

**RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CABINET ON 12 NOVEMBER 2019 TO
COUNCIL ON 28 NOVEMBER 2019**

CAB66: CORPORATE COMPLAINTS POLICY

Cabinet considered a report which reminded members that the borough council strives to provide excellent services to customers, visitors and businesses, and to deliver those services right first time. Occasionally, customers may be dissatisfied with council services and make a complaint about the service they had received. The current process focussed on the administration of complaints so a thorough review of the process had been conducted to drive greater consistency, reflect best practice, improve customer experience and to ensure all complaints were dealt with appropriately.

Issues identified during the review were:

- The existing process focussed on administration of the policy. The revision had been developed on best practice and according to advice from the Local Government (LGO) and Social Care Ombudsman
- Clear definitions of what constituted a complaint were not explicit
- Clearer timescales in the handling of complaints were needed to bring the policy into line with the Ombudsman's timescales

The revised policy had been presented to the Corporate Performance Panel and their comments and recommendations have been incorporated into the policy.

The Assistant Director explained that training had been procured from the LGO for staff across the authority to ensure consistency with the LGO approach.

It was agreed that the word "minor" be added to the recommendation regarding any amendments made.

RECOMMENDED: 1) That the Corporate Complaints Policy be approved.

2) That delegated authority to make any minor amendments considered necessary to the policy be granted to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council.

Reason for Decision

To ensure the council has a robust, consistent and easily accessible policy for staff, members and customers to manage the complaints process and associated expectations.

CAB66 REVISED UNREASONABLE COMPLAINTS POLICY

The Assistant Director explained that a recent review of corporate complaints and the Unreasonably Persistent Complainants Policy had highlighted a review of the policies was required to reflect best practice and to provide clarification on key points. The report related to the policy on persistent complainants and had been renamed the Unreasonable Complainants Policy.

The item had been submitted to the Corporate Performance Panel (CPP) who had discussed the matter and made comments which had been incorporated into the report. Member involvement had been included when placing someone on the list, so it would now involve an Assistant Director in consultation with the Executive Director and Chair or Vice-

Chair of Standards. The appeals process would involve the Chief Executive, a Standards Committee Member and the Independent Person on the Standards Committee. It was noted that the sanctions applied to each case would be proportionate for the circumstances of each case. An amended version of the policy had been issued prior to the meeting.

Under standing order 34 Councillor Moriarty addressed the Cabinet as the Vice-Chair of CPP. He made points on the following:

- CPP wished to review the policy annually.
- He felt that the involvement of councillors in the matter did not necessarily have to be Chair and Vice-Chair
- The scatter gun approach – after the complaint had been dealt with and the matter closed.
- Refusal to accept the decision without new evidence
- The 1 year time frame was not considered by CPP.

Councillor Long reminded Members that Cabinet would not be involved in CPP reviewing the policy annually as it was their decision to make. He agreed to add “minor” to the recommendations regarding making amendments to the scheme. He agreed to have a discussion with Councillor Moriarty on any other points he wished to make.

Councillor Gidney suggested that as some people used social media to abuse staff and highlight their complaints, that should also be added to the policy. It was agreed.

The Assistant Director explained that the 1 year time frame was in line with the practice and guidance of the LGO, as set out in the corporate complaints policy.

RECOMMENDED: 1) That the revised policy on managing the behaviour of unreasonable complainants be approved subject to:

- the addition of reference to the use of social media to further persistent complaints
- a further discussion between the Chair and Vice-Chair and Councillor Moriarty on the minor points raised.

2) That delegated authority to make minor amendments to the policy be granted to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council.

Reason for Decision

To ensure a clearly defined process is in place for the management of unreasonably persistent complainants, to provide fairness, transparency and accountability within the process, to safeguard the health and wellbeing of officers handling such complainants and to ensure the policy is in line with the Local Government Ombudsman’s best practice.

The reference to CPP wishing to review the policy annually was a matter for CPP to decide, not a matter of a Cabinet decision.