

S23. Scrutiny Plan: The Role of Elected Members in Engaging in the Complaints Process

The committee considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Housing Services summarising the ways in which elected members can raise and track constituents' enquiries and engage in the complaints process.

The committee had identified the role of elected members in engaging in the complaints process on 17 August 2017 (ref SC9) as a potential topic for further scrutiny and had asked for an issues report so that the matter could be considered further, ahead of committee identifying topics for inclusion on the scrutiny plan.

The report set out the methods by which members can raise constituents' enquiries, the introduction of the Customer First system and highlighted developments made to the system following consultation with members. The report also highlighted inconsistencies in the way in which enquiries are handled by complaints officers.

The Business and Members Services manager gave a summary of the report.

The committee thanked the Business and Members Services manager for the report and thorough response to the issues raised by members on 17 August.

The Business and Members Services manager confirmed, in response to questions, that the Customer First system which logged and tracked enquiries and complaints was not widely used by elected members. Since the Local Government elections in May 2017, there had been an uptake in use, particularly by newly elected members. The Business and Members manager confirmed that members could use other means of raising enquiries but emphasised that they would be logged on Customer First regardless of the method used e.g email, telephone call or face to face contact. Following discussion with members, a post box email address would be set up to assist members to raise enquiries without having to access the web based form. This was discussed further with members indicating that they would find a generic email address useful. It was reiterated, however, that some members would prefer to raise enquiries by direct contact with officers.

The committee discussed the enquiries and complaints processes and suggested that flow charts for each could be useful to help members understand the various stages.

The committee discussed their ability to track enquiries and complaints using Customer First. Currently they were not able to do so. However, the Head of Policy, Technology and Improvement suggested that the access requested could be arranged and suggested that it would be useful to establish a users group, with elected members, to look at this further, together with other issues raised by users.

The committee sought clarification as to how MP and MSP enquiries are handled. The Head of Policy, Technology and Improvement agreed to investigate further, in particular whether there was a protocol in place.

Following the discussion, the committee welcomed the steps taken to adjust the processes following consultation with elected members and confirmed that it was not necessary to further scrutinise this area of business, given in particular the proposal to establish a users group and the creation of a generic email address.

Decision

The committee noted:-

- (1) the role of elected Members in engaging in the complaints process on behalf of constituents, and**
- (2) the development of the Customer First system and the associated training proposals.**