

Report of: Caroline Bull, Chief Executive
To: Standards Committee
Date: 28th April 2006 **Item No:** 6
Title of Report : COMPLAINTS MONITORING AND OVERSEEING

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: This report provides details of the proposals for the Committee's overview role on complaints.

Key decision: No

Portfolio Holder: N/A

Scrutiny Responsibility: N/A

Ward(s) affected: All

Report Approved by: William Reed, Democratic Services Manager

Policy Framework: Corporate Governance

Recommendation(s):

Committee is recommended to agree that:

- i) It receives a report on complaints monitoring and overseeing twice-yearly, with the first report being presented to its meeting on 9th June 2006.
- ii) The report contains similar details and analysis as the report previously considered by Community Scrutiny Committee.
- iii) The report is forwarded to Community Scrutiny Committee for information purposes.

1. At its meeting on 6th January 2006, Committee considered a report that provided details of the Council's corporate complaints system. The report showed the sort of details and analysis of complaints that have been presented to the Community Scrutiny Committee.
2. The Committee resolved to note the contents of the report and to look forward to the submission to its April meeting of a complaints overview report.
3. The Committee's power and duty now reads: "To monitor the Council's handling of complaints and Ombudsman's investigations". There is nothing in Community Scrutiny Committee's powers and duties that relate to complaints overseeing.
4. Committee will recall that the complaints monitoring report presented to the Community Scrutiny Committee on a twice-yearly basis contains statistical information and analysis of customer feedback through complaints for six monthly periods, 1st April to 30th September and 1st October to 31st March. The report also includes an analysis of the complaints against the Council that have been investigated by the Local Government Ombudsman.
5. It is proposed that henceforth the Committee should receive a report twice yearly that covers the same information as the existing report to Community Scrutiny Committee. To enable sufficient time to gather and analyse the data, it is suggested that the reports are presented to the Committee's meetings in June and December. On this basis, the first report would be presented to Committee at its meeting on 9th June 2006.
6. As Executive Board is responsible for administering the Council's corporate complaints procedure, the Committee can forward any comments it might have to the Executive Board.
7. As Community Scrutiny Committee has no powers in respect of complaints overseeing, it is further proposed that should that Committee wish to continue to see the complaints report for information purposes only, then it should receive the report after it has been presented to the Standards Committee.
8. Committee is reminded that complaints handling in part of a wider quality improvement system, which has the aim of helping to ensure that feedback from customers, whether good or bad, can drive and influence service improvements.
9. The Council's complaints procedure is separated into three stages, with stages 1 and 2 being investigated at business unit level, while stage 3 investigations are undertaken on the Chief Executive's behalf. If complainants remain dissatisfied after they have exhausted the Council's procedure they have recourse in most cases to the Local Government Ombudsman. The current procedure was introduced in July 2003 following a review of the process and follows best practice guidelines suggested by the Local Government Ombudsman.

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Background papers: None