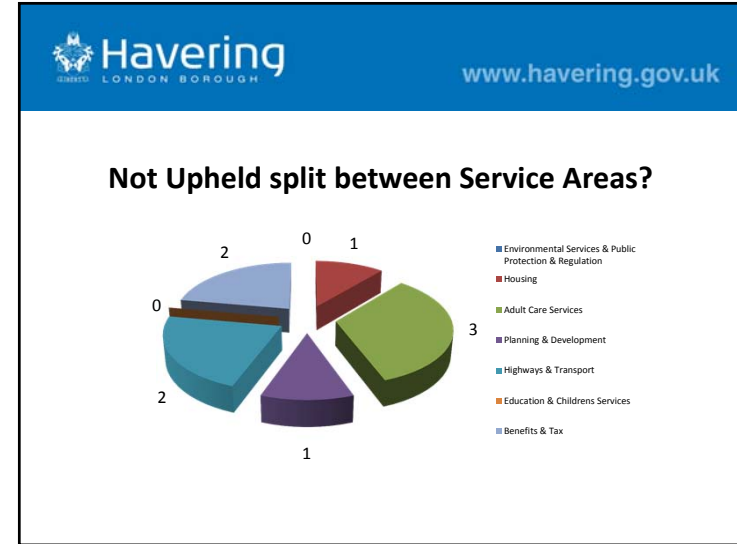
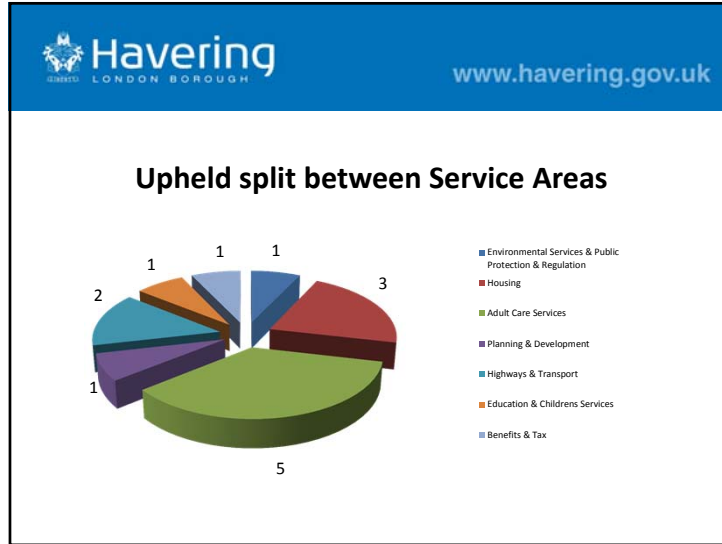
97 cases considered
23 detailed investigations
Of those 14 were upheld

LGO uphold rate = 61% (14 of 23) But 14 of 97 = 14%

Compared to other London Boroughs:

Barking & Dagenham 147 (30% upheld)
Croydon 212 (51% upheld)
Newham 248 (63% upheld)
Bromley 169 (60% upheld)





Background to LGO stats

- SLT team took over as liaison with LGO/HO mid year (October 2015). Recording methods differ slightly.
- Charts reflect the LGO records of the cases they have investigated for us.
- As in most years, for a number of reasons, it is difficult to tie these figures up with the numbers logged on the Council's records.
- Overall we can agree the figures LGO have supplied.

What Next?

- Local Government changes in recent years have resulted in a review of the way LGO structure their casework teams.
- Assistant Ombudsmen responsible for specific local authorities – giving greater opportunities for relationship building.
- Potentially a joined up Public Service Ombudsman for England, joining up Local Government Ombudsman, Housing Ombudsman and Public Health Services Ombudsman.
- Recent training from LGO was well received. The Council was complimented on it's Corporate Complaints Policy & Procedure, Persistent and Unreasonable Policy, use of LGO guidelines for goodwill payments.

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