

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Environmental Services Portfolio Holder 25 January 2010
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HANDLING OF COMPLAINTS, COMMENTS AND COMPLIMENTS POLICY

Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is to propose a policy to support the Council's current procedures for the handling of complaints, comments and compliments. This is not a key decision.

Background

2. The Council publishes corporate customer service standards which clearly set out what customers can expect from the Council, including a formal complaints procedure. Whilst this procedure has been implemented throughout the Council, a need for detailed guidance for officers and Members has been identified.
3. The policy has been created to provide clear and concise information for both officers and Members in relation to the handling of complaints, comments and compliments.

Considerations

4. Customer views are important to the Council: they help shape services to support the needs of the community. Providing insight into what the Council does well and where improvements can be made enables the Council to provide a responsive service that changes and adapts with the needs of its customers. A formal policy for the handling of complaints, comments and compliments is needed to ensure all feedback is captured.
5. In the event of a complaint the Council will endeavour to resolve a problem at the time it is brought to its attention, within the constraints that apply and to the customer's satisfaction. Where this is not possible the formal policy for the handling of complaints should be applied.
6. The Local Government Ombudsman will not usually investigate complaints unless the Council has been given the opportunity to conduct an investigation under its formal procedure. The Local Government Ombudsman expects the Council to address complaints in a positive manner and does not look favourably on Councils who fail to apply their procedure consistently.

Options

7. The Council needs to have a policy in place to support its current procedures. To meet customer expectations and to gain the maximum value from feedback, officers and Members must be fully aware of the systems in place and the Council's commitment to its customer service standards.

Implications

8.	Financial	Decisions by the Local Government Ombudsman could have financial implications for the Council.
	Legal	None
	Staffing	None
	Risk Management	There is reputational risk if complaints and comments are not dealt with in line with the Council's procedures.
	Equal Opportunities	All complainants, comments and compliments will be dealt with in a fair and open manner.

Consultations

9. The Handling Complaints, Comments and Compliments Policy has been endorsed by the Service First Steering Group and Executive Management Team and is now recommended for Portfolio Holder approval.

Effect on Strategic Aims

10. **Commitment to being a listening council, providing first class services accessible to all.**
The Handling Complaints, Comments and Compliments Policy provides a structure for recording and responding to customer feedback. Information provided can and will be used to further improve services.

Recommendation

11. That the Handling of Complaints, Comments and Compliments Policy detailed in **APPENDIX 1** be adopted as Council policy.

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

None

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