


'A' ITEM

	REPORT TO CABINET TO BE HELD ON 12 JULY 2016
	Key Decision YES Forward Plan Ref No
Corporate Priority ALL	Cabinet Portfolio Holder Cllr M Donohue-Moncrieff

REPORT OF: DIRECTOR (LD) 16/141

WARDS AFFECTED: ALL

SUBJECT: COMPLAINTS POLICY AND CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS

RECOMMENDATION :

It is recommended that Cabinet recommends to full Council for approval:

1. The amendments to the Council's Complaints Policy as set out in appendix 1
2. The Customer Service Standards as set out in appendix 2

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION:

The Council's Complaints Policy and Customer Service Standards have been reviewed. This report seeks Members' approval for revisions to the Council's Complaints Policy and the proposed Customer Service Standards.

HIGHLIGHTED RISKS: see attached risk matrix

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 On 7 July 2014, Council approved a revised Complaints Policy which aimed to provide a more efficient and streamlined complaints process. The Policy has now been reviewed and learning taken from dealing with complaints over the last two years has led to a change to the Policy being proposed.

- 1.2 The Council's current Customer Service Standards were last considered by Members on 21 July 2009 as part of a wider ranging report entitled 'Transforming our Customer Experience'. This document has now been partly superseded by the Complaints Policy which was approved in 2014. As part of the review of the Complaints Policy, the opportunity has been taken to review the Council's Customer Service Standards to ensure they remain appropriate and achievable, and reflect the increasing emphasis on electronic means of communication, including use of Social Media.

2. CORPORATE AIMS/PRIORITIES

- 2.1 Providing a high quality customer experience is fundamental to the delivery of all the Council's key aims and priorities.

3. CONSULTATION

- 3.1 The proposed Customer Service Standards have been the subject of consultation with the Council's Directors' Team and Senior Unit Managers and their views have been taken into account in the development of the document.

4. ASSESSMENT

- 4.1 As stated previously, the Council's current Complaints Policy was approved in 2014. It incorporates a two stage process for handling complaints, and meets the Local Government Ombudsman guidelines on good practice and customer expectations.
- 4.2 Alongside the introduction of the new Policy in 2014, a number of changes were introduced to the process for dealing with complaints, particularly at stage 2, which involves an investigation of the complaint by an Independent Complaints Board. The current policy and procedures have now been reviewed to ensure we maintain effective feedback processes and use customer experience to guide service development and improvement.
- 4.3 Experience of operating the Council's complaints procedure shows that generally it is considered that the process operates effectively. However, in some cases complainants are stating that they do not wish to escalate their complaint to stage 2 of the process, whilst remaining dissatisfied with the response to their complaint and wishing to engage in continuing correspondence with the Officers over the issue. Clearly this can have a significant impact on officer time, without a satisfactory resolution to the complaint being achieved. Once a stage 1 response has been issued, if the complainant remains dissatisfied it is felt that it is more appropriate for the matter to be reviewed under stage 2 of the process by the Independent Complaints Board. If the complaint still expresses dissatisfaction following a response under stage 2, they will be referred to the Local Government Ombudsman for an independent assessment of the complaint to be made as appropriate. The revised Complaints Policy therefore now sets out that the Council reserves the right to escalate the complaint to stage 2 of its process, where it is believed that it is appropriate to do so.

- 4.4 Complaints are now managed through the Council's Firmstep system and this allows response times to be tracked and monitored. This information is now being incorporated in to the Council's Performance Management Framework and will be reported to Cabinet on a regular basis as part of the Quarterly Performance Monitoring report, together with information on compliments and customer satisfaction.
- 4.5 The final version of the Corporate Complaints Policy for approval by Members is attached at appendix 1.
- 4.6 The current Customer Charter and Service Standards were adopted in 2009, as part of the 'Transforming our Customer Experience' agenda. Since that date there have been a number of changes to the provision of services and methods of service delivery. There is an increasing emphasis on electronic means of communication and rapid developments have taken place in the use of Social Media as a tool to engage with the public.
- 4.7 In order to reflect these changes, the new Service Standards for the first time include for response times to comments made on social media. It is also considered that the same standards should apply, regardless of whether the customer wishes to correspond with the Council by electronic means (eg, email, online) or through traditional means (post).
- 4.8 In the light of these changes, the Council's Customer Charter and Service Standards have been revised and expanded to include responses to comments posted on Social Media such as Twitter and Facebook. The proposed document is attached as appendix 2.

