

Connected Communities Executive Advisory Panel

16th February 2024

Report Title	North Northamptonshire Complaints Remedy Policy
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Are there public sector equality duty implications?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information (whether in appendices or not)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Applicable paragraph number/s for exemption from publication under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972	N/A
Which Corporate Plan priority does the report most closely align with? Our priorities for the future North Northamptonshire Council (northnorthants.gov.uk)	Modern public services

List of Appendices

Appendix A – Draft North Northamptonshire Complaints Remedy Policy

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to seek comments and feedback in relation to the North Northamptonshire Council Complaints Remedy Policy, which was designed to support services in assessing complaints at stage one, stage two and Ombudsman scale points.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. North Northamptonshire Council Complaints Handling Policy confirms that complainants have statutory rights when raising a dispute around loss of service or maladministration. The Complaints Remedy Policy will enable services to make more consistent decisions informed by Ombudsman guidance as to how best to address injustice arising from maladministration or loss of service arising from fault of the Council.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. It is recommended that the Connected Communities EAP consider the draft North Northamptonshire Complaints Remedy Policy and provide feedback prior to submission of the policy to Executive for approval at its meeting on 14th March 2024.
- 3.2 Reason for Recommendations: To ensure that the Executive Advisory the council has in place a policy reflecting best practice to advise and inform decision making on remedying complaints.
- 3.3 Alternative Option Considered: Adopt no policy and instead decision making continues to be informed on a case-by-case basis with no defined corporate response and the potential for contradictory decision making.

4. Report Background

- 4.1. Complainants have a statutory right to escalate a complaint to the appropriate Ombudsman Service should the complainant remain dissatisfied with the response to the complaint. This is confirmed in the Council's Compliments, Comments & Complaints Policy.
- 4.2. The Ombudsman Services have an expectation that when things have gone wrong resulting in injustice, the Council will put things right (remedy) without delay and where the Council does not do that, it is at risk of the Ombudsman Services upholding complaints against them, making its own recommendations and publicly highlighting the failure.
- 4.3. The Council currently has no policy to guide the offering of remedy for injustice arising from maladministration or loss of service, and as a result decision making in this area lacks prescription and clarity and is administered on a case-by-case basis giving rise to the potential for contradictory decision making.
- 4.4. This proposal is to introduce a new policy to inform decision which confirms the Council's approach to remedy.

5. Issues and Choices

- 5.1. A decision to offer remedy should be informed by guidance and outcomes of the Ombudsman Services as well as the values of North Northamptonshire Council.
- 5.2. A policy would confirm such circumstances where it would be appropriate to offer remedy and what form a remedy could take.
- 5.3. The current arrangements are inefficient, resulting in both delay and inconsistency in decision making and will likely result in continued customer dissatisfaction with complaint outcomes.

- 5.4. A choice to not adopt a policy could result in poor reputation should the lack of policy be highlighted by an Ombudsman Service.

6. Next Steps

- 6.1. Feedback from this meeting will be factored into the final draft policy submitted to the Executive for approval at its meeting on 14th March 2024.
- 6.2. If approved, this policy will be published internally to inform decision making.

7. Implications (including financial implications)

7.1. Resources and Financial and Transformation

- 7.1.1. Financial implications arising from remedy could decrease if the Council introduces this policy. Ombudsman Services have the option to award or increase remedy offers where the Council has failed to follow good practice guidance. The policy has the potential to add efficiencies and reduce delay and increase satisfaction in outcomes reducing escalation to Ombudsman Services.
- 7.1.2. This decision has implications for transforming complaint handling by all services. A policy framework will speed up decision making and increase accuracy of decision-making providing efficiencies in the process and increasing customer satisfaction.

7.2. Legal and Governance

- 7.2.1. This report and policy has been reviewed and approved for submission by Legal services.

7.3. Relevant Policies and Plans

- 7.3.1. The proposed policy supports our Corporate Plan key commitment to provide modern and efficient services by providing a framework to level up decision making in line with best practice and will result in increased customer satisfaction.

7.4. Risk

- 7.4.1. Failing to adopt a policy could result in risk to reputation. There is an expectation that the Council maintains a policy to inform decision making on this matter. Continuing to operate without a policy framework will increase the potential for erroneous decision making, failures in addressing injustice and increase the risk of reputational damage resulting in Ombudsman Services publicly highlighting failures.

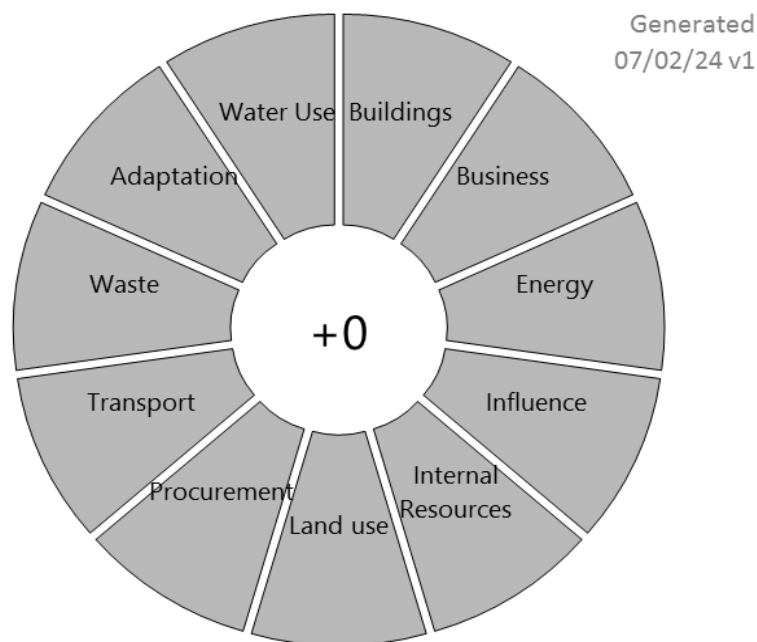
7.5. Consultation

7.5.1. Internal consultation with interested parties – stakeholder services engaged and feedback incorporated to ensure clarity.

7.6. Equality Implications

7.6.1. An Equality Screening Assessment has been completed.

7.7. Climate Impact



North Northamptonshire Council has committed to being a carbon neutral organisation by 2030, 5 yrs & 10 mos away.

7.7.1 The infographic shows the relative costs and benefits of the decision on 11 different categories with respect to the climate as a result of this policy adoption: Buildings, no effect. Business, no effect. Energy, no effect. Influence, no effect. Internal Resources, no effect. Land use, no effect. Procurement, no effect. Transport, no effect. Waste, no effect. Adaptation, no effect. Water Use, no effect

7.8. Community Impact

7.8.1. No community impact

7.9. Crime and Disorder Impact

7.9.1. There are no crime and disorder impacts from this policy.

8. Background Papers

8.1. Equality Screening Assessment