

SWINDON BOROUGH COUNCIL
CORPORATE CUSTOMER FEEDBACK POLICY
Version 2.3
Customer Feedback Policy 2007 APPROVED

Table of Contents

1	Introduction	4
2	Our Aims	4
3	Complaints	4
3.1	Definition of a complaint	4
3.2	Classification of complaints	5
3.2.1	Justified Complaint	5
3.2.2	Not Justified Complaint	5
3.3	Exclusions (out of scope)	5
3.4	Anonymous Complaints	6
3.5	Complaint Response Letters	6
3.5.1	Acknowledgement Letter	6
3.5.2	Full Response Letter for Justified Complaints	6
3.5.3	Interim Response Letter	6
3.5.4	Not Justified Complaint Response Letter	6
3.6	Complaints received by Councillors and MPs	7
3.7	Complaints – four stage handling process	7
3.7.1	Stage 1 – Solution Owner	7
3.7.2	Stage 2 – Referral to the Business Unit Director	7
3.7.3	Stage 3 – Referral to Chief Executive	7
3.7.4	Local Government Ombudsman (LGO)	7
3.8	Persistent and Vexatious Complaints	8
3.8.1	What is a Persistent or Vexatious Complaint?	8
3.8.2	Persistent and Vexatious Complaints Procedure	8
3.8.3	Withdrawing Vexatious Complaints Status	9
4	Comments and Compliments	9
4.1	Definition of a Comment	9
4.1.1	Comment Response Letter	9
4.2	Definition of a Compliment	10
5	Customer Feedback	10
5.1	Recording customer feedback	10
5.2	Monitoring customer feedback	10
6	Roles and Responsibilities	11
6.1	Customer Comments Officer (CCO)	11
6.2	Solution Owner	11
6.3	Business Unit Director	11
7	Appendix 1 - The Procedure to be followed in Adult Social Care	12
7.1	Stage 1	12

7.2	Stage 2.....	12
7.2.1	Children’s Act Complaints	12
7.3	Stage 3.....	12
8	Appendix 2 - The procedure to be followed in Children’s Service	14
8.1	Stage 1 – Local Resolution	14
8.2	Stage 2 – Investigation.....	15
8.3	Stage 3 – Review Panel.....	15

1 Introduction

The Corporate Customer Feedback Policy provides guidelines for responding to complaints, comments and compliments. It provides a fair, consistent and structured system for the handling of customer feedback including complaint handling guidelines set down by the Local Government Ombudsman.

This document contains policy requirements and advice and is designed to cover most situations where a customer provides feedback regarding the service provided. There are statutory requirements that need to be taken into consideration for both Social Services and Education and these are detailed in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2.

2 Our Aims

All our customers:

- Have ease of access to use our customer feedback policy to express their views and have appropriate help with differential needs such as interpreters/signers.
- Are confident that their concerns are taken seriously.
- Are kept informed of progress.
- Receive replies within the agreed target timescales.
- Receive written responses in plain English or language of choice.
- Are treated fairly and without discrimination.
- Are made aware that confidentiality is maintained in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

The Council is committed to providing a high quality service to all our customers so complaints are welcomed as an opportunity to identify areas to drive continuous service improvement to improve customer satisfaction.

Our customer feedback policy:

- Is easy to understand and widely publicised.
- Provides clear guidelines and targets for the handling of customer feedback, i.e. complaints, comments and compliments.
- Ensures all areas across the Council consistently use the Lagan tool for the recording, monitoring of customer feedback together with providing an audit trail.

All our staff:

- Are aware of this policy and guidance document, which clearly defines roles and responsibilities.
- Will assist wherever possible to ensure the customer receives a full response within agreed timescales that is both accurate and unbiased.
- Are empowered to resolve the query on the spot, as quickly and as positively as possible with the necessary support structure in place should the matter require further investigation.

3 Complaints

3.1 Definition of a complaint

An **expression of dissatisfaction** with regards to:

- The standard of service, action or lack of action or decision taken by the Council.
- The way in which the Council's staff or representatives carry out their duties.

3.2 Classification of complaints

The Council classifies complaints into two categories, which are justified and not justified. The determination of a complaint as justified and not justified is for internal monitoring purposes only. This must not be advised to the customer.

3.2.1 Justified Complaint

A justified complaint is where the Council upholds the customer's complaint. Examples of a justified complaint:

- When a customer expresses dissatisfaction at the Council's failure to meet our standards of service such as delivering to agreed time scales and quality of service.
- The Council has failed to respond to the customer's original problem/service request.
- A member of staff has not carried out their duties to an acceptable standard or with the appropriate courtesy.
- The Council has not treated the customer fairly without discrimination.

