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**Report to Scrutiny Committee**

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**Date of Meeting: 24 August 2017**

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**Subject: Annual Complaints Report 2016/17**

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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:

- (i) the volume and nature of customer complaints recorded in 2016/17, 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 2016/17, 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 a new 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. 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 185 complaints were logged in the complaints database in 2016/17 (compared to 176 in 2015/16).
- 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:
- 149 out of 185 (81%) were resolved at Stage 1 (93% in 2015/16).
  - 79% of Stage 1 complaints were resolved within the target time of 5 days (84% in 2015/16).
  - 26 complaints were passed to Stage 2 for investigation; 21 out of the 26 (81%) were responded to within the target time of 20 days (75% in 2015/16).
  - 125 out of the 175 complaints (71%) were either upheld or partially upheld (56% in 2015/16).
  - The main reason for complaints was about aspects of Service Provision (48%), then Employee Issue/Attitude (18%). (This was the same in 2015/16 with Service Provision (40%) then Employee Issue/Attitude (24%)
  - There were a total of 60 positive comments formally recorded in year (117 in 2015/16).
- 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 14 complaints raised with SPSO in 2016/17 (compared to 10 in 2015/16). Three complaints were moved into the investigation stage; all three were not upheld.

## **5.0 Areas for development**

- 5.1. Improvements continue to be made on an ongoing basis, however in line with good practice guidelines produced by SPSO, it is prudent to identify areas for improvement in the coming year:
- Services need to continually review their internal systems to ensure they meet the service standard of responding to Stage 1 complaints within 5 days. If a complaint cannot be resolved within 5 days, then the customer should be advised immediately of the expected timescale.
  - 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 opportunities to improve the recording of 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. (185 complaints out of approximately 500,000 contacts per year equates to 0.04%.)

## 6.0 Social Work Model Complaints Handling Procedure

- 6.1. The SPSO introduced a new two-stage Social Work Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP) from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017, bringing the service into line with all other council services. Previously, the Social Work complaints system had an additional third stage.
- 6.2. Clackmannanshire Council's approach has been signed off as fully complaint with the new model CHP requirements.

## 7.0 Conclusions

- 7.1. The Council's performance in recording and responding to complaints is being routinely monitored using a range of performance indicators.
- 7.2. Ongoing improvements have been made since the new 2-stage system was introduced in September 2012.

## 8.0 Sustainability Implications

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

## 9.0 Resource Implications

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

## 10.0 Exempt Reports

- 10.1. 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         | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Our communities are more cohesive and inclusive                          | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| People are better skilled, trained and ready for learning and employment | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Our communities are safer  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Vulnerable people and families are supported                             | <input type="checkbox"/> |

- 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 2016/17

**14.0 Background Papers**


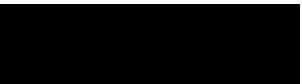
14.1 Have you used other documents to compile your report? (All documents must be kept available by the author for public inspection for four years from the date of meeting at which the report is considered)

No

**Author(s)**

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**Approved by**

NAME	DESIGNATION	SIGNATURE
Stuart Crickmar	Head of Strategy & Customer Services	
Elaine McPherson	Chief Executive	

## APPENDIX 1 - ANNUAL COMPLAINTS REVIEW 2016/17

<b>2016/17</b>	<b>S&amp;CS</b>	<b>Res &amp; Gov</b>	<b>D&amp;E</b>	<b>Housing &amp;CS</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>Social Services*</b>	<b>Council</b>
Total Number of Complaints Received	18	3	33	85	31	15	<b>185</b>
Total Stage 1 - closed	16	2	32	68	17	14	<b>149</b>
Stage 1 within timescale	15	1	27	68	7	0	<b>118</b>
Stage 1 % in timescale	94%	50%	84%	100%	41%	0%	<b>79%</b>
Total Stage 2 - closed	0	0	1	16	6	3	<b>26</b>
Stage 2 within timescale	0	0	1	16	3	1	<b>21</b>
Stage 2 % in timescale	n/a	n/a	100%	100%	50%	33%	<b>81%</b>
Total Number Upheld	5	1	9	19	2	5	<b>41</b>
Total Number Partially Upheld	4	1	14	47	11	7	<b>84</b>
Total Number Not Upheld	7	0	10	18	10	5	<b>50</b>
Closed from previous year	0	0	0	0	0	3	<b>3</b>
Complaints carried over to 2017-2018	2	1	0	1	8	1	<b>13</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	16	0	<b>16</b>
Communication	7	1	0	4	2	0	<b>14</b>
Employees	1	0	12	11	3	6	<b>33</b>
Other	1	0	0	0	9	2	<b>12</b>
Policy & Procedure	0	0	2	18	0	1	<b>21</b>
Service Provision	9	2	19	52	1	6	<b>89</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>185</b>

*\* Timescales for Social Services complaints handling differed in 2016/17 to that of other Services (Social Services Stage 1 complaints are acknowledged within 5 working days and should be responded to within 28 days). The figures for Social Services noted in the table above are measured using current Clackmannanshire Council Local CHP guidelines where Officers have 5 working days to answer Stage 1 complaints and 20 working days to answer Stage 2 complaints.*

