

**ANGUS COUNCIL**

**SCRUTINY & AUDIT COMMITTEE – 22 JUNE 2017**

**COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCEDURE**

**REPORT BY MARGO WILLIAMSON, CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

**ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this report is to highlight the changes to the Council's Complaint Handling procedure which now incorporates Social Work Complaints.

**1. RECOMMENDATION**

1.1 It is recommended that the Scrutiny & Audit Committee:-

- (i) agree the amended complaints handling procedure as detailed in Appendix 1.

**2. ALIGNMENT TO THE ANGUS COMMUNITY PLAN/SINGLE OUTCOME AGREEMENT/COPORATE PLAN**

2.1 This report contributes to the following local outcome(s) contained within the Angus Community Plan and Single Outcome Agreement 2013-2016:

- Angus is a place where a first class quality of life can be enjoyed by all.

**3. BACKGROUND**

3.1 Since 1 April 2013, the council has been operating the new Complaints Handling Procedure for Local Authorities as required by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman.

3.2 The Scottish Government has completed a review of the social work complaints system. As a result the complaints system changed on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017.

3.3 The context of this change is an emphasis on partnership working and a more standardised, simplified and aligned complaints process. As a result of this review Angus Council now operates a two stage model complaints handling procedure (CHP) which includes the new social work CHP for all complaints.

3.4 The benefits of integrating the complaints processes are in achieving a single customer complaints process which is aligned to the current council and NHS model CHPs.

3.5 At stage one all complaints will be dealt with as close to the point of service delivery as possible in order to achieve early resolution with a focus on a single response across services from a joined up, person centred approach.

3.6 The procedure for social work complaints follows the same model as all other complaints but with an extension of frontline resolution cases to ten working days in exceptional circumstances only. However it is not expected that such extensions become standard practice they are for exceptional circumstances only.

3.7 The timescale for responding to a complaint at stage one shall be 5 working days.

3.8 More complex complaints or those not resolved at stage one will be investigated at stage two of the new procedure. The timescale for a final response will be 20 working days.

- 3.9 If a service user remains unhappy with the response to their complaint after stage two they can take the complaint to the Scottish Public Service Ombudsman (SPSO), this is a significant change for social work complaints as previously there was a third stage of an independent complaints review committee (CRC).
- 3.10 Another variance to note is the SPSO's extended jurisdiction in relation to social work complaints; this will allow the SPSO to consider professional judgement of social workers when complainants pass their complaint to the SPSO/.

#### **4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

#### **5. CONSULTATION**

- 5.1 The Strategic Directors of People and Place, the Head of Legal and Democratic Services and the Head of Corporate Improvement and Finance have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

**MARGO WILLIAMSON  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

**NOTE:** No background papers, as detailed by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to a material extent in preparing the above report.

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**List of Appendices:-**

**Appendix 1 – Complaints Handling Procedure**