

AGENDA ITEM 6

POLICY FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

26 JANUARY 2016

REPORT OF HEAD OF COMMUNICATIONS

REVIEW OF CORPORATE COMPLAINTS POLICY

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To update on the findings of a review of the corporate complaints policy.
- 1.2 To introduce a new, revised policy along with additional guidance and support for managers in dealing with customer complaints.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **That members approve the revised Corporate Complaints Policy at Appendix A, to be implemented with immediate effect**

3.0 KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 Our Service Strategy for Customers states that “we want to put matters right when things go wrong but also prevent them from happening again.” In order to achieve this it is important that we manage the way we handle and respond to complaints in a customer focused way. We accept that complaints can be a rich source of information about how customers perceive the service they have received which, when handled effectively, can enable us to learn and improve our service delivery. It is therefore important that our complaints process is clear, accessible, flexible and forms part of the service provision for customers without overwhelming them.
- 3.2 The current published policy available to customers was reviewed in 2012. Although still largely fit for purpose it required a refresh to reflect the current approach to customer service delivery and the structure and culture of the Council. It was felt that the tone of the policy was not as customer focused as it could be, using language and acronyms that are probably not familiar to most of our customers. The first stage of the process is the informal stage which results in complaints quickly being escalated to stage two of the process without giving the service the opportunity to work with the customer to put things right first.
- 3.3 The current policy identifies specifically who should be dealing with the complaint. It outlines the roles and responsibilities by officer level in the organisation however it may be the case that they may not always be the best person with service knowledge to actually effectively deal with the customer and their concerns. The revised policy aims to empower more staff to deal responsively to customer queries raised.
- 3.4 The new policy reflects our current working practices here at Parkside and considers that customers may wish to make a complaint involving not just MBC but the partners as well. We pride ourselves on good working relationships with our partners and feedback on joint service delivery is important to continuing success of the partnerships and improving these relationships.

3.5 Our strategy is to prevent failings in service delivery from reoccurring. In order to achieve this it is important to have a deep understanding of the customer journey while accessing the services of the Council and our partners. For this reason the revised policy has a new section about “learning lessons” explaining how we will review our complaints information and that we may make contact with customers to gain feedback and suggestions on service improvements.

3.6 In summary the key changes to the revised policy are :

- Change in the tone of language used in the policy so it reads better for the customer
- Outlining the different ways to express concerns for example using online “report a problem” or statutory right to appeal
- Explain different types of complaints ie on behalf of another person or about a partner organisation
- More focus on putting matters right and how we will communicate the outcomes of complaints
- Information of how we monitor complaints and use the information for service improvements

4.0 POLICY AND CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The revised policy should come into immediate effect however complaints which have been made before the date of implementation will still be dealt with under the current policy.

4.2 The full set of guidance notes for staff to support the new policy will be produced to aid consistency in complaint handling to include template letters.

4.3 Regular reporting of complaint data will be presented on a quarterly basis to Management team and T3.

5.0 FINANCIAL AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The revised policy does empower staff below the T3 level to deal and respond to complaints in their service area as appropriate. This was a restriction on the current policy

5.2 There are no other financial implications as a result of this report

6.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS/POWERS

6.1 The revised complaints policy continues to outline the process for report to the Ombudsman and the guidance note will ensure that data is maintained in line with the Data Protection Policy. As a result there are no other direct legal implications to the report.

7.0 COMMUNITY SAFETY

7.1 The policy encourages reporting of matters through established processes and is

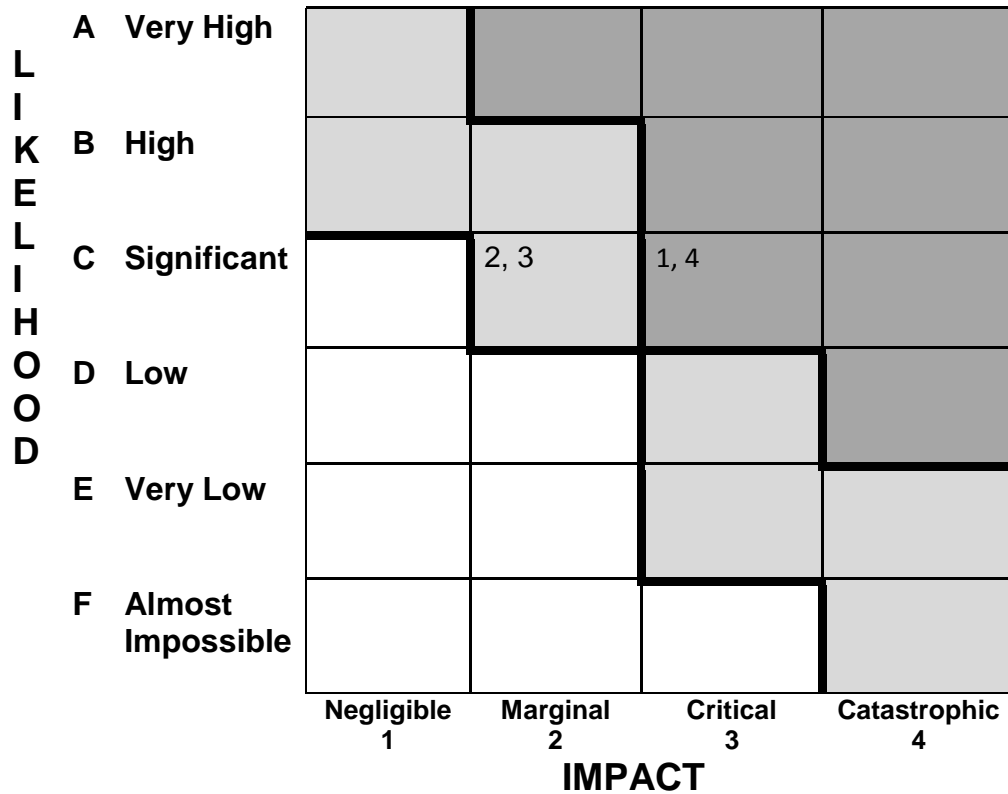
proactive is ensuring changes are made as a result of information collected through the complaints process.

8.0 EQUALITIES

8.1 The policy is available in all formats and recognises more channels for making a complaint. There are no adverse equality implications identified as a result of the revised policy.

9.0 RISKS

9.1



Risk No	Risk Description
1	Poor levels of service are not identified and put right
2	Failure to make changes to services based on customer feedback
3	Increase in complaint received through the Ombudsman
4	Poor reputation for service delivery

10.0 CLIMATE CHANGE

10.1 There are no issues relating to climate change

11.0 CONSULTATION

11.1 Consultation has been undertaken with Customer Services, Third Tier Managers and Management Team.

12.0 WARDS AFFECTED

12.1 All Wards are affected by the revision of the policy

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Date: 18 January 2015

Appendices : Appendix A

Background Papers:

Reference : X : Committees\PFA/ 2015-16/26Jan2016