

Midlothian Council Annual Complaint Handling Report 2018/19**Report by Dr Grace Vickers, Chief Executive****Report for Information/Noting****1 Recommendations**

Cabinet and Performance Review and Scrutiny are asked to:

- i. Note the recent publication of the Annual Complaint Handling Report on the Council's website here:

https://www.midlothian.gov.uk/downloads/file/3942/annual_complaint_handling_report_201819

- ii. Note that the published report includes summary information for Midlothian Council's complaints referred to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO)

2 Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to advise Cabinet and Performance Review and Scrutiny that the Midlothian Council Annual Complaint Handling Report 2018/19, which was approved by Corporate Management Team on 18 March 2020, has been published on the Council's website.

This is the third report of its kind, and it provides an annual review and assessment of complaints information which includes some useful customer feedback and an analysis of what the results could suggest. As a result of its publication, customers and staff alike are provided with:

- Evidence of how the council values complaints - by sharing the information whilst appropriately comparing the data to other local authorities and the Scottish averages;
- Essential information relating to the complaints procedure and outcomes;
- Knowledge about the importance of managing the process;
- Information that relates to customer insight based on the data;
- A summary of the compliments that the council receives in addition to complaints;
- Case studies that highlight how the council has learned and improved;

The report also provides an update of statistics shared with us by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) about how they have handled complaint cases by Midlothian customers, and which services

were being complained about to them. Outcome decisions to cases are published on the SPSO's website.

Date: 14 August 2020

Report Contact:

Myra Forsyth
Continuous Improvement Manager

myra.forsyth@midlothian.gov.uk

3 Background

3.1 Insert text here.

3.1 The model Complaint Handling Procedure (CHP) was developed for public services in line with the recommendations of the Sinclair report which tasked the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) to simplify and improve complaints handling by developing a standardised CHP. This was arranged within the framework of the SPSO Statement of Complaint Handling Principles, which is approved by the Scottish Parliament, and Guidance on a Model Complaints Handling Procedure.

3.2 The emphasis in the CHP is on quicker and simpler complaints handling with local, early resolution by empowered and well trained staff. The aim is to help bodies 'get it right first time' with a focus on resolving complaints at the frontline wherever possible. There is also an emphasis on valuing complaints – recording all complaints, reporting key information and using the lessons learned to improve service delivery.

3.3 The aim of standardising and streamlining CHPs has been at the core of this work, so all public service model CHPs are closely aligned. The key elements of each model CHP will be the same for all sectors, including:

- A shared definition of what is and what is not a complaint
- A two stage process where complaints are resolved as close to the frontline as possible
- Frontline resolution of complaints within five working days
- An investigation stage of 20 working days, which provides the organisation's final decision
- Recording of all complaints
- Active learning from complaints through reporting and publicising complaints information.

3.4 In line with the local intelligence tool that the Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) applies and reports on, value is also added to the complaints report using the comparative element. There is an established benchmarking sub-group for complaints, a group composed of members from the mainstream Local Authority Complaint Handlers Network group (LACHN). The complaints statistics are therefore likened to previous years', as well as to the Scottish average and the family group average.

3.5 A focal point of the document is the information provided under the heading 'Annual Complaints Handled by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO)'. This section provides a summary of the information about cases that were handled directly by the SPSO. It is useful to know how many of Midlothian's customers have approached the SPSO, and how their queries have been processed.

4 Report Implications (Resource, Digital and Risk)

4.1 Resource

The requirement to complete and publish an Annual Complaints Handling Report sits within the current Customer Service Improvement Officer role however, elected members are asked to note that developing the complaints function to ensure a 'fit for purpose' and sustainable framework requires support from managers and services as part of the ongoing performance management and improvement agenda.

4.2 Digital

Whilst not directly relating to the production of the annual report a monthly complaints dashboard has been developed to support a proactive approach to managing performance related to complaints, however the implementation of this tool has been delayed due to resourcing issues within Digital Services.

Future development work around complaints will also be informed by the proposed provision of a new CRM system.

4.3 Risk

Failure to meet the statutory requirements as they relate to complaint handling and SPSO reporting presents a risk. Publishing this document seeks to mitigate the risk and illustrates how feedback information provided by the council's customers is valued.

4.4 Ensuring Equalities (if required a separate IIA must be completed)

Whilst not directly impacting on equalities, information is provided about the opportunity to reformat the document into a legible format or language to accommodate additional needs or those whose first language is not English. This is in line with the Equalities Act 2010.

4.4 Additional Report Implications (See Appendix A)

See Appendix A

Appendices

Appendix A – Additional Report Implications

Appendix B – Supporting Links

APPENDIX A – Report Implications

A.1 Key Priorities within the Single Midlothian Plan

This report does not relate directly to the key priorities within the Single Midlothian Plan; however the proposed action supports the ongoing improvement agenda across a number of the thematic areas.

A.2 Key Drivers for Change

Key drivers addressed in this report:

- ☐ Holistic Working
- ☐ Hub and Spoke
- ☐ Modern
- ☐ Sustainable
- ☐ Transformational
- ☐ Preventative
- ☐ Asset-based
- ☒ Continuous Improvement
- ☐ One size fits one
- ☐ None of the above

A.3 Key Delivery Streams

Key delivery streams addressed in this report:

- ☒ One Council Working with you, for you
- ☐ Preventative and Sustainable
- ☐ Efficient and Modern
- ☐ Innovative and Ambitious
- ☐ None of the above

A.4 Delivering Best Value

The existing Complaint Handling Procedure and supporting practices such as quarterly and annual reporting helps to ensure delivery of Best Value by ensuring that there is good governance and effective management of complaints, with a focus on improvement, to deliver the best possible outcomes.

A.5 Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders

The Council is using the evidence from complaints as another form of customer feedback to assist in its delivery of services and processes within the divisions.

A.6 Impact on Performance and Outcomes

The annual report and review of the complaints framework provides a number of benefits which include an enhanced understanding of the complaint handling process, clarity about the indicators, and statistical data analysis which supports discussion about what the results could

mean. The report also compliments what is reported quarterly via the quarterly performance reporting framework.

A key benefit is meeting our obligation to report on the improvements/remedial action that we have made as a result of the feedback we receive, and how we have learned from complaints.

A.7 Adopting a Preventative Approach

The Council is proactively responding to improvement opportunities noted as part of the complaints process.

A.8 Supporting Sustainable Development

There are no sustainability issues with regard to this report.

APPENDIX B

Supporting Links

1. Midlothian Council Annual Complaint Report 2018/19

https://www.midlothian.gov.uk/downloads/file/3942/annual_complaint_handling_report_201819

2. Complaint Handling Procedure

https://www.midlothian.gov.uk/info/670/have_your_say/132/complaints_procedure

3. Public Performance Reporting – Including link to previous Annual Complaint Reports

https://www.midlothian.gov.uk/info/691/performance_and_spending/257/council_performance/4