

S35. COUNCIL COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCEDURE

The committee considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Neighbourhood Services presenting information requested by the committee on 14 August 2014 (ref S22) in regard to the Council's handling of complaints.

The report provided information on the Council's complaints handling procedure (CHP) and its implementation. The CHP was based on a two stage process, front line resolution and investigation. Only issues not resolved at the first stage or that are complex, serious or 'high risk' move to stage two. The report provided information on performance at frontline resolution and investigation and examples of services learning from complaints.

Caroline Binnie provided an overview of the report highlighting the response timescales for frontline resolution and investigation, five and twenty days respectively. Before implementing the CHP, staff had been trained by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) training unit. All staff have access to online complaints training.

The committee asked if complaint numbers were compared against previous levels. Caroline Binnie stated that the numbers were fairly consistent. Subsequent to issuing the report the SPSO had supplied figures for the number of complaints referred to them regarding the Council. The number of referrals and the areas in which the complaints were made were in line with national figures.

Members asked about the reporting of complaints information. Caroline Binnie advised that the information is reported to the Performance Panel at service level, although corporate figures could be provided.

The committee asked for the results of national benchmarking. Caroline Binnie stated that benchmarking was in progress and she would ask for an indicative timetable.

Members asked if comparison against other Councils was available. Caroline Binnie stated that the Council compared well against information published by other Councils.

The committee asked if some complainants go direct to the SPSO rather than through the CHP. Caroline Binnie stated that there can be a lack of understanding of process but the SPSO will not consider a complaint if the Council's process has not been completed.

Decision

The committee continued consideration of whether the subject matter of the report is suitable for inclusion in the Council's scrutiny plan to the next meeting to allow consideration of all the reports requested on 14 August 2014.