

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2008/2009 REPORT NO. **143**

MEETING TITLE AND DATE:
Cabinet –
26th November 2008

REPORT OF:
Assistant Director of Revenues
& Benefits

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Agenda – Part: 1	Item: 8
Subject: Annual Complaints Report 2007/08	
Wards: All	
Cabinet Members consulted: Cllr Rye & Cllr Zinkin	

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report outlines performance and organisational learning in respect of complaints handling for 2007/08. The report covers the operation of Enfield's Complaints Scheme and of complaints about Enfield Council services that have been made to the Local Government Ombudsman.

Response to Ombudsman enquiries have for the third year running been within Ombudsman's target time and the percentage of Council Complaint Scheme responses within target time improved from 78% in 2006/07 to 85% in 2007/08.

In 2007/08 Enfield had no cases decided by the Local Government Ombudsman as maladministration.

Organisational Learning from complaints continues to develop.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet is recommended to note the content of this report in terms of performance and organisational learning derived from complaints handling.

3. BACKGROUND

Enfield's Complaint Scheme

Complaints falling within Enfield's complaints scheme received in 2007/08 are set out in Appendix A.

Key results are: -

- I. an increase in complaints received principally because of improved complaint identification in the Housing Repairs Service
- II. 85% of Stage 1 Complaints answered within timescale representing a significant improvement compared to 2006/07 (78%)
- III. around 88% of complaints are settled at Stage 1
- IV. 61% of Stage 1 complaints are fully or partially upheld
- V. approximately 150 staff have received the "Effective Complaints Handling" course run by the Local Government Ombudsman
- VI. Organisational Learning has been reviewed at CMB quarterly (monthly from January 2008)

Complaints to Local Government Ombudsman

The annual letter from the Local Government Ombudsman and statistics are set out in Appendix C. Key results are: -

- I. similar level of complaints received (113 in 2007/08, 109 in 2006/07)
- II. no cases determined as maladministration
- III. the Ombudsman made 76 decisions about Enfield (disregarding Premature complaints) which is well beneath the median level of London Boroughs – see Appendix E
- IV. "at fault" decisions at 19 were well beneath the median level of London Boroughs – see Appendix F
- V. the percentage of total Ombudsman decisions decided as "at fault" at 25% for Enfield is beneath the London Borough median level of 28%
- VI. the number of "at fault" decisions in 2007/08 is approximately 1 for every 15,000 residents in the Borough

A selection of Organisation Learning is shown in Appendix B. Organisational Learning is reviewed at CMB monthly from January 2008 (quarterly hitherto).

Enfield's complaints handling performance is gaining greater recognition with contact from three other London Boroughs seeking advice upon good practice complaints handling issues from Enfield.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

None.

5. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

To ensure the appropriate focus on complaints handling performance and learning from complaints is maintained.

6. COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND CORPORATE RESOURCES AND OTHER DEPARTMENTS

6.1 Financial Implications

There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

6.2 Risk Management Implications

None.

6.3 Legal Implications

The Local Government Ombudsman has statutory powers under the Local Government Act 1974. The effective resolution and monitoring of complaints (both internal and involving the Ombudsman) is likely to assist in maintaining and improving the Council's performance. It may also lead to the early identification of possible legal issues, which should then of course be brought to the attention of the Borough Solicitor.

6.4 Property Implications

There are no property implications arising directly from this report.

7. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

Complaints handling feeds into the CPA assessment both in terms of performance in responding and in organisational learning derived from complaints with a practical difference being implemented.

8. COMMUNITY IMPLICATIONS

An effective complaints process may have a positive impact in providing widespread access to complaints and assurance that issues are fairly and thoroughly investigated.

9. PUTTING ENFIELD FIRST

Supports aim 5a – “deliver a customer-focused approach that helps all people access council services”.

Background Papers

Local Government Ombudsman Annual letter 2008.