5. IMPLICATIONS

(a) Policy

- 5.1 This recommendation fits in with Council's overall aims and objectives and updates the current Corporate Complaint Policy.

(b) Legal

- 5.2 There are no direct legal implications arising directly from this report.

(c) Financial

- 5.3 There are no direct financial implications arising directly from this report.

(d) Sustainability

- 5.4 No implications identified

(e) Equalities and Diversity

5.5 This proposal would not have a detrimental impact on any customer groups. One of the main objectives is to increase the accessibility via a range of channels, supporting greater inclusion.

(f) Human Resources

5.6 There are no Human Resource implications



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Background Papers:

None

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUERIES ABOUT THIS REPORT OR WISH TO INSPECT ANY OF THE BACKGROUND PAPERS, PLEASE CONTACT PETRA JACKSON ON 01723 383528 e-mail Petra.Jackson@scarborough.gov.uk

Risk Matrix

Risk Ref	Date	Risk	Consequences	Mitigation	Current Risk Score	Target Score	Service Unit Manager/ Responsible Officer	Action Plan
1	June 2016	Failure to meet targets for handling complaints	Damage to Council's reputation and customer dissatisfaction Increase in escalation to Stage 2 and Ombudsman complaints	Revision of current policy to include realistic target response times and monitoring procedures.	C3	B2	All SUMs/ Performance and Admin Manager	Introduce new policy and procedures
3	June 2016	Individual complaints not handled in accordance with policy laid down	Customer dissatisfaction and potential involvement of Local Government Ombudsman	Revision of both administrative procedures and introduction of regular monitoring reports to Cabinet.	C3	B2	SUMs/ Performance and Admin Manager	Introduce new policy and procedures and reporting mechanisms
4	June 2016	Failure to thoroughly investigate complaints	Customer dissatisfaction and potential involvement of Local Government Ombudsman Damage to Council's reputation and customer dissatisfaction	Revision of timescales, improved monitoring and reporting processes	C3	B2	SUMs/ Performance and Admin Manager	Introduction of improved monitoring and reporting regimes

Risk Ref	Date	Risk	Consequences	Mitigation	Current Risk Score	Target Score	Service Unit Manager/ Responsible Officer	Action Plan
5	June 2016	Service Standards not appropriate and attainable	Failure to meet customer expectations Customer dissatisfaction and potential involvement of Local Government Ombudsman Damage to Council's reputation and customer dissatisfaction	Revision of Service Standards	C3	B2	SUMs/ Performance and Admin Manager	Introduce new policy and procedures

Glossary of Terms

Risk	An event which may prevent the Council achieving its objectives
Consequences	The outcome if the risk materialised
Mitigation	The processes and procedures that are in place to reduce the risk
Current Risk Score	The likelihood and impact score with the current mitigation measures in place
Corporate Objectives	An assessment of the Corporate Objectives that are affected by the risk identified.
Target Risk Score	The likelihood and impact score that the Council is aiming to achieve
Service Unit Manager	The Service Unit or Officer responsible for managing the risk
Action Plan	The proposed actions to be implemented in order to reduce the risk to the target score

Risk Scoring

Impact	5					
	4					
	3					
	2					
	1					
		A	B	C	D	E
	Likelihood					

Likelihood:

A = Very Low
 B = Not Likely
 C = Likely
 D = Very Likely
 E = Almost Certain

Impact

1 = Low
 2 = Minor
 3 = Medium
 4 = Major
 5 = Disaster