



## Committee report

COMMITTEE	<b>CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b>
DATE	<b>8 OCTOBER 2019</b>
TITLE	<b>REVIEW OF THE COMPLAINTS PROCESS</b>
REPORT OF	<b>CHAIRMAN OF THE CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b>

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### BACKGROUND

1. At its meeting of 12 March 2019, the Scrutiny Committee agreed an approach to reviewing the Council's complaints system. This paper provides an update, suggests the final overall scope, and sets out the timetable for reporting.
2. The definition of a complaint is:
  - A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction with our services or those for which we are responsible, (this includes some provided under contract to the council), that requires a response. There is no difference between a "formal" and an "informal" complaint. Both are expressions of dissatisfaction that require a response.
3. The Committee identified an overarching question for its work:
  - Is the way that the Council handles complaints leading to improvements in service delivery?
4. Scrutiny Committee noted that complaints regarding adult social care and children's services have specific statutory requirements, with reports going to the respective policy and scrutiny committees. At the time it was proposed that the scope of Scrutiny Committee's work not extend to these areas. Subsequent discussion with the chairs of those committees resulted in their agreement that they should be included.
5. In summer this year, the new corporate customer complaints system went live. A number of training sessions for nominated complaints officers were held, and the chairman attended one of these. The system will allow for statistical data on the handling of complaints. A key part of the system the requirement to record learning outcomes from the handling of a complaint. Subsequent discussions with officers show that this field is beginning to be used effectively.
6. This autumn an updated complaints policy is due to be adopted. At the time of writing it was awaiting consideration by the Corporate Management Team.

## **SCOPE AND TIMETABLE**

7. It had been anticipated that a final report would be taken this autumn.
8. Because of the weight of the committee's agenda for November 2019, it is now proposed that this be taken at its meeting of 7 January 2020.
9. This has some advantages. Statistical data from the new complaints system will be available for a full six months. It will also provide time to identify suitable case studies derived from the learning outcomes that show how the handling of complaints leads to improvements in service delivery. It should be recognised that any case studies chosen can only be those which cannot lead to the identification of any person or persons.
10. The statistical data should be able to show the numbers of complaints recorded, the stages through which they pass, the headline service areas receiving complaints, a broad category into which a complaint falls, and the lengths of time taken to close a complaint. Additional information will be available from the various annual reports provided to the Council by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.
11. Scrutiny of this information and data will have in mind the updated complaints policy. This will be helpful in understanding the 'pathway' of a complaint including whether the process is easy to understand and accessible to all.
12. A particular consideration for the committee may be the handling of complaints where the service provider is either another body (such as Hampshire County Council for children's services) or a contractor (such as Island Roads) as identified in the definition of a complaint above.
13. The committee is asked to comment on the above scope, identify any additional or different areas of scrutiny to be considered, and identify any other information it feels would be useful.

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