

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
ADJUDICATION AND REVIEW COMMITTEE
Committee Room 3B - Town Hall
4 December 2019 (7.00 - 7.30 pm)**

Present:

COUNCILLORS

Conservative Group Ray Best (Vice-Chair), Timothy Ryan (Vice-Chair),
+Robert Benham and +Carol Smith

Residents' Group

Labour Group

**Upminster & Cranham
Residents' Group** +John Tyler

**Independent Residents
Group**

Apologies were received for the absence of Councillors Matt Sutton, Joshua Chapman, Ray Morgon, Linda Van den Hende and Denis O'Flynn.

+Substitute members: Councillor Robert Benham (for Matt Sutton), Councillor Carol Smith (for Joshua Chapman) and Councillor John Tyler (for Linda Van den Hende).

All decisions were taken with no votes against.

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

13 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest.

14 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 September 2019 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

15 UPDATE ON CORPORATE COMPLAINTS AND STATUTORY COMPLAINTS FOR QUARTER 2

The report before Members updated on complaint handling performance across all Council services.

The council received 562 Stage 1 complaints during the period July to September 2019. 92% of them (519) were responded to within the required timescale of ten days.

The council received 111 requests for escalation to Stage 2 of the process, 69% (77) of them dealt with within 25 days, in line with current timescales.

This equated to an escalation request rate of 20% however, this was reduced to 9% when considering the number of cases that were not escalated to Stage 2. This was an increase from the previous 5% in Quarter 1. The request for escalation rate was exactly the same as in Quarter 2 2018/19.

Unfortunately, there had been a dip in performance across the quarter, most markedly in Stage 2 complaints. Given previous discussions relating to increasing numbers of Stage 2 complaints, with the need for more in-depth investigations, the team had been struggling. This was being addressed, with the appointment of one permanent member of staff, who took up post mid-October, and a secondment opportunity for another.

The number of statutory complaints received in 2019-20 by Adult Social Care in Q2 totalled 10 and Children's Services totalled 23, however of the 23 received, four were withdrawn, and one was on hold, resulting in 18 for the quarter. There has been a slight decrease in the number of complaints of two from Q1 (20) for Children's Services, while there had been a decrease of nine in Adult Social Care complaints from Q1 (19).

For Adults, of those complaints responded to in Q2 (10), seven were Adult Social Care, whilst three involved third parties (external providers).

Adult Social Care complaints in Q2 continued to largely be concerning invoices/fees charged relating to disputes around times charged for care. This was an ongoing issue and continued to be a high priority within the Adult Social Care action plan. Children's Services complaints continued to be around interventions by Children's Services, and in relation to support around accommodation.

During Quarter 2 there were 26 decisions by Local Government and Housing Ombudsmen, as follows:

- 7 x Closed after initial enquiries: No further action
(*Environment (4); Planning; Public Protection; Housing*)
- 5 x Closed after initial enquiries: Out of jurisdiction
(*Environment; Planning; Housing (2); Business Rates*)

- 6 x Closed: Premature
(*Adult Services: Children's Services; Environment; Housing (2); Council Tax & Benefits*)
- 4 x Not Upheld: No Maladministration
(*Adult Services (2); Children's Services (1); Environment*)
- 1 x Upheld: Maladministration, injustice with no penalty
(*Environment*)
- 2 x Upheld: Maladministration, injustice with penalty
(*Adults Services*)

There was one Housing Ombudsman decision during the period, which found no maladministration.

Committee members expressed concerns regarding the number of Housing complaints that had been raised, particularly in relation to housing repairs.

The committee requested that a representative from Housing be invited to the next meeting of the committee to discuss what corrective and preventative measures were in place to assist in reducing the number of complaints going forward.

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

- The Corporate Complaints Performance Statistics for Quarter 2 (July – September 2019).
- The Statutory Complaints Performance Statistics for Quarter 2 (July – September 2019)
- Decisions made by both the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) and Housing Ombudsman (HO) throughout the quarter.

16 **UPDATE ON THE COUNCIL'S ACCESS TO INFORMATION PERFORMANCE FOR QUARTER 2**

The report before Members detailed an update of the Council's Access to Information performance for Subject Access, Freedom of Information & Environmental Information Requests for the period of July to August 2019.

Members noted that the following numbers of requests had been received in the following months:

July 214
August 156
September 166

The Committee **RESOLVED** to **NOTE** the contents of the report

Chairman