

**HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**Title/Subject Matter:** Complaints

**Meeting/Date:** Standards Committee – 10 September 2015

**Executive Portfolio:** Councillor Darren Tysoe - Executive Councillor for Customer Services

**Report by:** L Sboui

**Ward(s) affected:** All or list individual Ward(s)

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**Executive Summary:**

The report provides Members with information on complaints referred to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) 2013/14 and 2014/15 and an update on an impending review of the council's complaints policy and procedure.

**Recommendation(s):**

Members are invited to note the LGO local authority report for Huntingdonshire District Council and approve the review of the corporate complaints policy and procedures.

## **1. WHAT IS THIS REPORT ABOUT/PURPOSE?**

- 1.1 This report provides Members with information on complaints referred to the Local Government Ombudsman. The report also provides an update on an impending review of the council's complaints policy and procedure.

## **2. WHY IS THIS REPORT NECESSARY/BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 One of the purposes of the annual summary of statistics on complaints made to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) is to help ensure that learning from complaints helps inform service provision by fixing problems and preventing them from reoccurring to improve customer satisfaction. The data provided by the LGO shows the complaints and enquiries that have been recorded, along with the decisions the LGO have made. These numbers include people who the LGO have signposted back to the council but who may have never contacted us.

The LGO statistics detail whether a decision was upheld, not upheld, advice given, closed after initial enquiry, incomplete/invalid, or referred back for local resolution.

- 2.2 The LGO have worked in partnership with the Local Government Association to produce a workbook for councillors which explains how they can support local people with their complaints and identifies opportunities for using complaints data as part of their scrutiny tool kit. This can be found [here](#).

## **3. OPTIONS CONSIDERED/ANALYSIS**

- 3.1 There was no internal annual report for 2013/14, so the LGO statistics for 2013/14 are included in Appendix 1. This reveals that there were seven detailed investigations carried out in 2013/14; three were upheld, in summary these cases were:

- The way the council determined an application for planning permission and the extent to which a complainant had to make views understood
- The council should have considered offering temporary accommodation and issued a formal decision on a homelessness claim
- The council failed to enforce a condition of planning permission

In 2014/15 there were three detailed investigations carried out and none upheld. There has been an increase in complaints/enquires received by the LGO.

- 3.2 It is not possible to provide reliable data on internal complaints for 2014/15 as the database used to record stage one complaints received by services across the council has not been accurately updated. Following the Corporate Team restructure in November 2014 responsibility for complaints was moved to a different service area within the Corporate Team. This provided an opportunity to take a fresh look at the complaints policy and internal processes currently being used for managing stage one and stage two complaints. The aims of the review will include:

- to provide clarity of what is a complaint and when it should be recorded as a complaint
- to improve recording of stage one complaints
- to clarify responsibility for managing complaints

- to identify the level of independence required for stage two complaints
- to consider how we learn from complaints and how this is shared across the council.

3.3 The review will also include how the council manages feedback e.g. compliments and suggestions.

#### **4. KEY IMPACTS/RISKS? HOW WILL THEY BE ADDRESSED?**

4.1 A revised Customer Feedback Policy was approved in June 2012; it is proposed that the policy and internal guidance will be reviewed to ensure they continue to be effective; any risks identified with the current processes will be addressed.

4.2 A reviewed complaints and feedback policy and procedure will be completed by autumn 2015 and this will be presented to the Standards Committee. The review will ensure that the revised policy and procedure is aligned with the Customer Service Strategy.

#### **5. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN**

5.1 Complaints handling links to the following Strategic Priority within the Corporate Plan - Ensuring we are a customer focused and service led council

#### **6 REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS**

6.1 Members are invited to note the LGO local authority report for Huntingdonshire District Council and approve the review of the corporate complaints and feedback policy, internal guidance and procedures.

#### **7. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED**

Appendix 1	LGO statistics for HDC
Appendix 2	HDC internal complaints
Appendix 3	Current process for formal complaints at Stage one and Stage two

#### **CONTACT OFFICER**

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Appendix 1

LGO local authority report – Huntingdonshire District Council

Complaints and enquiries received

HDC	Benefits and tax	Corporate and other services	Environmental services and public protection	Planning and development	Housing	Total
<b>2014/15</b> period ending 31/03/15	3	3	3	7	0	16
<b>2013/14</b>	2	1	2	4	2	11

Decisions made

	Detailed investigations carried out						
HDC	Upheld	Not upheld	Advice given	Closed after initial enquiry	Incomplete/invalid	Referred back for local resolution	Total
<b>2014/15</b>	0	3	1	7	0	5	16
<b>2013/14</b>	3	4	2	2	0	4	15

A number of cases will have been received and decided in different business years, this means the number of complaints and enquiries received will not always match the number of decisions made.

## Appendix 2

### HDC internal complaints

Year	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15
Number of complaints	67	58	40	43	22 – Stage one	15 – Stage one 14 Stage two

Using the complaints SharePoint site it is possible to estimate number of Stage one complaints for 2013/14 and 2014/15. These figures suggest that there has been under-reporting. Stage

### Appendix 3 - Current stages in formal complaint process

