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**REPORT TO: POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE ON 14 JANUARY 2020**

**SUBJECT: COMPLAINTS ANNUAL REPORT 2018-19**

**BY: CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

**1. REASON FOR REPORT**

- 1.1 The Policy and Resources Committee is asked to consider the Complaints Annual Report 2018-19.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section III (B) (45) 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 the Committee:**

- (i) **consider the content of the Complaints Annual Report, seek clarification on any points arising, and otherwise approve the report; and**
- (ii) **note that the annual report will then be submitted to the Scottish Public Sector Ombudsman (SPSO).**

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 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 2018-19 reporting period. **(Appendix)**
- 3.2 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.
- 3.3 Complaints received per 1,000 head population increased from 5.75 in 2017-18 to 6.4 in 2018-19 and is significant compared to 4.31 in 2016-17. This increase can be viewed as positive as it reflects continued public confidence in reporting complaints. Decreasing staff numbers has placed a greater pressure upon departments to maintain service provision and this may

attribute to the increased number of recorded complaints, 611 in 2018-19 compared to 551 in 2017-18. Our complaint recording has increased by 10% whereas nationally across all councils complaint recording has decreased by 11%.

- 3.4 During 2018-19, 81% of complaints were dealt with at frontline resolution stage compared to 19% dealt with at the investigation stage. The front line response handling is a 15% improvement on the 66% in 2017-18 and more in keeping with SPSO requirements to deal with customers complaints at this earlier stage.
- 3.5 Over one-third (39%) of frontline (stage one) complaints were 'upheld', or 'partially upheld' in 2018-19, similar to 2017-18. For stage two complaints 'upheld' or 'partially upheld' at the investigation stage, the proportion in 2018-19 remained unchanged at 43%, the same as in 2017-18. Indeed over the past 5 years the proportion of stage two complaints (including after escalation) has been consistently around 40%. This demonstrates that complaints continue to be acknowledged, apologies are given with learning and improvement outcomes sought and implemented.

#### 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 the Moray Council Corporate Plan 2023. As part of the *Improving Value* the Complaints Handling Process enables us to be open about our performance, including opportunities to improve, and also to learn from our experiences and failures, and change accordingly.

(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**

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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