

North East Derbyshire District Council

Cabinet

30th July 2014

Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy

**Report No: GBXR/18/14/AB of Councillor G Baxter MBE, Portfolio Holder with
Responsibility for Building a Better Council**

This report is public.

Purpose of the Report

- To approve the revised Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy.
- To meet legal requirements and national guidance.

1 Report Details

- 1.1 The policy sets out the intentions of both Bolsover District Council and North East Derbyshire District Council in the management of compliments, comments and complaints. Both Councils recognise the importance of management of feedback from customers contributing to the continual improvement of the authorities.
- 1.2 The existing policies and procedures have been reviewed to ensure that both Councils manage this function in line with the Local Government Act 1974 and guidance set out by the Local Government Ombudsman, the Housing Ombudsman, and the Joint Lean Review (August 2013). In addition the most recent complaints handling model from the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman was also taken into consideration. No British model is now available.
- 1.3 The decision to develop a joint policy was made to enable Officers working across both Councils to be able to do so within one set of standards and criteria, which will ensure a consistent approach for customers of both Councils. This has been welcomed by joint officers. The policy is largely an internal document which sets out what we need to do ensure compliance.
- 1.4 The effectiveness of the policy and its application will be reviewed through internal and external satisfaction surveys and reported to the appropriate Officer and Elected Member groups. It is intended to carry out an internal satisfaction survey after twelve months of the operation of the policy and biennially thereafter. External satisfaction surveys are sent to each customer at the end of the complaint process.
- 1.5 A joint procedure has already been produced to support this policy. This will form the basis of the training and development for managers and employees in the early autumn.

- 1.6 The adoption of the policy will rescind the existing Complaints Procedure and Vexatious Policy at North East Derbyshire District Council.
- 1.7 The policy has gained approval from the Strategic Alliance Joint Committee.

2 Conclusions and Reasons for Recommendation

- 2.1 The policy meets amended external drivers and compliance requirements. As such it is essential that it is put in place as soon as practicable.
- 2.2 Tailored training will be delivered to officers dealing with compliments, comments and complaints and more widely to all new appointees to both Councils within the mandatory Customer Services training.

3 Consultation and Equality Impact

- 3.1 The policy has been developed by a number of officers in the Customer Service and Improvement Department to ensure that it is fit for purpose. Initial consultation with key officers has also fed into the review of the policy.
- 3.2 External consultation and an Equality Impact Assessment on the policy are not necessary as it is legislation and national guidance led. However the policy recognises equality requirements and an Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out on the supporting procedure to ensure that there are no barriers to the service and support is given to those customers who require it.

4 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

- 4.1 In preparing the policy consideration has been given to how best the required actions can be achieved within existing resources.

5 Implication

5.1 Finance and Risk Implications

The policy is a review of both Councils' existing Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policies and Procedures; however both Councils are at risk of recommendations or decisions by the Local Government Ombudsman and the Housing Ombudsman if complaints are not handled well.

In cases of maladministration, financial penalties can be imposed by the Local Government Ombudsman, the Housing Ombudsman.

In the case of complaints about Freedom of Information, Data Protection and Environmental Information requests, the Information Commissioner's Office can issue decision notices and impose significant fines.

5.2 Legal Implications including Data Protection

The policy allows compliance with the Local Government Act 1974 and guidance set out by the Local Government Ombudsman and the Housing Ombudsman. It is also in line with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998, Freedom of Information Act 2000 and Environmental Information Regulations 2004.

5.3 **Human Resources Implications**

Once approved the policy and supporting documentation will be made available on the intranet and briefings will be provided to managers and those departmental contacts dealing with compliments, comments and complaints.

6 **Recommendations**

- That Cabinet notes the need for harmonisation of the Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy between the Strategic Alliance.
- That Cabinet approve the Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy for adoption.

7 **Decision Information**

Is the decision a Key Decision? (A Key Decision is one which results in income or expenditure to the Council of £50,000 or more or which has a significant impact on two or more District wards)	No
District Wards Affected	N/a
Links to Corporate Plan priorities or Policy Framework	High Performing Council - NEDDC

8 **Document Information**

Appendix No	Title
1	Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy
Background Papers (These are unpublished works which have been relied on to a material extent when preparing the report. They must be listed in the section below. If the report is going to Cabinet (NEDDC) or Executive (BDC) you must provide copies of the background papers)	
n/a	
Report Author	Contact Number
Assistant Director – Customer Service and Improvement	7029