



STANDARDS COMMITTEE

28 October 2011

CORPORATE COMPLAINTS – IMPACT OF REMOVAL OF STAGE 3

UPDATE

Purpose of report

To inform the Committee and demonstrate the effect of removal of stage 3 from the complaints process.

Background

The Corporate Customer Relations Team submitted a report to Standards Committee on 13 December 2010, recommending the removal of Stage 3 of the corporate complaints process, as it rarely added value, was time consuming and caused delay in resolution. A two-stage process complies with Local Government Ombudsman guidance on simplicity and speed of resolution. The Committee considered the rationale put forward and supported the recommendation and asked for a report in October 2011 to show the impact on performance.

Activity and impact

All customers who made a complaint after 1 January 2011 were informed that the council has a 2-stage complaints process. The change was not publicised. No complaints or comments have been received about the change.

The council received 59 stage 2 complaints between 1 January and 30 September 2011. During the same period Corporate Customer Relations recorded 10 enquiries from the Local Government Ombudsman. Each of these complaints had been previously investigated by the council and not upheld or only in part. None of these complaints to the LGO resulted in a different outcome.

This demonstrates that a two stage process is adequate and appropriate, and that the council's investigations at stage two are thorough, impartial and to a high standard, applying similar objectivity as would the LGO.

In addition, the average number of days the council takes to deal with a complaint through all stages of the council's process has come down, from 45 working days in 2010, to 25 working days in 2011.

Conclusions

Removing stage 3 of the Corporate Complaints Procedure has been successful in delivering a more efficient and cost effective process for handling complaints, whilst maintaining the quality of response. The shorter timescales also benefit complainants in getting earlier resolution or access to consideration by the Ombudsman.

Recommendations

That the Committee note this improvement.

Next steps

Customer Relations continue to routinely monitor and manage overall complaint handling, and to ensure that the council extracts the value from customer complaints.

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Sources/background papers: Customer Relations monthly performance management reports