

S46. COUNCIL COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCEDURE

The committee considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Housing Services providing information on complaints handling within the Council. The report set out performance against the indicators set by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) during the financial year 2014/15 and included benchmarking information drawn from the Improvement Service and Audit Scotland. Information was also provided on how the Council learns from complaints. Caroline Binnie provided an overview of the report.

Members asked how many complaints had been considered by the SPSO relating to Falkirk Council. Caroline Binnie advised that there had been 26 complaints which the SPSO had investigated and that this had resulted in 6 being upheld or partially upheld. She stated that in a number of cases the SPSO would not investigate a complaint if it had been referred prematurely, before going through the full Council procedure, or if it did not fall within their remit.

The committee discussed how people can make suggestions to the Council without raising a formal complaint and raised that other organisations have comments and concerns sections on their websites. Caroline Binnie stated that learning of this type was currently carried out at Service level and that lessons learned from complaints were recorded in the system.

Members asked if there was a corporate definition of what constitutes a complaint. Caroline Binnie stated that the SPSO had provided a definition within their model complaints handling procedure which advises that a complaint is an: “expression of dissatisfaction by one or more members of the public about the local authority’s action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of the local authority”.

Decision

The committee:-

- (i) noted the corporate position with complaints performance during the period April 2014 to March 2015;**
- (ii) noted that the information in the report would be used as the basis for the Council’s Complaints Annual Report, which would be published on the Council’s website and submitted to the SPSO;**
- (iii) noted the Council’s performance against the national average, as set out in the benchmarking report;**
- (iv) agreed that SPSO indicators 3 and 5 will be used by all Services as the standard performance indicators for complaints reported to the Performance Panel; and**
- (v) noted that a Scrutiny Panel will be established to look at the operation of the Complaints Procedure within the Council, in particular the extent to which complaints information is used to improve services, and that a scoping meeting will take place to establish a timetable and process for the review prior to the summer recess.**