

## **WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **VALUE FOR MONEY AND CUSTOMER SERVICE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**19 NOVEMBER 2018**

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**Title:**

**COMPLAINTS HANDLING POLICY AND REVIEW OF COMPLAINTS RECEIVED BY  
WAVERLEY IN 2017/18**

**[Portfolio Holder:Councillor Julia Potts]  
[Wards Affected:All]**

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**Summary and purpose:**

This report provides a brief summary of the complaints received by Waverley in 2017/18 and the Council's performance in responding to those complaints. Complaints about Waverley's services that were received by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and the Housing Ombudsman in 2017/18 are the subject of a separate report.

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**How this report relates to the Council's Corporate Priorities:**

Investigating complaints provides the Council with an opportunity to keep under review and improve the quality of its services to the community. Lessons learnt from complaints help the Council to meet its priorities to maintain high quality services that meet the needs of our residents at an affordable cost.

**Equality and Diversity Implications:**

Waverley's complaints handling policy helps to ensure that there is no discrimination in the way in which it delivers services in a fair and equal way.

**Financial Implications:**

Sometimes the appropriate remedy for a complaint will be to offer the complainant compensation and this may be financial. All compensation payments must be authorised by the relevant Head of Service.

**Legal Implications:**

There are no legal implications associated with the proposals. The Council's complaints handling process is fully consistent with best practice and the most recent guidance from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

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**Analysis of complaints received and closed by Waverley in in 2017/18**

1. In February 2018 the Council's complaints procedure was changed from three to two stages, and following a short transition period the new procedure came into effect on 1 April 2018. The following statistics relate to the former three stage procedure.

2. The table below shows the number of complaints closed in 2017/18 for each service and at each level.

<b>Service</b>	<b>Level 1</b>	<b>Level 2</b>	<b>Level 3</b>	<b>Total</b>
Communities	2	2	0	4
Customer and Corporate Services	2	0	0	2
Elections and special projects	8	8	2	18
Environment	104	17	2	123
Finance	18	8	2	28
Housing Operations	121	28	17	166
Housing Strategy and Delivery	8	5	3	16
Planning	43	51	27	121
Policy and Governance	0	1	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>306</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>479</b>

3. It is encouraging to note that 64% of all complaints closed in 2017/18 were resolved at Level 1, and just 11% took their complaint to Level 3.
4. As in previous years, Housing Operations received the highest number of complaints, a total of 166. However, this is a significant reduction in complaints when compared with a total of 252 complaints received in 2016/17. This is due in part to an improved performance by the Council's contractors, Mears, but also reflects improvements made to the way in which the Housing Customer Services Team deal with tenants' requests for housing repairs.
5. The increase in the number of complaints received by Environmental Services – a total of 123 compared with 52 in 2016/17 – is due to the Council's decision in February 2017 to introduce car park charges for disabled drivers.
6. There was a very small decrease in the number of complaints received by the Planning Service - 121 compared with 129 in the previous year – the majority of which concerned development management matters.

### **Waverley's performance in responding to complaints**

7. The corporate target is currently 95% of all complaints to be responded to within the timescales of 10 and 15 working days respectively, and will be reviewed in early 2019 at the end of the first year of the new two stage complaints procedure.
8. In 2017/18 82% of all complaints closed were responded to within the target timescales compared with 90% in 2016/17. Performance at each level was as follows:
- Level 1 - 87%
- Level 2 - 82%
- Level 3 - 72%
9. It is difficult to identify specific reasons for this reduction in performance, although complaints at Levels 2 and 3 may well have been more complex requiring more time to investigate.

## **Outcome of complaints made in 2017/18**

10. The following table gives information on the outcome of complaints made in 2017/18.

<b>Service</b>	<b>Not upheld</b>	<b>Partly upheld</b>	<b>Upheld</b>	<b>Total</b>
Communities	4	0	0	4
Customer and Corporate Services	1	1	0	2
Elections and special projects	13	2	3	18
Environment	38	76	9	123
Finance	21	5	2	28
Housing Operations	68	28	70	166
Housing Strategy and Delivery	16	0	0	16
Planning	117	3	1	121
Policy and Governance	1	0	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>479</b>

11. The assessment of whether a complaint is recorded as being upheld, partly upheld or not upheld can be a subjective matter, and in most cases is made by the officer investigating the complaint. Overall 58% complaints were not upheld, 24% were partly upheld and 18% were upheld. The majority of complaints that were partly upheld or upheld concerned the service provided by contractors in respect of responsive repairs and property services, and the introduction of disabled parking charges.

### **Lessons learned from complaints**

12. Learning lessons from complaints is an important part of improving Waverley's services and these are recorded on the complaints database, together with information on any action taken to improve processes. Annexe 1 gives some examples of lessons learned in 2017/18. Many lessons learned concerned procedural/administrative issues and the need to improve communications with the customer.

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### **Recommendation**

It is recommended that the Value for Money and Customer Service Overview and Scrutiny Committee considers the information in this report and passes any comments to the Executive.

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### **Background Papers**

There are no background papers (as defined by Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) relating to this report.

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