

1. We are seeking feedback to our proposal to update our policy. We would welcome any comments you may have by 1 February 2013. Your views will be considered before the policy is introduced and ready to be implemented from April 2013.
2. This paper outlines our proposal to make changes to, and improve, Southwark's corporate complaints policy. We currently have two policies that have not been updated for some time, the corporate complaints policy (August 2007) and the complaint resolution policy (December 2009). We will be bringing these together as one policy.
3. We aim to ensure there is a consistent approach to complaints across the council and that all complaints are treated seriously and sympathetically and are resolved at the earliest possible stage.
4. We are increasingly focused on resolving complaints early and the current complaint policies do not adequately reflect this emphasis. Our aims are to:
 - a) bring the two policies together
 - b) ensure that complaints are dealt with more quickly and
 - c) ensure that the right outcome for the customer is delivered earlier than it is now.
5. The key changes being proposed are:

- a) the removal of a stage in the complaints process

Stage 1 – response by business unit within 15 working days

Complaint Phase – response by business unit within 15 working days

Stage 2 – response by customer resolutions team within 20 working days

Review Phase – response by customer resolutions team within 25 working days

Stage 3 – response by customer resolutions team on behalf of chief executive within 25 working days

- b) a renewed emphasis on certain aspects of our approach to responding to complaints:

communication – the investigator of the original complaint or review will telephone the customer, updating on investigation progress and agreeing an action plan.

learning – where a complaint highlights a need for change, the customer resolutions team work with service manager(s) to achieve this.

- c) a minor amendment to our complaint definition from

any expression of dissatisfaction about any of our services, whether justified or not, requiring a response to

any expression of dissatisfaction about any of our services requiring a response

6. It is our aim that complaints will be dealt with more **quickly** (reviews by the customer resolutions team will take 25 working days instead of the current 45 working days) and that, through this and a renewed emphasis on communication, the right **outcome** for our customers will be delivered earlier than it is now.
7. Please note that from April 2013, the Housing Ombudsman will be taking over from the Local Government Ombudsman in handling complaints about local authorities in their role as landlords. This change is not part of our consultation and has already been introduced as law as part of the Localism Act (2011).
8. Please give us your feedback and comments by answering the questions below:

a) What do you think of the proposal to change from a 3-stage to a 2-phase process?

b) Do you think that the proposed policy will help us to get things right earlier?

c) Do you have any suggestions for how the complaints policy could be improved?

d) Is our complaint definition satisfactory?

9. We are seeking feedback from customers on the proposed changes. The closing date is 5pm on 1 February 2013.

Responses can be made online (see 'Customer resolutions' on the 'Say It Now' page on the Southwark website), by returning this completed form (and additional sheets if needed) to Daniel Toms, Customer Resolutions Team, Southwark Council, PO Box 64529, London SE1P 5LX or by email to daniel.toms@southwark.gov.uk.