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**Report to: Scrutiny Committee**

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**Date of Meeting: 18th August 2016**

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**Subject: Annual Complaints Report 2015/16**

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**Report by: Head of Strategy & Customer Services**

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## **1.0 Purpose**

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to advise Committee of the volume and nature of customer complaints recorded in 2015/16, key performance information related to the handling of complaints and areas for further improvement.

## **2.0 Recommendations**

- 2.1. It is recommended that Committee:
- a) note, comment on and challenge the volume and nature of complaints recorded in financial year 2015/16, including comparisons with previous years, and
  - b) note ongoing improvements in the way complaints are recorded, reported and being used to drive improvement and customer satisfaction.

## **3.0 Background**

- 3.1. This is the fourth year since the model Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP) was introduced by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO), in September 2012, to help simplify, standardise and improve complaints handling across Scottish local government.
- 3.2. A key driver for the updated approach was to reduce the significant resource and cost in dealing with complaints, as part of wider Public Sector Reform. The model CHP aims to resolve more complaints at source, learn more from customer feedback and use feedback to improve service delivery.
- 3.3. Council services are required to demonstrate that they analyse complaints data to identify trends, patterns and opportunities for service improvement. Additionally, councils are expected to publish externally the outcomes of complaints by, for example, using case studies and examples, typically through a "You Said, We Did" approach. Quarterly reports are published on ClacksWeb about how well we are performing in handling complaints.

## **4.0 Progress to date**

- 4.1. A total of 176 complaints were logged in the complaints database in 2015/16 (compared to 93 in 2014/15).
- 4.2. These are broken down further in Appendix 1 by service area, category of complaint, number dealt with at stage 1 and stage 2, percentage resolved within target timescale and number upheld/not upheld/partially upheld.
- 4.3. Key points of note from this year's performance data are:
  - 164 out of 176 (93%) were resolved at Stage 1 (89% in 2014/15).
  - 84% of Stage 1 complaints were resolved within the target time of 5 days (76% in 2014/15).
  - 12 complaints were passed to Stage 2 for investigation; 9 out of the 12 (75%) were responded to within the target time of 20 days (80% in 2014/15).
  - 99 out of the 176 complaints (56%) were either upheld or partially upheld (59% in 2014/15).
  - The main reason for complaints was about aspects of Service Provision (40%), then Employee Issue/Attitude (24%). This was similar to 2014/15 with Service Provision (42%) then Employee Issue/Attitude (27%).
  - There was a total of 117 positive comments formally recorded in year (45 in 2014/15).
- 4.4. Customers unhappy with the Council's final response to their complaint can raise the matter with the SPSO and request an investigation. There were a total of 10 complaints raised with SPSO in 2015/16 (compared to 14 in 2014/15). None of these complaints were moved into the investigation stage.

## **5.0 Areas for development**

- 5.1. A number of improvements have been made in the last 12 months, however in line with good practice guidelines produced by SPSO, it is prudent to identify areas for improvement in the coming year:
  - There is an ongoing need for services to record what action has been taken to correct things that have gone wrong and to communicate these improvements via ClacksWeb.
  - There is an ongoing need for services to routinely gather customer feedback on how well their complaint was handled.
  - There are ongoing opportunities to record positive feedback received from customers and clients, which should then be shared with staff.
  - Given the large number of customer interactions processed on a daily basis, the total number of complaints formally recorded is still very small in

comparison. (176 complaints out of approximately 500,000 contacts per year equates to 0.04%.)

## 6.0 Conclusions

- 6.1. The Council's performance in recording and responding to complaints is being routinely monitored using a range of performance indicators.
- 6.2. Ongoing improvements have been made since the new 2-stage system was introduced in September 2012.
- 6.3. Social Services complaints handling procedures and timescales will be aligned with the model Complaint Handling Procedure in April 2017, providing customers and clients with a more consistent approach across all council services.

## 7.0 Sustainability Implications

- 7.1. There are no sustainability implications arising directly from this report.

## 8.0 Resource Implications

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

## 9.0 Exempt Reports

- 9.1. Is this report exempt? No

## 10.0 Declarations

The recommendations contained within this report support or implement our Corporate Priorities and Council Policies.

- (1) **Our Priorities** (Please double click on the check box )

- The area has a positive image and attracts people and businesses
- Our communities are more cohesive and inclusive
- People are better skilled, trained and ready for learning and employment
- Our communities are safer
- Vulnerable people and families are supported
- Substance misuse and its effects are reduced
- Health is improving and health inequalities are reducing
- The environment is protected and enhanced for all
- The Council is effective, efficient and recognised for excellence

- (2) **Council Policies** (Please detail)

## 11.0 Equalities Impact

- 11.1 Have you undertaken the required equalities impact assessment to ensure that no groups are adversely affected by the recommendations?  
 Yes  No

**12.0 Legality**

- 12.1 It has been confirmed that in adopting the recommendations contained in this report, the Council is acting within its legal powers. Yes

**13.0 Appendices**

- 13.1 Please list any appendices attached to this report. If there are no appendices, please state "none".

Appendix 1 - Annual Complaints Review 2015/16

**14.0 Background Papers**

- 14.1 Have you used other documents to compile your report? (All documents must be kept available by the author for public inspection for four years from the date of meeting at which the report is considered)  
 No

**Author(s)**

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**Approved by**

NAME	DESIGNATION	SIGNATURE
Stuart Crickmar	Head of Strategy & Customer Services	Signed: S Crickmar
Garry Dallas	Executive Director	Signed: G Dallas

## **APPENDIX 1 - ANNUAL COMPLAINTS REVIEW 2015/16**

<b>2015/16</b>	<b>S&amp;CS</b>	<b>Res &amp; Gov</b>	<b>D&amp;E</b>	<b>H&amp;C Safety</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>Social Services*</b>	<b>Council</b>
Total Number of Complaints	17	6	48	65	26	14	<b>176</b>
Total Stage 1	17	6	45	60	24	12	<b>164</b>
Stage 1 within timescale	16	2	34	60	18	7	<b>137</b>
Stage 1 % in timescale	94%	33%	76%	100%	75%	58%	<b>84%</b>
Total Stage 2	0	0	3	5	2	2	<b>12</b>
Stage 2 within timescale	0	0	2	5	2	0	<b>9</b>
Stage 2 % in timescale	0%	0%	67%	100%	100%	0%	<b>75%</b>
Total Number Upheld	6	3	17	15	7	1	<b>49</b>
Total Number Partially Upheld	7	1	10	19	10	3	<b>50</b>
Total Number Not Upheld	4	2	21	31	8	4	<b>70</b>
Open complaints carried forward to 2016/17	0	0	0	0	1	6	<b>7</b>
<b>By Category</b>	<b>S&amp;CS</b>	<b>Res &amp; Gov</b>	<b>D&amp;E</b>	<b>H&amp;C Safety</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>Social Services</b>	<b>Council</b>
Education	0	0	0	0	22	0	<b>22</b>
Communication	2	0	4	4	0	4	<b>14</b>
Employees	7	0	14	16	1	4	<b>42</b>
Other	2	2	2	3	1	2	<b>12</b>
Policy & Procedure	0	1	2	9	0	3	<b>15</b>
Service Provision	6	3	26	33	2	1	<b>71</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>176</b>

\*Note that Social Services timescales for Stage 1 and 2 currently differs from other council services, as Social Services are not required to adopt the national CHP timescales at this point in time. Social Services Stage 1 complaints are acknowledged within 5 working days and responded to within 28 days. The SPSO are working towards incorporating Social Services complaints into the model CHP in April 2017.





