

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No.

meeting date: TUESDAY, 25 SEPTEMBER 2012
 title: REVIEW OF COUNCIL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE
 submitted by: CHIEF EXECUTIVE
 principal author: BILL ALKER

1 PURPOSE

1.1 To put arrangements in place to carry out a review of the Council's complaints procedure.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:

- Community Objectives – }
- Corporate Priorities – } The Council aims to be a well-managed Council, the
Complaints Procedure supports that objective.
- Other Considerations – }

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 The Council's complaints procedure was last reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 30 November 2012. A copy of the report to Committee is attached as Appendix 1. Attached as Appendix 2 is a copy of the Council's complaints form and as Appendix 3 a complaints leaflet, both of the latter documents as amended after consideration by Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

2.2 The terms of reference of Policy and Finance Committee includes a power to exercise all powers, duties and functions of the Council except those which are delegated to any other Committee. The Complaints Procedure does not appear to be included specifically in the Terms of Reference of any Committee.

2.3 The Council receives numerous enquiries about the services it provides, these are usually resolved by the relevant member of staff or service manager, however, on average about 12 complaints are dealt with through the Council's complaints procedure each year.

3 ISSUES

3.1 The Council's complaints procedure relates to service issues, ie is separate from the Code of Conduct based procedure. The procedure is set out in the leaflet attached as Appendix 3. The current procedure would benefit from a review to ensure it is still fit for purpose and to address concerns which have been identified by staff, including investigating officers and staff who have been the subject of a complaint, and by Members who have been involved with the second stage of the procedure.

3.2 As both Members and officers have direct experience of the procedure, it is proposed that a working group, comprising of three Members with support from the Council's Complaints Officer and the Head of Legal and Democratic Services be convened to

carry out the review. The proposed terms of reference of the working group will be as follows.

- To review the Council's complaints procedure and make recommendations to the Policy and Finance Committee.
- The review to encompass the procedure for lodging a complaint
- Vetting and rejecting complaints
- Investigation of complaints
- The hearing
- Notification.

In addition, the working group could be asked to clarify the powers that are available to the investigating officer and to the panel.

All the above to be formulated after considering best practice in other authorities and the advice of the Ombudsman.

4 RISK ASSESSMENT

4.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications:

- Resources – N/A.
- Technical, Environmental and Legal – N/A.
- Political – N/A.
- Reputation – An improved Complaints Procedure should contribute to enhancing the Council's reputation.
- Equality & Diversity – N/A.

5 **RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE**

5.1 Approve the proposal to review the current complaints procedure.

5.2 Nominate Members to form part of the working group.

5.3 Agree the terms of reference.

BILL ALKER
COMPLAINTS OFFICER

MARSHAL SCOTT
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

For further information please ask for Bill Alker, extension 4412.

REF:BA/EL/250912/P&F