

## SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

**REPORT TO:** Leader and Cabinet

10 May 2007

**AUTHOR/S:** Chief Executive / Transformation Project Manager

### COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS PROCESS

#### Purpose

1. This report outlines a revised Complaints and Compliments process, and seeks to obtain approval for the revised process to be implemented.
2. The effect on corporate objectives are outlined below:

Quality, Accessible Services	Contributes to our Priority of improving Customer Service by delivering consistent customer service and ensuring that services are meeting the needs of our customers.
Village Life	
Sustainability	
Partnership	

#### Executive Summary

3. Work is in progress to develop and implement a revised Complaints and Compliments procedure – this is in a very mature stage of development, has been approved by SMT, has been through Scrutiny and Overview Committee, has been discussed in a sub meeting as a result of Scrutiny and Overview Committee's recommendations, and has been discussed at the RSICS PFH's meeting. The RSICS PFH supported the procedure, subject to a number of minor changes that have now been incorporated in the procedure.
4. See **Appendix 1, 2, 3 and 4** for detail of the process. This new process requires approval by the Cabinet.
5. As part of this work, the Anite system used to process complaints and it's supporting manual procedures have been reviewed. This system was found to be inherently difficult to operate, and this has consequently led to data inaccuracies. It may have been possible to rectify these problems by increased training, but so many officers were involved in the updating of the data that it was not felt that this would be a practical solution. The required system changes and process changes have been identified to rectify the issues identified – the key change has been to amend the system and process such that the operational aspects of the processing will be undertaken by the Reception team rather than by the various officers located within each service.

#### Background

6. At a meeting of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee held on 19 January 2006 it was recommended that existing Complaints and Compliments system be developed and improved.
7. It was recognised that the current complaints process was difficult to operate and this has lead to inaccurate information being recorded on the Complaints system (resident on the Anite system).

8. In addition, the Scrutiny and Overview Committee recommended that the complaints recording system should be developed to provide more monitoring information, such as the services being complained about; the general nature of the complaints; the number of complaints handled at formal complaints stage 1 and 2; the number of complaints which were found to be justified; the outcomes of complaints; lessons learned and services improvements made as a result of complaints; and the amount of time spent on each complaint. It was also recommended that an article on the complaints process should be included in a future edition of South Cambs magazine. This will form part of communicating the new process, within a broader customer service focus.

### Considerations

9. (a) The current mechanism for the processing of complaints is not working, i.e. the complaints data stored on the existing (Anite) system has been found to be incomplete and/or frequently duplicated.
- (b) There is a lack of clarity with respect to how complaints should be processed.
- (c) There is no monitoring process in place to ensure that we are processing complaints in a timely manner.
- (d) There is a lack of flexibility in the current (Anite) system allowing us to meaningfully report on the status of complaints.

### Options

10. There are only two options being considered, i.e.
- (a) Continue with the existing process, but this will continue with the existing procedural and processing difficulties.
- (b) Implement the proposed process.

### Implications

11. There are no major implications in the process.
12. The key changes are procedural and to the process mechanism.

Financial	None
Legal	None
Staffing	A change in the staff who process complaints
Risk Management	None
Equal Opportunities	None

### Consultations

13. People who have been consulted in the process are:
- (a) Service First Project Team, through various meetings and opportunities to feedback on the process.
- (b) Some front line staff in 1-2-1 meetings
14. On a more formal level, the processes have been reviewed by:
- (a) Senior Management Team
- (b) Scrutiny and Overview Committee
- (c) Resources, Staffing, Information and Customer Services Portfolio Holder

## Effect on Annual Priorities and Corporate Objectives

15. Affordable Homes	None
Customer Service	Improving Customer Service by providing more information on making a complaint to the Council; keeping the customer informed; and having clear stages for complaints.
Northstowe and other growth areas	None
Quality, Accessible Services	We are making it easier for customers when they complain by having a clear process. Access channels of making a complaint are improved.
Village Life	None
Sustainability	None
Partnership	None

## Recommendations

16. It is recommended that Cabinet
- (a) approve the revised Complaints and Compliments process, and
  - (b) requires the new process to be monitored to ensure that it has been operationally compliant with the council's race and disability equality schemes.

**Background Papers:** the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

- Complaints Procedure (Version 0.9)
- Positive Comments and Compliments (Version 0.3)
- Complaints Procedure for CSO (Version 0.3)
- Complaints a guide for our customers (Version 0.5)

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