

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: Complaints – Annual Report

Meeting/Date: Corporate Governance Committee - 27 September 2016

Executive Portfolio: Councillor Stephen Cawley - Executive Councillor for Organisation and Customer Service

Report by: L Sboui, Policy, Performance & Transformation Manager (Project Support)

Wards affected: All Wards

Executive Summary:

The report provides Members with information on complaints referred to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) 2015/16 along with data relating to stage 1 and stage 2 complaints received between April 2015 – March 2016.

Recommendation(s):

Members are invited to note the LGO local authority report for Huntingdonshire District Council. Members are also invited to note the data relating to formal stage 1 and stage 2 complaints received.

1. WHAT IS THIS REPORT ABOUT/PURPOSE?

- 1.1 This report provides Members with information on complaints referred to the Local Government Ombudsman and those received by the Council during April 2015 – March 2016.

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. The LGO statistics show whether a decision was upheld, not upheld, advice given, closed after initial enquiry, incomplete/invalid, or referred back for local resolution. A further purpose of this report is to provide Members with data relating to stage 1 and stage 2 complaints by Service area.

3. OPTIONS CONSIDERED/ANALYSIS

- 3.1 There continues to be an increase in complaints/enquires received by the LGO; however there were just two detailed investigations carried out by the LGO in 2015/16 (compared to three 2014/15). In summary:

- One related to recovery of Council Tax and Business Rates. Only one aspect of what was a complex and detailed case was upheld but no injustice was found. However amendments have been made to processes to address this aspect of the investigation;
- One related to planning enforcement – this was not upheld.

- 3.2 The Council's complaints policy and procedure was reviewed in 2015 and a more consistent approach to how complaints are being recorded has been introduced. The number of stage 1 complaints has increased, particularly for those services with higher levels of customer interaction; these services have confirmed that the increase is likely the result of a more rigorous focus on the customer, including a more robust approach to the recording and resolution of complaints within set timescales. Figures indicate that complaints are largely being resolved at stage 1; this is a positive indication that formal complaints are being dealt with effectively in the first instance.

- 3.4 Figures for One Leisure are yet to be confirmed, the formal complaints process was discussed at the September Leisure Board; it was agreed that a clear reporting and monitoring process for One Leisure formal complaints should be agreed and put in place as a priority and to ensure the process aligns with the corporate approach.

- 3.5 Corporate Team/Executive support had four stage 1 complaints, three of which were escalated to stage 2, this is statistically significant, reasons for this have been considered. Two of the three stage 2 complaints were cross cutting and complex in nature but apart from this no other issues were identified that raise concerns.

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

- 4.1 One issue remains outstanding from the complaints review, this relates to the Complaints SharePoint site, specifically its functionality and adaptability to reflect changes service areas across the council and enable the site to record positive feedback.

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 note the data relating to stage 1 and stage 2 complaints received by the Council.

7. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

- 7.1 Appendix 1 LGO statistics for HDC
- 7.2 Appendix 2 HDC internal complaints
- 7.3 Appendix 3 LGO statistics – neighbouring authority comparison

CONTACT OFFICER

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LGO local authority report – Huntingdonshire District Council

Complaints and enquiries received

HDC	Benefits and tax	Corporate and other services	Environment Services	Planning and development	Housing	Total
2015/16	7	2	2	11	1	23
2014/15	3	3	3	7	0	16
2013/14	2	1	2	4	2	11

Decisions made

HDC	Detailed investigations carried out		Advice given	Closed after initial enquiry	Incomplete/invalid	Referred back for local resolution	Total
	Upheld	Not upheld					
2015/16	1	1	0	11	0	8	21
2014/15	0	3	1	7	0	5	16
2013/14	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.

HDC internal complaints

Year	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16
Number of complaints	67	58	40	43	22 Stage one	15 Stage one 14 Stage two	116 Stage one 15 Stage 2

Service	Stage 1	Stage 2	Total	LGO investigations
Community	5	0	5	
Corporate Team inc Executive Support	4	3	7	
Customer Services	24	4	28	1
Development	19	7	26	1
Operations	62	1	63	
Resources	1	0	1	
One Leisure	tbc	tbc	tbc	
Shared Services	2	0	2	
		Total stage 1	116	
		Total stage 2	15	

Appendix 3

2015/16	Detailed investigations carried out	Decisions that were upheld following detailed investigations carried out by the Local Government Ombudsman	Complaints and enquiries received (2014/15)
HDC	2	1	23 (16)
South Cambridgeshire	10	3	18 (6)
Fenland	4	2	30 (22)
East Cambridgeshire	3	2	7 (10)
Cambridge City	3	2	17 (16)
Cambridgeshire County Council	21	12	57 (60)

Please note - 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.