

ADJUDICATION & REPORT REVIEW COMMITTEE

6 November 2012

Subject Heading:

INITIAL ASSESSMENT PANELS
(CORPORATE COMPLAINTS &
STANDARDS ISSUES) - PROPOSALS

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Policy context:

The Committee has responsibility for
considering Corporate Complaints and
Standards issues

Financial summary:

There are no specific financial implications

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

Ensuring a clean, safe and green borough	<input type="checkbox"/>
Championing education and learning for all	<input type="checkbox"/>
Providing economic, social and cultural activity in thriving towns and villages	<input type="checkbox"/>
Valuing and enhancing the lives of our residents	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Delivering high customer satisfaction and a stable council tax	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

SUMMARY

The Committee is responsible for considering the most intractable Corporate Complaints at Stage 3 of the Process. The demise of Homes in Havering (with effect from 1 October 2012) means that there is a likelihood of more housing complaints being escalated to Stage 3 of the complaints process.

In order to ensure that these initial assessments are managed in a way which best uses Members' time and other Council resources economically and to best

advantage, it is proposed to place Initial Assessment Panels (IAPs) on a more formal footing.

This report sets out those proposals.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee adopt the proposals set out in this report.

REPORT DETAIL

Outline

- 1 In 2010 the Committee endorsed the setting up of IAPs in order to quickly establish whether a Corporate Complaint should proceed to a full hearing or not. These have, to date, been held on an ad-hoc basis. .
- 2 On 1 October this year, Homes in Havering (HiH) ceased to be responsible for maintaining the Council's housing stock and, as a consequence of the housing responsibilities returning to Council management, the complaints which had been referred to the Board of HiH for consideration at Stage 3, now reverts to the Council.
- 3 Whilst it is unknown how much this will impact the complaints process, it is likely that there will be an increase in the number of complaints being referred to Members for consideration.
- 4 In addition, the abolition of the Standards Committee at Annual Council this year and the transference of responsibility for holding hearings panels to the Adjudication and Review Committee for it to consider complaints against Members in respect of breaches of the Members' Code of Conduct could add further to this work-load..
- 5 Both types of appeal can be processed in a similar manner in accordance with practices approved by this Committee and covered by the Constitution.
- 6 There is no intention to make any changes to the format of the IAPs. In respect of both Corporate Complaints and Standards matters, the IAP will comprise of the Chairman and two other members. A clerk will be present to take minutes and note the decisions of the Panel.
- 7 It is proposed that in order to ensure Council resources and Members' time are used efficiently and economically, it is proposed that the IAPs are scheduled for a specific time on a monthly basis. In the absence of any appeals coming forward, there will be no need for the IAP to convene and the meeting will be cancelled.

- 9 The Appendix gives proposed dates for the remainder of 2012/13 and for 2013/14. If approved, the dates will be added to the scheduled meetings for the year. It is also proposed that the commencing times for the IAPs should be 6.00pm or 6.30pm in order that the business can be concluded before the commencement of other committees.
- 10 If there is a mix of Corporate and Standards matters for consideration, Members will be sent both a Corporate and a Standards agenda, even though the membership of the IAP may be the same.
- 11 If an IAP has been nominated for a particular date and subsequently there arises a conflict of interest for one of its Members in respect of one case out of a number which are to be considered, that case will be considered as a separate item with a different Member and the remainder of the items will be considered with the nominated panellists. It is suggested that in these instances, the single item be dealt with first.
- 12 Dates could be changed if there was a compelling reason for this being necessary and in the event of there being an urgent need for a matter to be considered, an ad-hoc meeting would be arranged with the consent of the Chairman.

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Financial implications and risks:

If the proposals are adopted, the management of the IAPs will be such that costs to the Council will be kept to a minimum as hearings will be marshalled onto specific dates.

Legal implications and risks:

There are none directly associated with this report.

Human Resources implications and risks:

There are none associated with this report.

Equalities implications and risks:

There are none associated with this report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

Appendix

All the following dates are planned to fall on the third Thursday in the month and it is proposed that they should usually commence at 6.00pm or 6.30pm and be held in the Town Hall.

If there are no cases to consider, Members will be informed that the meeting has been cancelled.

Proposed dates for Initial Assessment Panels for the remainder of 2012/13:

22 November 2012

20 December

24 January 2013

21 February

21 March

Proposed dates for Initial Assessment Panels through 2013/14:

25 April 2013

23 May

20 June

25 July

22 August

19 September

24 October

21 November

19 December

23 January 2014

20 February

20 March