3.2.2 Not Justified Complaint

A complaint is not justified where the issue relates to Council policy as detailed below:

- The Council has met the agreed standard but the customer believes that the agreed standards are unacceptable e.g. the Council policy states the grass shall be cut once a month, the customer would like the grass cut twice a month.
- The Council responded within the time scales quoted but the customer felt we should have done it sooner.
- The Council offices open at 09.00 whereas the customer thinks it should be 08.45.

3.3 Exclusions (out of scope)

There are some exclusions which apply, some of which relate to statutory and legal limitations:

- Requests for service are not classified as complaints e.g. "I want to report that a street light is not working".
- Appeals will be dealt with as part of the standard appeals process e.g. Policy planning decisions, Housing and Council Tax Benefit etc.
- Policy decision i.e. car park charges, alternate weekly collections.
- Social Services provision provided by the Community Care Act and Children's Act – explained in more detail in appendix 1.
- School admissions or exclusion appeals – explained in more detail in appendix 2.
- Issues which are, or could be, the subject of court or tribunal proceedings, or which are likely to be put in the hands of the Council's insurers.
- Complaints concerning a disagreement about, or refusal to accept, a lawful discretion that the Council is applying.
- Complaints from employees, former employees and prospective employees (e.g. whistle blowing and personnel issues) that are subject to other procedures or policies.
- Complaints and comments regarding Members.

Where an exclusion applies the Council shall provide an explanation in writing to the customer and advise them of any statutory procedures with regard to their complaint.

3.4 Anonymous Complaints

In the case of anonymous complaints the relevant Customer Comments Officer (CCO) or officer will need to decide whether an investigation is required. This will depend on the nature of the complaint and the information provided.

3.5 Complaint Response Letters

3.5.1 Acknowledgement Letter

Target: 90% of complaints will be acknowledged within 2 days.

The acknowledgement letter to contain:

- The date the complaint was received.
- The reason for the complaint.
- To whom the complaint has been referred.
- The date a full response will be received.

3.5.2 Full Response Letter for Justified Complaints

Target: 80% of complaints to receive a full response within 10 working days.

The full response letter to contain:

- An apology.
- An explanation about what went wrong.
- A remedy that aims to put right what has gone wrong (remedy/corrective action).
- Advise the process for referring the complaint to Stage 2 if the customer disagrees with the outcome contained within the full response letter.
- That the customer may be contacted as part of a customer satisfaction survey.

3.5.3 Interim Response Letter

Target: No more than 20% of complaints should receive an interim response.

100% of interim response letters must be received within 10 working days.

All complaints that cannot be resolved within 10 working days must receive an interim response within 10 working days of receipt of the complaint. However an interim response must only be sent as a last resort, when it is clear that the complaint cannot be resolved within the 10 working days.

The interim response letter to contain:

- The date the complaint was received.
- The reason for the complaint.
- An indication of why there is a delay in providing a full response.
- To whom the complaint has been referred.
- The date the customer will receive a full response.

3.5.4 Not Justified Complaint Response Letter

Where a complaint is not justified it is important that staff recognise where the customer has a genuine sense of grievance, therefore a letter should be sent to the customer. A remedy may not be appropriate but the response should be sympathetic, and include a full explanation taking care not to increase the feeling of grievance. The letter should contain:

- Advise the process for referring the complaint to Stage 2 if the customer disagrees with the outcome.
- That the customer may be contacted as part of a customer satisfaction survey.

N.B. the determination of a complaint as justified or not justified is for our internal monitoring purposes only, and is must not be included in the response to the customer.

3.6 Complaints received by Councillors and MPs

Letters from Councillors and MPs who have been asked to investigate concerns on behalf of their constituents are also included within the scope of the Corporate Customer Feedback Policy in order that a complete picture of service performance is maintained. These letters should follow the process detailed in this Policy. The response should be sent to the Councillor or MP unless otherwise requested.

3.7 Complaints – four stage handling process

3.7.1 Stage 1 – Solution Owner

All complaints received will be logged onto Lagan by the designated person within each Business Unit (usually the CCO). A solution owner will be designated and an acknowledgment letter sent within 2 days. The solution owner will investigate and aim to send a full response within 10 days. Where appropriate, an interim response will be sent within 10 days.

3.7.2 Stage 2 – Referral to the Business Unit Director

If the customer is unhappy with the initial response and resolution to their complaint, they can either write to the solution owner or the relevant business unit Director. Any further actions must be added to Lagan, to ensure a complete audit trail, which is essential should the complaint go to Stage 3.

3.7.3 Stage 3 – Referral to Chief Executive

If the customer is still unhappy following a second stage investigation, they have the right of appeal to the Chief Executive.

