

STATEMENT OF PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS

INTRODUCTION

This document sets out in two stages the procedure for dealing with complaints made about the Council. The Council hopes that the majority of complaints will be dealt with informally to the satisfaction of the complainant when the matter complained of is first raised with the Council. If the complainant remains dissatisfied however, the procedure which follows provides an opportunity for the complaint to be fully investigated. The procedure does not prejudice the complainant's right to refer the matter to the Local Government Ombudsman at any stage if they so wish.

A complaint may be made by a member of the public or by someone acting on their behalf. Where a complaint is made through a Member of the Council it should be addressed to the relevant Group Manager or the Corporate Services Group Manager (who monitors all complaints), and that Member must be kept informed of the progress of the complaint and the final outcome.

DEFINITION

The Council has formally defined a complaint as:

"When a member of the public is not happy with something the Council, or an Officer of the Council, has either done, failed to do, or done in an unacceptable way". This does not include initial requests for a service, requests for information or an explanation of Council policy, or any matters for which there is a right of appeal or a legal remedy.

REMEDY

Once a complaint has been made a full investigation will be carried out following the stages of the procedure set out below. If the complaint is found to be justified this will be acknowledged and an apology given. Steps will then be taken to remedy the situation wherever possible by putting the complainant in the position they would have been in, had the complaint not arisen.

REVIEW

Group Managers must keep under review the causes of complaints with a view to modifying systems or procedures if necessary, to prevent the cause of the complaints recurring.

MONITORING

There are systems (including computer systems) for recording all complaints received and the responses to the complaints. These are used to monitor the progress of complaints, and to provide information about the number and nature of complaints on a Divisional basis. Monitoring is carried out both at Divisional and Corporate level.

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Stage 1

The Group Manager responsible for the service area will investigate the complaint and send a response in writing within 15 working days, or will let the customer know when they can expect a reply. If the customer is not happy with the way their complaint has been dealt with they can ask for it to be reviewed at Stage 2.

Stage 2

The Corporate Services Group Manager (CSGM), or an Officer nominated by the CSGM, will undertake an independent review of the complaint.

A review will normally be completed within 15 working days but if this is not possible, the customer will be advised when they can expect a response.