

**HAMBLETON DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**Report To:** Audit, Governance and Standards Committee  
29 January 2014

**From:** Director of Corporate Services

**Subject:** **CORPORATE CUSTOMER FEEDBACK POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

All Wards

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**1.0 PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND:**

1.1 The Committee is responsible for oversight of the Council's Customer Feedback and Complaints Procedure. This report asks the Committee to approve a time restriction on considering complaints against the Council and restricting complaints to those who either reside in the District or have been directly affected by a Council service or the failure to provide a service.

**2.0 THE CORPORATE CUSTOMER FEEDBACK AND COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE:**

2.1 A copy of the current Policy and Procedure is attached as an Annex to this report. The Procedure includes those categories of matter which are excluded from its scope.

2.2 The Policy and Procedure does not include any restriction on the length of time within which a complaint can be made. The Ombudsman will only consider complaints that are made within one year. It is therefore recommended that a similar exclusion be included in the Council's Customer Feedback Procedure.

2.3 Almost all complaints are made by people resident in the District or visitors who have been affected by a service (e.g., car parking). However, there are some people outside the District who have raised issues with the Council when they are not directly affected and this can involve significant resources on the Council's part.

**3.0 RECOMMENDATION:**

3.1 It is recommended that the Council's Customer Feedback Procedure:-

- (1) includes a provision that excludes complaints which are not brought within one year of the subject matter of the complaint arising;
- (2) includes a provision which restricts complaints to those who are residents of the district or have been directly affected by a Council service or the failure to provide a service.

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**Background papers:** None

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# Hambleton District Council



## Customer Feedback Procedure

**Hambleton District Council is committed to providing high quality services to all its communities, but in any organisation things can go wrong. When people contact us to say we have not provided a satisfactory service, we treat this as a complaint and take it seriously.**

Compliments, comments and complaints are all useful forms of customer feedback. We want to provide a consistent procedure for handling all types of feedback, both positive and negative, that will feed change and improve our service delivery.

### Why we have a customer feedback procedure

A clear and well publicised feedback procedure helps us provide good quality services to our customers. We accept that things can go wrong with our services but we can put things right and learn from issues that are brought to our attention. Dealing with feedback from customers fairly and consistently helps us to do that and gives customers an opportunity to have their issue reviewed. We can monitor feedback regularly, produce management information and ensure we meet our service standards.

### How we deal with compliments, comments and concerns

Everyone likes to receive compliments and council officers are no exception. More importantly, compliments can help us identify what our customers value and highlight good practice. If you believe you have received good service, we will be pleased to hear from you.

Comments and concerns may be more neutral than compliments or complaints, but can still provide valuable feedback and inform service planning and operational decision making.

### How we deal with complaints

We always try to get things right but there will be occasions when customers will have cause for complaint. Such complaints can highlight areas where services could be improved.

We define a complaint as an expression of dissatisfaction about the standard of service, actions or lack of action taken by the council, or a person or body acting on behalf of the council, affecting an individual or group of customers. The council has procedures in place to ensure that complaints are thoroughly investigated and where possible, resolved.

We look on complaints as a tool to help us feed our corporate goals of continued service improvement and customer service excellence. The information contained in a complaint is free feedback on our services and a useful form of market research.

Hambleton District Council has a three stage feedback procedure for managing complaints.

## Stage 1

It is helpful for feedback to be made at the time or as soon as possible after the issue arises. Your complaint will be investigated and dealt with as soon as possible. You should tell us what in your opinion we did wrong or did not do, how you were affected by this and what you think we should do about it.

We aim to provide a full response within 10 working days of receipt. If a full response cannot be provided within 10 working days, we will advise when it will be made.

We will provide a Customer Feedback leaflet which explains how the procedure works.

## Stage 2

If not resolved at stage 1, the complaint will escalate to stage 2. Your complaint will be passed to the Service Manager or Director to act as Investigating Officer who will normally be from the service relating to the complaint. Any relevant information which has not previously been submitted for consideration should be provided.

The Investigating Officer will investigate and respond with a suggested resolution within 10 working days, or will advise when a full response can be expected.

## Stage 3

If dissatisfied with the stage 2 response of the Investigating Officer, a review by the Standards Hearings Panel is the last internal stage of the procedure. It will review how the complaint investigation was carried out.

If you wish to take the matter further, you have the right to contact the Local Government Ombudsman. Details of contact and what will happen are available in a leaflet entitled 'Complained to the Council - Still not satisfied?' which can be obtained from council offices or on [www.lgo.org.uk](http://www.lgo.org.uk)



## What is excluded from the feedback procedure?

■ Initial or secondary requests for a service or service provision - a missed bin collection where within 48 hours the situation is resolved
■ Any matter where a right of appeal exists such as granting or refusal of planning permission - unless the issue relates specifically to the way the matter has been administered
■ Issues which could reasonably be the subject of court or tribunal proceedings or which need to be referred to our insurers - such as compensation or personal injury
■ Dissatisfaction of a member of staff about HR matters - including appointments, dismissals, pay, pensions and discipline
■ Feedback which is essentially a criticism of or disagreement with approved Council policy or decisions properly taken
■ Issues involving a Member of Parliament that have been initiated from an MP's office
■ If an issue has intended or current court proceedings, it should be suspended until the legal proceedings are completed
■ A complaint against individual Members of the Council
■ A request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 or Environmental Information Regulations 2004
■ An appeal under the Data Protection Act 1998

**Please contact the Customer Services Manager on 0845 1211 555 for further information**