

Bolsover District Council

Meeting of Executive on Monday 15th April 2024

Complaints, Comments & Compliments Policy Review

Report of the Service Director for Executive, Corporate Services and Partnerships

Classification :	This report is Public
Contact Officer :	Lesley Botham Customer Service, Standards and Complaints Manager

PURPOSE/SUMMARY OF REPORT

Executive's approval is sought for the revised Complaints, Comments and Compliments Policy (CCC Policy).

REPORT DETAILS

1 Background

- 1.1 The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) and the Housing Ombudsman (HO) undertook a consultation in November 2023 with a view to align both requirements for local authorities to respond to complaints effectively and fairly – Joint Complaint Handling Code ('the Code') which will be effective from 1st April 2024.
- 1.2 The purpose of the Code is to enable resolution of complaints from individuals quickly, and to use the data and learning from complaints to drive improvements.
- 1.3 Although a Joint Code was not agreed following the consultation, there will be a statutory duty for the LGSCO and HO to monitor compliance of the Code and non-compliance could result in taking further action (Complaint Handling Failure Order) which places a risk to the Council's reputation.
- 1.4 To comply with the recommendations set out by the LGSCO and HO the CCC Policy has been reviewed to strengthen and clarify the requirements of the Council to meet compliance.

2. Details of Proposal or Information

- 2.1 The updated CCC Policy outlines Bolsover District Council's approach to administrating, monitoring and service area duty to meet the requirements of the Code and provide effective complaint handling.

- 2.2 The Policy provides an updated definition of what is a service request and a complaint. It sets out the internal procedure in terms of assessing a service request, complaints and the process that will be followed.
- 2.3 In addition, there is a section on what will be excluded and falls out of scope of the Policy.
- 2.4 The LGCSO and HO have agreed a two stage Complaint handling process which the Council will need to implement to meet the requirement.
- All Complaint Acknowledgements responded within 5 working days.
 - Stage 1 complaints must be responded to withing 10 working days.
 - Stage 2, within 20 working days.
- 2.5 The Policy will therefore be amended to reflect the complaint acknowledgement and response time frames set out in the Code.
- 2.6 A copy of the draft, updated Policy is attached as **Appendix 1**. The previous Policy is attached at **Appendix 2** with a summary of changes for comparison at **Appendix 3**.
- 2.7 Customer Services Scrutiny Committee has reviewed the Policy and recommend the amendments made to the Policy.

3 Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1 It is considered good practice to have a policy which sets out the Council's approach to Complaint handling. This updated policy will ensure we are compliant with the LGSCO & HO codes.
- 3.2 The policy which sits alongside the Customer Service Standards and Procedures will ensure the Council sets out a good complaint handling process and promotes a positive relationship between the organisation and service users.

4 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

- 4.1 The updated Policy is considered necessary so that members of the public are aware of the Council's approach to meeting the LGSCO & HO Code for handling complaints which allows the Council to resolve complaints quickly, effectively, and fairly, and use the data to drive service improvements, providing a positive culture for complaint handling.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

That Executive approve the updated Complaints, Comments and Compliments Policy.

Approved by Councillor Mary Dooley, Portfolio Holder for Partnerships, Health & Wellbeing

IMPLICATIONS.

Finance and Risk: Yes No

Details:

There are no financial implications in the Report or arising from the updated Complaints, Comments and Compliments Policy.

On behalf of the Section 151 Officer

Legal (including Data Protection): Yes No

Details:

There are no legal implications in the Report or arising from the updated Complaints, Comments and Compliments Policy.

On behalf of the Solicitor to the Council

Environment: Yes No

Details:

There are no environmental implications in the Report or arising from the updated Complaints, Comments and Compliments Policy.

On Behalf of the Climate Change Lead Officer

Staffing: Yes No

Details:

There are no staffing implications in the Report or arising from the updated Complaints, Comments and Compliments Policy.

On behalf of the Head of Paid Service

DECISION INFORMATION

<p>Is the decision a Key Decision? A Key Decision is an executive decision which has a significant impact on two or more District wards, or which results in income or expenditure to the Council above the following thresholds:</p> <p>Revenue - £75,000 <input type="checkbox"/> Capital - £150,000 <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Please indicate which threshold applies</i></p>	No
<p>Is the decision subject to Call-In? (Only Key Decisions are subject to Call-In)</p>	No

District Wards Significantly Affected	All
Consultation: Leader / Deputy Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Executive <input type="checkbox"/> SLT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Relevant Service Manager <input type="checkbox"/> Members <input type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Details: Customer Services Scrutiny Committee

Links to Council Ambition: Customers, Economy, and Environment.
Customer Services - Providing Excellent and Accessible services

DOCUMENT INFORMATION	
Appendix No	Title
1	Draft Complaint Comments and Compliments Policy – April 2024
2	Complaint Comments and Compliments Policy – revised March 2023
3	Summary of Changes

Background Papers
<i>(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 Executive, you must provide copies of the background papers).</i>