

1. This consultation paper outlines our proposal to make changes to 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 are increasingly focused on resolving complaints early and the current complaint policies do not adequately reflect this emphasis. The new draft policy is not a wholesale change from previous policies and much of the previous guidance remains unchanged.
2. The key changes being proposed are:

Current System	Proposal
<p>Definition of a complaint: <i>any expression of dissatisfaction about any of our services, whether justified or not, requiring a response.</i></p>	<p>Definition of a complaint: <i>Often, someone who wishes to complain will be specific about their intention to make a complaint. If not, the person’s expectations should be established. Although we do not require the word ‘complaint’ to be used by the person voicing discontent, this term ‘complaint’ implies a grievance that needs to be resolved, not just a request for service, an observation for the service to note, or a question to be answered.</i></p>
<p>Stage 1 – investigated & answered by business unit within 15 working days</p> <p>Stage 2 – investigated & answered by Customer Resolutions Team within 20 working days</p> <p>Stage 3 – investigated & answered by Customer Resolutions Team on behalf of Chief Executive within 25 working days</p>	<p>Complaint Phase – answered by business unit within 15 working days</p> <p>Review Phase – investigated & answered by Customer Resolutions Team on behalf of Chief Executive within 25 working days</p>
	<p>A re-emphasis on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication – we will telephone the customer, updating on investigation progress and agreeing action plan. • Learning – where a complaint highlights a need for change, the Customer Resolutions Team work with service manager(s) to achieve this.

- 3. It is our opinion 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** will be delivered earlier than it is now.
- 4. The new policy would be introduced at a time of wider changes in how complaints against Council are managed. From April 2013, the Housing Ombudsman will be taking over from the Local Government Ombudsman in handling complaints against local authorities in their role as landlords. This change is not part of our consultation – it has already been introduced as law as part of the Localism Act (2011).
- 5. We are seeking feedback from customers on the proposed changes. We would be grateful if you would answer the following questions. The closing date is 5pm on 19 December 2012.

a) What is your opinion of the proposal to change from a 3-stage to 2-phase process?

b) Is our complaint definition satisfactory?

c) Do you think that the proposed policy will lead to us getting things right earlier?

d) Do you have any amendments or alternative suggestions to this proposal?

Responses can be made online (Consultation page on 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.