

REPORT TO	ON
CABINET	25 th October 2017

September 2017



TITLE	PORTFOLIO	REPORT OF
Customer Feedback Policy	Corporate Support and Assets	Peter Haywood, Revenues Manager

Is this report a KEY DECISION (i.e. more than £100,000 or impacting on more than 2 Borough wards?)	Yes
Is this report on the Statutory Cabinet Forward Plan ?	Yes
Is the request outside the policy and budgetary framework and therefore subject to confirmation at full Council?	No
Is this report confidential?	No

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 This report will request approval of a Customer Feedback Policy which details how the Council will deal with and respond to comments, compliments and complaints.

2. PORTFOLIO RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 To approve the adoption of the ‘South Ribble Borough Council Customer Feedback Policy – Dealing with Customer Comments, Compliments and Complaints’.

3. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- 3.1 The report relates to the following corporate priorities:

Clean, green and safe		Strong and healthy communities	
Strong South Ribble in the heart of prosperous Lancashire		Efficient, effective and exceptional council	x

4. BACKGROUND TO THE REPORT

- 4.1 The current process for dealing with complaints was introduced a number of years ago but there is no formal process in place for dealing with comments or compliments. Furthermore, the Corporate Improvement Plan includes a required outcome of the adoption and implementation of a new Customer Feedback Strategy. As such, it is appropriate for the Council to adopt a new policy and for this to be expanded to cover all feedback, as opposed to complaints only.

- 4.2 The new Customer Feedback Policy outlines how the Council will deal with all types of feedback, whether it is in the form of a comment, compliment or complaint. It also details differing processes for dealing with the differing types of feedback.

5. PROPOSALS (e.g.RATIONALE, DETAIL, FINANCIAL, PROCUREMENT)

- 5.1 The current process deals solely with complaints and is a 4 stage procedure, with the first 3 stages being internal to the Council and the final 4th stage requiring a complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO). The 3rd internal stage of the current process requires the involvement of the Chief Executive in dealing with complaints.
- 5.2 It is felt that the 3 internal stages may be viewed as cumbersome and increase the time taken to deal with complaints, whilst the potential elevation of complaints to the Chief Executive does not encourage staff to take ownership and responsibility for dealing with complaints.
- 5.3 The new policy will reduce the number of stages in the complaints process from 4 to 3, with the 3rd stage being a complaint to the LGO. Furthermore, the new policy will encourage officers to attempt to deal with concerns in the first instance as an alternative to the formal procedure.
- 5.4 Where an issue is dealt with in accordance with the formal procedure it is the intention of the new policy that stage 1 complaints are dealt with by a team leader, with a core manager (or equivalent) dealing with stage 2 complaints. However, given the nature of a complaint, it may be appropriate for a complaint to be dealt with by a core manager and director respectively.
- 5.5 It is the intention of the new policy to empower staff to take ownership and responsibility for dealing with complaints by removing the 3rd internal stage and by encouraging staff to deal with complaints without the need to refer to a director or Chief Executive.
- 5.6 The policy also seeks to create a culture where feedback is viewed positively and may be used to influence future policy. To this end, all responders to complaints will be required to complete a 'Learning from Complaints' form with outcomes being recorded, reported and lessons learned being shared across the council.
- 5.7 The policy also creates a requirement for complaints handling performance information and learning points to be reported to the Senior Management Team and the Portfolio Holder on a quarterly basis.

6. CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT AND OUTCOME OF CONSULTATION

- 6.1 An internal task group was created to develop a new policy to ensure that feedback is dealt with in an efficient and effective manner and lessons learned are used to influence future decision making where appropriate.

7. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

None

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None

9. HUMAN RESOURCES AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

None

10. ICT/TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The adoption of the new policy will require new processes for dealing with feedback to be written in the Council's Customer Relationship Management system.

11. PROPERTY AND ASSET MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

None

12. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 12.1 The lack of a clear policy for dealing with complaints could increase the potential for the Council to be liable for compensation payments or costs, as directed by the LGO.
- 12.2 There is a reduction in the number of stages required before a complaint can be made to the LGO. As a result, there is the potential for a greater number of complaints to be referred to the LGO. However, a very limited number of complaints have previously had a decision changed at the third stage, therefore the number of additional complaints that will be referred to the LGO is expected to be minimal.

13. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPACT

- 13.1 The adoption of a formal policy for dealing with and monitoring all types of feedback will assist the Council in identifying opportunities for improvements to the services provided to residents.

14. RELEVANT DIRECTORS RECOMMENDATIONS

- 14.1 This policy encourages staff to deal with and rectify complaints without the need to automatically refer to a higher level, thereby ensuring that complaints are dealt with in a more timely fashion.

15. COMMENTS OF THE STATUTORY FINANCE OFFICER

- 15.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

16. COMMENTS OF THE MONITORING OFFICER

- 16.1 Our previous complaints policy has served us well in the past but now it is looking rather cumbersome and out of date – hence why we need a new more focussed policy which also encompasses comments and compliments as well as complaints. It is important of course that we do have a robust and fit for purpose customer feedback policy in place – this is something the Ombudsman would expect.

17. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS (or there are no background papers to this report)

Appendix A - South Ribble Borough Council Customer Feedback Policy

Denise Johnson
Director of Development, Enterprise & Communities

Report Author:	Telephone:	Date:
Peter Haywood	5578	6 th October 2017