

OVERVIEW OF COMPLAINTS RECEIVED - BIENNIAL UPDATE

Executive Summary

The Committee agreed that it would be helpful to receive a regular report giving brief details of formal complaints received by the Council. This would enable the Committee to identify whether there are any common themes arising from the complaints. If so, the Committee could then consider whether it should scrutinise the area(s) of activity identified.

This report sets out how complaints are dealt with, and gives brief details of those received since 27 November 2017.

Recommendations

The Committee is requested to:

RESOLVE That

- (i) the report be noted.

The Committee has the authority to determine the recommendation(s) set out above.

Background Papers: Council's Complaints Procedure

Reporting Person:

Joanne McIntosh, Legal Services Manager
Ext. 3038, E Mail: Joanne.McIntosh@woking.gov.uk

Contact Person:

Joanne McIntosh, Legal Services Manager
Ext. 3038, E Mail: Joanne.McIntosh@woking.gov.uk

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 It has been agreed that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee should have a regular report giving brief details of formal complaints received by the Council. This would enable the Committee to identify whether there are any common themes arising from the complaints. If so, the Committee could then consider whether it should scrutinise the area(s) of activity identified.

2.0 The Council's Complaints Procedure

- 2.1 A copy of the Council's Complaints Procedure can be found at:-

<https://www.woking.gov.uk/council/about/customercarestandards/comments>

- 2.2 A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction. It could relate to:

- A failure to deliver a service;
- A delay in providing a service;
- A poor quality of service;
- A failure to comply with Council policies, or
- The conduct or behaviour of a member of staff.

- 2.3 When a complaint is received, it is allocated to a manager within the relevant service concerned. The complaint is acknowledged within five working days' of receipt, and details of the Officer who will investigate it are provided to the complainant.

- 2.4 The intention is that investigations into complaints are completed within fifteen working days of allocation to the Officer who will investigate it. If this is not possible, the complainant will be advised of the date by which he/she will receive a full reply.

- 2.5 If the complainant has good reasons to believe that the complaint has not been investigated properly, he/she can appeal and ask for a further review to be undertaken. The appeal has to be submitted within six weeks of the initial determination. The Deputy Monitoring Officer will decide whether there are grounds to support a further review of the complaint. Her decision should be made within fifteen working days of receipt of the request. If the Deputy Monitoring Officer considers that there are grounds for a review, the complaint will be investigated by a member of the Corporate Management Group. The decision of the CMG member will be final, and should be made within fifteen working days of the complaint being allocated to him/her.

- 2.6 If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome under the Council's Complaints Procedure, he/she can refer the matter to the Local Government Ombudsman or Housing Ombudsman (as appropriate).

- 2.7 If a complaint relates to a service provided by a contractor, the complainant must submit it to the contractor under the contractor's complaints procedure. Once this process has been completed, the complainant can request a review under the Council's Complaints Procedure (as outlined in paragraph 2.5 above).

- 2.8 Under the Council's Constitution, the following arrangements exist for dealing with decisions of the Local Government Ombudsman and Housing Ombudsman:-

- (i) The Monitoring Officer deals with compensation payments which are neither disputed nor significant. This is subject to oversight by the Standards and Audit Committee.
- (ii) Full Council has responsibility for compensation payments which are disputed or significant.

3.0 Complaints received by the Council since 27 November 2017

- 3.1 A table containing a summary of the complaints can be found at Appendix 1. Together with a graph illustrating trends.
- 3.2 In the period of 1 April 2017 to 27 November 2017 the Council received 55 complaints through its Complaints Procedure. The Council received a total of 69 complaints through its Complaints Procedure between 27 November 2017 and 1 July 2018.
- 3.3 Of these a total of 10 complainants have made a request for a review of the original response to their complaint since July 2018. Of these two were referred to a member of CMG for consideration. It should also be noted that two are still in progress. This compares with eight requests for a review in the previous six months with one being referred to a member of CMG.
- 3.4 There has been an increase in complaints in respect of various parking matters. However, it should be noted that of these complaints only one complainant has to date requested a review of their complaint. This is currently in progress.
- 3.5 It should be noted that it would not be appropriate for the Committee to review the circumstances of, or decisions reached in respect of, individual complaints. The purpose of submitting this report is to assist the Committee in identifying possible topic areas for future scrutiny.

4.0 Complaints received by the New Vision Homes since 27 November 2017

- 4.1 A table containing a summary of the complaints can be found at Appendix 2. Together with a graph illustrating trends.
- 4.2 In the period of 1 April 2017 to 27 November 2017 New Vision Homes received 88 complaints through its Complaints Procedure. New Vision Homes received a total of 82 complaints through its Complaints Procedure between 27 November 2017 and 1 July 2018.
- 4.3 The primary cause of a large number of complaints listed in the previous report was "uncategorised". I am pleased to say that every complaint listed in Appendix 2 to this report has been categorised. This will make it easier to identify any trends moving forward.
- 4.4 The number of complaints in respect of missed appointments and late attendance has decreased substantially from 39 to 11 complaints.
- 4.5 Again, as above, it should be noted that it would not be appropriate for the Committee to review the circumstances of, or decisions reached in respect of, individual complaints. The purpose of submitting this report is to assist the Committee in identifying possible topic areas for future scrutiny.

5.0 Complaints to Joint Waste Solutions

- 5.1 It is proposed to include Joint Waste Solution Complaints details in the next bi-annual report. To date two matters have been referred through their system to the review stage of the Council's procedure. One review has been determined and the other is still in progress.

6.0 Implications

Financial

- 6.1 None.

Human Resource/Training and Development

- 6.2 None.

Community Safety

- 6.3 None.

Risk Management

- 6.4 None.

Sustainability

- 6.5 None.

Equalities

- 6.6 None.

Safeguarding

- 6.7 None.

7.0 Conclusions

- 7.1 Submitting a six-monthly report to the Committee on complaints received will enable the Committee to identify whether there are any common themes arising from the complaints. If so, the Committee could then consider whether it should scrutinise the area(s) of activity identified.

REPORT ENDS