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**REPORT TO: POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE ON 9 APRIL 2019**

**SUBJECT: COMPLAINTS ANNUAL REPORT 2016-17**

**BY: CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

**1. REASON FOR REPORT**

- 1.1 The Policy & Resources Committee is asked to consider the Complaints Annual Report 2016-17.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section III (A) (51) of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to developing and monitoring public relations, public reporting, publicity and corporate communications.

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

**2.1 It is recommended that Committee:-**

- i) considers the contents of the Complaints Annual Report;**
- ii) welcomes performance as indicated in the report;**
- iii) notes the actions being taken to improve performance where required;**
- iv) otherwise approves the report for submission to the Scottish Public Sector Ombudsman (SPSO).**

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The 2015-16 Complaints Annual Report was approved by this committee on 30<sup>th</sup> August 2016 (para 16 of the minute refers).
- 3.2 All councils are required to publish their performance against the national performance indicators set by the SPSO. The attached report presents our performance against these performance indicators for the 2016-17 reporting period. **(Appendix)**
- 3.3 Complaints handling is part of the council's performance management framework. Members receive six-monthly updates on complaints performance through routine reports to service committees.

- 3.4 Over the past three years there has been a trend towards a reduction in the rate of complaints received per 1,000 head population: from 5.17 in 2014-15 to 4.31 in 2016-17. This reduction can be seen as positive and reflects public confidence in reporting complaints and service improvements made through complaint handling.
- 3.5 To put these figures in context, the average number of complaints received by local authorities in Scotland was 13.03 per 1,000 head population in 2015-16 (the latest published data). However, due to differences in how councils categorise and record complaints, this is not a definitive comparison.
- 3.6 During the year our ratio of complaints dealt with at front line resolution stage one compared to those dealt with at the investigation stage two showed a marked improvement from 2015-16. There was a 20% improvement in dealing with complaints at the front line stage (71.5%) compared to 2015-16 where just over half of all complaints were resolved at this stage (51.7%). This demonstrates that our staff are dealing timeously with and seeking early resolution with complainants.
- 3.7 For all the complaints closed during 2016-17, at both stages one and two, 46% were fully 'upheld' or 'partially upheld' compared to 43% in 2015-16. This would suggest that many customers are raising genuine concerns with service provision, and a greater proportion of all complaints require us to review and improve the way services are being delivered.
- 3.8 Due to legislation, statutory social work complaints operate through the existing three stage complaints process. As this process is at a variance with the model Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP), social work complaint figures are not included in great detail in this report. Social work complaints aligned with the model CHP on 1 April 2017 and will be included in the 2017-18 annual report.

#### **4. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

##### **(a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan) (LOIP)**

This report supports the Scottish Government's national outcomes, in particular the commitment to be accountable to the community as stated: "Our public services are high quality, continually improving, efficient and responsive to local people's needs."

Effective handling of complaints is used to ensure the efficient and sustainable delivery of services to meet the Council's priorities in 'Moray 2023: A Plan for the Future.' Within the Moray Council Corporate Plan, it has been identified that "we will talk to our customers and see how they would like services improved" that is a core part of the process of learning from complaints.

**(b) Policy and Legal**

There is a statutory requirement to report to the SPSO annually on the performance indicators. The 'Social Work' complaints procedure, is now aligned into the model Complaints Handling Procedures.

**(c) Financial implications**

It is not anticipated that there will be any financial implications as the recommendations in this report relate to publicising performance information.

**(d) Risk Implications**

Performance reporting is a statutory requirement of the SPSO's Complaints Handling Policy. Failure to report may result in SPSO making a declaration of non-compliance against the Council. Non-compliance with the statutory duty relating to national standards being adopted would present risk in terms of reputational damage and a loss of public confidence in our ability to deliver quality improvements based on complaints analysis, and ultimately to maintaining and improving service standards.

**(e) Staffing Implications**

There are no staffing implications related to this report.

**(f) Property**

There are no property implications related to this report.

**(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact**

The Equal Opportunities Officer has been consulted in the preparation of this report and the equalities impact has been identified as uncertain.

The Equal Opportunities Officer has recommended that where services are experiencing high volumes of complaints, the management of respective services should arrange to identify common complaint issues and any learning arising. This will help to ensure that complaints are not arising from situations where customer diversity needs have not been considered or addressed, e.g. disability or cultural issues.

**(h) Consultations**

The Corporate Management Team has been consulted on the contents of annual report. The Performance Management Officer and Equal Opportunities Officers have been consulted in the preparation the Complaints Annual Report.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

### **5.1 The Complaints Annual Report presents our performance against the national performance indicators set by SPSO.**

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Background Papers: SPSO PIs

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