

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No.

meeting date: TUESDAY, 29 JANUARY 2013
title: COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE REVIEW WORKING GROUP
submitted by: MARSHAL SCOTT – CHIEF EXECUTIVE
principal author: BILL ALKER – COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

1 PURPOSE

1.1 To report on the first meeting of the Complaints Procedure Review Working Group which was formed in September 2012.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:

- Community Objectives – To treat everyone equally and ensure that access to services is available to all including our most vulnerable citizens. To engage with all our communities to ensure we deliver services to meet customer needs and expectations.
- Corporate Priorities – To be a well-managed Council providing efficient services based on identified customer needs.
- Other Considerations – None.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 I took a report to Policy and Finance Committee on the 25 September 2012 asking Members to review how the Council's Complaints Procedure was operating.

2.2 Members and Officers had separately expressed some misgivings about certain aspects of the procedure and it was felt that a review was appropriate.

2.3 Previously Overview and Scrutiny Committee had been responsible for monitoring complaints on an annual basis but with the demise of that Committee the responsibility now rests with Policy and Finance Committee.

2.4 A Working Group consisting of Councillors Hirst, Hore and Knox was set up to investigate how to improve the Council's procedure.

2.5 The Working Group's remit covered the following areas:

- Review of the procedure – reporting back to Policy and Finance Committee.
- Look at how a complaint should be lodged.
- Who should vet and reject complaints if required.
- How investigations were carried out.
- Whether the complaints panel should continue in its present form.
- When and how notification should be carried out.

2.6 The Working Group had held its first meeting on 6 November 2012 and discussed all the above issues.

3 ISSUES

- 3.1 The notes of the first meeting of the Working Group are enclosed at Appendix A to this report.
- 3.2 The Working Group looked at 7 specific questions and gave their views on each one.
- 3.3 Probably the main question for the Working Group was whether they wished to continue Councillor involvement at stage 2 of the process.
- 3.4 As a result of their decision to continue with Councillor involvement, all Councillors have now been written to asking whether they wished to be part of the pool of Councillors which can be called on for complaint panels. To date we have had a number of positive responses, although feedback has been relatively light.
- 3.5 The other area which the Working Group were keen to implement was that relating to whether to inform complainants about who was on the panel.
- 3.6 This was in the light of recent experience in relation to panel members being lobbied by a particular complainant.

4 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 4.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications:
 - Resources – None.
 - Technical, Environmental and Legal – None.
 - Political – None.
 - Reputation – By reviewing and revising the Complaints Procedure this will enhance the reputation of the Council as well run authority.
 - Equality and Diversity – It is important we have a complaints policy that is accessible to all customers.

5 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The Complaints Procedure Review Working Group has had a useful first meeting and has laid out a number of areas which it will continue to investigate.
- 5.2 The Working Group will meet again next month and will finalise their recommendation with a view to a final report being submitted to Committee in March 2013.

6. **RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE**

- 6.1 Note the report.

BILL ALKER
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

MARSHAL SCOTT
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

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