

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
ADJUDICATION AND REVIEW COMMITTEE
Town Hall
22 August 2018 (7.00 - 8.00 pm)**

Present:

COUNCILLORS

Conservative Group Timothy Ryan (Vice-Chair), Maggie Themistocli (Chairman), Joshua Chapman and +Michael Deon Burton

Residents' Group Ray Morgon

Labour Group Denis O'Flynn

Upminster & Cranham Residents' Group Gillian Ford

Independent Residents Group

An apology for absence for Councillor Ray Best was received.

+Substitute Members: Councillor Michael Deon Burton (for Ray Best)

All decisions were taken with no votes against.

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

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations made at the meeting.

2 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 February 2018 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3 UPDATE ON CORPORATE COMPLAINTS

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on complaint handling performance across all Council services.

The Council received 452 Stage 1 complaints during the period April to June 2018. 94% of them (427) were responded to within 15 days which was a slight increase on the quarter 4 figures.

The council received 92 requests for escalation to Stage 2 of the process, 73% (67) of them dealt with within 20 days.

This equated to an escalation request rate of 20% however, this was reduced to 5% when considering the number of cases that were not escalated to Stage 2.

Appended to the report was a breakdown of cases that had been audited during quarter 1. The aim was to audit approximately ten percent of the total number of complaints received. Also appended were details of decisions that had been taken by Local Government and Housing Ombudsmen. During quarter 1 fourteen decisions had been taken.

Members were advised that the purpose of the 15 day timescale given in April 2015 for Stage 1 complaints was to enable a full and comprehensive investigation to be carried out. In many cases, the full investigation was not being undertaken until the customer requested escalation to Stage 2 of the complaints process. Whilst Stage 1 performance remained at reasonable levels, the Stage 2 process was clearly struggling.

As a result, it was therefore recommended that turnaround times for Stage 1 complaints be reduced from 15 days to 10 days, whilst increasing the Stage 2 target to 25 days.

Performance targets would remain at 95% for both stages.

Any revisions would be made to the Corporate Complaint Policy and Procedure and be signed off as an Executive Decision, with an effective date of 1 October 2018.

The Committee **RESOLVED** to note as follows:

- The Corporate Complaints Performance Statistics for Quarter 1
- The results following the Quarter 1 Audit of complaints
- Decisions made by both the Local Government and Housing Ombudsmen throughout the quarter.

4 **UPDATE ON PERFORMANCE WITH MEMBER ENQUIRIES**

The Committee considered a report that provided an update on Member Enquiries handling performance across all the Council's services.

The quarter 1 performance statistics for all Member Enquiries was appended to the report.

Members made 857 enquiries of Services during the period April to June 2018. 95% of them (811) were responded to within time; compared to the previous Quarter when 727 enquiries were received and (714) responded to within time.

For the same period in the previous year, 2017, 702 were received and 672 (95%) were dealt with in time.

Members again re-iterated the point made at the last meeting of the Committee that it was felt that the number of Members/MP Enquiries data presented was not an accurate reflection as often Members approached officers directly which by-passed the CRM process.

Members were advised that a new system of collecting enquiry information was in the pipeline and would hopefully be live by the beginning of 2019 that would enable officers to provide more accurate data in future.

The Committee **RESOLVED** to note the Member Enquiries Statistics for Quarter 1 and also that until the new system was in place to enable more accurate statistics that the member enquiry report be temporarily removed from future meeting agendas.

5 **LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND SOCIAL CARE OMBUDSMAN'S ANNUAL REVIEW LETTER 2017/18**

The report before Members provided details relating to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's Annual Review letter.

The Council had improved results in the Ombudsman's 2017/18 letter compared to 2016/17.

This year, the LGSCO received 94 complaints and enquiries about Havering Council, against 104 the previous year. Of those 94, there were reductions for almost all Service Areas, most noticeably for Council Tax and Benefits who had seven complaints lodged against them this year; down from 16 in 2016/17

When considering the decisions made, and in particular the Detailed Investigations, 13 were Not Upheld compared to nine the previous year, (where more is better); whilst ten were upheld, against 12 in 2016/17 (where less is better). The overall uphold rate equated to 44%, down from 57%, again, less is better.

In his letter, the Ombudsman, Michael King, had emphasised the need for council's to evidence their learning from complaints. As a result, the LGSCO would be making some changes to the format of their annual letter from next year, to encourage transparency in the work of the Ombudsman's office, and also to recognise the improvements councils have made following intervention.

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Appended to the Annual Review letter was the Ombudsman's activity report for 2017/18.

Members **NOTED** the contents of the Ombudsman's Annual Review letter and activity report.

Chairman