

EXECUTIVE

14th March 2024

Report Title	North Northamptonshire Council Complaints Remedy Policy
Lead Member	Cllr Lloyd Bunday, Executive Member for Finance and Transformation
Report Author	Simon Mills – Assistant Director, Customer Experience

Key Decision	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for call-in by Scrutiny?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
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
Which Corporate Plan priority does the report most closely align with?	Modern public services

List of Appendices

Appendix A – Draft North Northamptonshire Complaints Remedy Policy

Appendix B – Climate Change Impact Assessment tool

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to seek approval for adoption of North Northamptonshire Council Complaints Remedy policy, which will support services responding to complaints under the North Northamptonshire Comments, Compliments and Complaints Policy.
- 1.2. This policy will inform decision making to support best practice in line with Ombudsman Service guidance.

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 ensure consistent decision making informed by Ombudsman guidance for councils

when addressing injustice arising from maladministration or loss of service and fault has been established.

3. Recommendations

3.1. It is recommended that the Executive approve the Complaints Remedy Policy.

3.2. Reason for Recommendations –

- Ensure a policy reflecting best practice to advise and inform decision making
- To support knowledge and understanding on remedy consideration
- Promote consistent decision making

3.3. Alternative Options Considered –

- Not having a policy reduces efficiency and risks robust consideration being applied to 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 the Council, making their own recommendations and publicly highlighting the failure.

4.3. Without policy to guide offering of remedy for injustice arising from maladministration or loss of service decision making in this area lacks prescription and clarity increasing potential for risk of contradictory decision making.

4.4. This proposal is to introduce a new policy to inform 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 forms a remedy could take in different circumstances.
- 5.3. Ombudsman Services promote adoption of a policy to inform decision making as good practice; lack of policy has potential to be highlighted.
- 5.4. Current arrangement is inefficient resulting in potential for delay and inconsistency in decision making and could result in continued customer dissatisfaction with complaint outcomes.

6. Next Steps

- 6.1. If approved this policy will be published internally to inform decision making.

7. Implications

7.1. Resources, 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.
- 7.1.3. This report and policy have been reviewed and approved for submission by legal services.

7.2. Legal and Governance

- 7.2.1. This report and policy have been reviewed and approved for submission by Legal Services. There are no legal implications arising from the proposals.

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.
- 7.3.2. The proposed policy also supports decision making on responses to complaints raised under the council's [Comments, Compliments and Complaints Policy](#).

7.4. Risk

7.4.1. There is an expectation that Councils should have a policy to inform decision making on this matter. Continuing to operate without a policy framework increases delay in decision making and increases risk of inconsistency which are a risk to reputation. Delay in decision making could have a financial impact resulting from award of remedy by Ombudsman Services.

7.5. Consultation

7.5.1. Internal consultation has been undertaken with interested parties – stakeholder services have been engaged and feedback incorporated into the draft policy to ensure clarity.

7.6. Consideration by Executive Advisory Panel

7.6.1. This policy and covering report were presented to the Connected Customer Executive Advisory Panel on Wednesday 28th March. Feedback was positive, in particular, on how the policy has been drafted to be easily understood.

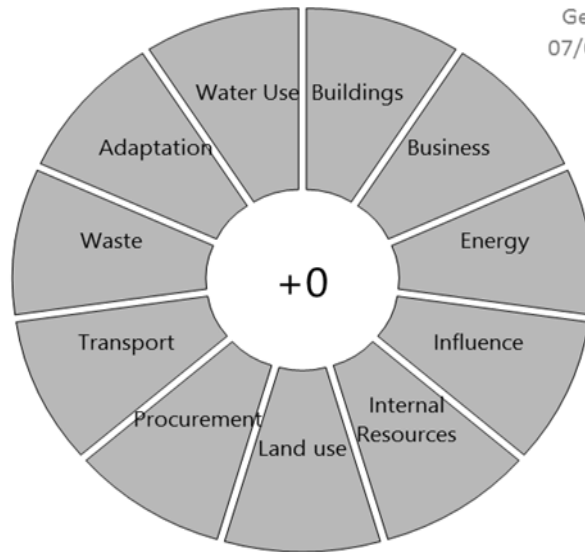
7.7. Equality Implications

7.7.1. An Equality Screening Assessment has been completed in relation to this report and signed off by the Equalities Team on 23rd February 2024.

7.8. Climate Impact

7.8.1. The infographic shows the relative costs and benefits of the decision on 11 different categories with respect to the climate: 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

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

7.9. Community Impact

7.9.1. There is no identified community impact.

7.10. Crime and Disorder Impact

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

8. Background Papers

8.1. Equality Screening Assessment