

Name of person submitting	Questions
Barry Warren	My questions relate to item 8 on your agenda. Recently, in my position as Parish Council Chair, it was necessary to make a formal complaint against lack of enforcement of planning conditions and also an officer discharging a condition which was blatantly flawed. Complaints Policy states that “Stage 1 will be to refer the complaint to the relevant service manager or Housing Complaints Officer. If the customer/tenant is still unhappy with the response, Stage 2 will result in a further investigation by an alternative officer or more senior officer as appropriate.” The Stage 1 complaint was dealt with by the officer that was the subject of the complaint. This is contrary to policy. Under Section 6 of the policy it states: respond to all complaints and include in our response: an apology confirmation of whether the complaint was upheld or not The only words that could be considered an apology in the response were –“I am sorry you felt you had to make a complaint.” Part of the complaint was considered to be upheld but no apology was offered for the officer not having done his job with care and due diligence.

Question 1

What is there in the report which brings such a breach of policy to the attention of members of Committee?

Response:

The purpose of the report is to provide an overview of customer feedback and performance around complaints. This includes recognition of patterns of feedback and performance, not necessarily reporting of individual events.

The Stage 2 complaint was dealt with by the original officers manager whose first mention of an apology was – “I am sorry that you remain dissatisfied and felt that you had to escalate your complaint.” Explanations and excuses were given for policy not being followed.

The officer did later state: “I would apologise that this breeched the council’s investigations procedure.”

Question 2

The explanations given tends to show that there is a mind set to keep complaints within a department when policy allows ‘external’ involvement. Is there a lesson to be learned here or a training need identified?

Response:

Though external involvement is permitted, the service is typically best equipped to address complaints related to its own regulations and processes. Complaints are assigned upon receipt, and training will be updated to stress independent investigation.

Question 3

How does do the decisions made on complaints within a department feed into the system to be able to be shown in figures in a report such as presented to Committee?

Response:

The report includes data identifying whether complaints were upheld or not and establishes those services with a higher/lower frequency of different decisions. The report also confirms that qualitative analysis was not possible in the commissioning of the report due to capacity issues. This will be addressed prior to the next annual report.

Question 4

Rather than just note a report, will the Scrutiny Committee undertake some work to satisfy themselves and the public that policies are being correctly followed and relevant information being recorded and presented?

Response:

The committee has requested an interim report from the Head of Service in 6-8 months to review the current position.

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