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**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
ADJUDICATION AND REVIEW COMMITTEE  
Committee Room 3B - Town Hall  
5 March 2020 (7.00 - 8.15 pm)**

**Present:**

**COUNCILLORS**

**Conservative Group** Joshua Chapman, Timothy Ryan (Vice-Chair),  
Matt Sutton (Chairman) and +Viddy Persaud

**Residents' Group** Ray Morgon

**Labour Group** Carole Beth

**Upminster & Cranham  
Residents' Group** Linda Van den Hende

**Independent Residents  
Group**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Ray Best .

+Substitute members; Councillor Viddy Persaud (for Councillor Ray Best)

All decisions were taken with no votes against.

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

**17 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

There were no declarations of interest.

**18 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 December 2019 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**19 UPDATE ON CORPORATE COMPLAINTS AND STATUTORY  
COMPLAINTS FOR QUARTER 3**

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

Attached to the report were appendices that contained written information for Members to consider on complaint statistics for Quarter 3, indicating numbers received and performance on timeliness and quality.

The Council had received 567 Stage 1 complaints during the period October to December 2019. 86% of them (486) were responded to within the required timescale of ten days, which represented a slight drop in performance from 92% in Quarter 2.

The Council received 98 requests for escalation to Stage 2 of the process, 80% (78) of them dealt with within 25 days, in line with current timescales, which represented an increase in performance from 69% in Quarter 2.

This equated to an escalation request rate of 17% however, this was reduced to 5% when considering the number of cases that were not escalated to Stage 2.

The cumulative performance across Stages 1 and 2 for the quarter was 85%, compared to 78% for the same period in the previous year. At that time, the Council received 480 complaints, 376 of which were completed within timescales.

Overall performance this year had improved while Services had been handling higher numbers of complaints.

The number of statutory complaints received in 2019-20 by Adult Social Care in Quarter 3 totalled 27 and Children's Services totalled 12. Of the 27 Adult Social Care complaints, eight had been withdrawn due to either consent not being received or further information not being provided. Of the 12 Children's complaints, three had been withdrawn. There had been a decrease in the number of complaints of six from Quarter 2 (18) for Children's Services, while there has been an increase of 15 in Adult Social Care complaints from Q2 (12).

For Adults, of those complaints responded to in Quarter 3 (27), 25 were Adult Social Care, whilst two were third parties (external providers). Of the Adult Social Care complaints, 92% were responded to within the 20 day timescale. Of the two not responded to within timescale, one involved an external contractor, the other due to telephone conference arrangements. Of the two external provider complaints both were responded to within the 25 day timescale. Of those complaints responded for Children's in Quarter 3 (12), 83% were responded to within the 20 day timescale.

There were five Stage 2 requests for Children's Services, with two not progressing, one ongoing and one on hold. There was one Stage 3 Review Panel request in Quarter 3.

Adult Social Care complaints in Quarter 3 were largely about home care in relation to late calls, or not being happy about the care being provided. There were also complaints concerning invoices/fees charged relating to disputes around times charged for care. This is an ongoing issue and continues to be a high priority within the Adult Social Care action plan. Children's Services complaints continued to be about interventions by Children's Services, and in relation to support around Special Guardianship.

During Quarter 3 there had been 14 decisions by Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, with a further determination by the Housing Ombudsman,

Members were advised that lessons had been learnt and improvements made to services to keep complaints to a minimum.

Members **noted** the contents of the report and the appendices.

## 20 **HOUSING COMPLAINTS**

The report sought to update the Committee on the latest improvements relating to the management of Complaints received by Housing Services in quarter 3.

In the period between October and December 2019 there had been the following number of complaints:

Repairs Complaints Stage 1: 65

Repairs Complaints Stage 1 Upheld: 39 Upheld / Partly Upheld

Repairs Complaints Stage 2: 9

Repairs Complaints Stage 2 Upheld: 4 Upheld / Partly Upheld (3 still under investigation with the CEO)

Members were advised that a new performance and strategy team was being set up in Housing which would see a head of service appointed to directly manage the complaints function, giving more focus and rewriting processes to make the service more robust. It was hoped to begin recruitment for the head of service by the end of February.

A meeting had been held with the gas contractor to improve performance and reduce complaints. An action plan had been put in place with the gas contractor. Meetings have also re-commenced with the main repairs

contractor, following recruitment of the new Repairs Manager, where complaints were raised and discussed to identify trends.

The Housing Complaints Team were working on complaints being logged via the current Housing Management system 'Open Housing'. The system would be designed to record data and report in a more effective way, to enhance the learning from complaints and implement service improvement. This would also allow all services in Housing to be aware of ongoing complaints at all levels, when dealing with customers.

During the debate Members felt that it would be useful in future if a breakdown of the complaint reason and the area of the service could be identified.

Members **noted** the contents of the report.

## 21 **THE COUNCIL'S COMPLAINT POLICY & PROCEDURE/ STAGE 3 HEARINGS - DISCUSSION**

The report before Members introduced the Council's Corporate Complaints mechanism and invited debate around stage 3 hearings.

The Corporate Complaint Policy and Procedure was introduced on 1 April 2015.

Some changes to the Corporate timescales were made, effective 1 October 2018. Turnaround was set to 10 working days for Stage 1 complaints and 25 working days for Stage 2 complaints. Services should aim to respond to 95% of cases within time.

Most complaints were dealt with under stage 1 or 2 however, some complainants wanted to take their complaint further and for it to be heard by a review panel.

Officers confirmed that Havering was the only borough in London that still operated a three tier complaint system.

During the debate Members felt that the hearings were onerous on both officers and Members.

It was also commented that poorly worded letters at both stage 1 and 2 sometimes left complainants without the resolution they were looking for.

Officers advised that if the stage 3 hearings were to be removed that there would have to be a constitutional change made.

Members **noted** the contents of the report and agreed to **review** the position in the future.

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**Chairman**

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