A member of the Chief Executive's Business Unit will conduct the stage 3 investigation on behalf of the Chief Executive. They will liase directly with relevant officers and will be responsible for co-ordinating the response back to the customer. The response should clearly indicate that the complainant has the right of appeal to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) if they are not satisfied with the final response.

3.7.4 Local Government Ombudsman (LGO)

The Ombudsman is an independent body that investigates complaints against local Councils concerning 'maladministration'. This is defined as:

- Doing something the wrong way.
- Failing to do something they should.
- Doing something they should not.

The Ombudsman does not, in general, investigate decisions that individuals do not like, or consider complaints until they have had a chance to be resolved through the Council's Corporate Customer Feedback Policy. However, the customer can refer their complaint to the Ombudsman at any stage. It is at the discretion of the Ombudsman whether they deal with the

complaint or refer it back to the Council. Ombudsman complaints are co-ordinated by the CCO for the Directorate of Law and Democratic Services.

There are three Local Government Ombudsmen in England. Each of them deals with complaints from different parts of the country, but all new complaints will go to the LGO Advice Team, To make a complaint by phone Monday – Friday between the hours of 08.30am to 17.00pm, Tel: 0300 061 0614 or 0845 602 1983 or Text “call back” 0762 480 4299

or write to:

The Local Government Ombudsman

PO Box 4771

Coventry

CV4 0EH

Fax: 024 7682 0001 or email advice@lgo.org.uk.

3.8 Persistent and Vexatious Complaints

There will be occasions where a customer will persist in their cause. Whenever a complaint is received which has been investigated previously and replied to, the matter needs to be referred to the Director of the business unit.

3.8.1 What is a Persistent or Vexatious Complaint?

Complainants may be deemed vexatious where previous or current contact with them shows they meet one or more of the following criteria:

- Persist in pursuing a complaint where it has been fully investigated and full action has already been taken within the Council’s procedures but the complainant will not acknowledge this.
- Display unreasonable demands or expectations and fail to recognise that these are unreasonable. For example, insisting on responses to be made sooner than the Council’s 10 working day response target.
- Complainants have threatened or used physical violence to a member of staff or member of the public in relation to the complaint.
- Have harassed or been personally abusive or verbally aggressive on more than one occasion towards staff dealing with their complaint or query.
- Change the main issue of the complaint or continually raise new issues to prolong contact whilst the original complaint is still being addressed. Please note care must be taken not to discard new issues, which may be significantly different from the original complaint.
- Are unwilling to accept documented evidence to support an adequate response.
- Have caused persistent offence to a member of staff or a member of the council or a member of the public by referring to their gender, race, disability, age, religious belief or sexuality.
- Attempt to override or circumvent the Corporate Customer Feedback Policy by involving the Leader of the Council, the Chief Executive, MPs, external auditors, Ombudsman, etc., at an early stage of every complaint.

3.8.2 Persistent and Vexatious Complaints Procedure

Please note that this procedure should only be used as an absolute last resort and after all reasonable measures have been taken to try to resolve complaints using the Corporate

Customer Feedback Procedure. Discretion must be used in applying the criteria, which identify potential persistent and vexatious complaints, and in deciding the appropriate action to be taken. The procedure should only be implemented following careful consideration by and with the authorisation of the Director of the business unit concerned, along with the relevant Cabinet Member.

Where complainants have been identified as persistent or vexatious in accordance with the above criteria, the Director will determine what action should be taken. This notification will be circulated to staff involved in the complaint. At this stage it should be considered whether the Council wishes to suspend all contact with the complainant whilst seeking advice from the Director of Law and Democratic Services.

Should it involve the complainant only being allowed to contact the Council through written correspondence, all front line service areas and security staff affected will be notified. A record must be kept of the reasons why a complainant has been deemed persistent or vexatious under these criteria and noted on Lagan.

The Director may decide to deal with the complaints in one or more of the following ways:

- Try to resolve matters before invoking this procedure, by drawing up a signed agreement with the complainant, which sets out a code of acceptable behaviour on the part of the Council, and the complainant in order for the Council to continue to investigate the complaint.
- Specify how future contact will be maintained between the Council and the complainant.
- Notify the complainant that the Council has fully responded to all issues and that continuing contact on the same matter will serve no purpose as all matters have now been thoroughly investigated. The complainant will also be notified that any further correspondence on the same matter will be acknowledged but not answered, unless any significant new matters are raised in writing.

The complainant will be notified in writing that they have been considered persistent or vexatious under the Council's Corporate Customer Feedback Policy and that this sanction has been invoked as a last resort in order to conclude the matter. The notification should include information on the right of appeal to the Standards Committee.

Any action that is taken should be fully notified to the complainant in writing, stating the period in which this decision will be reviewed.

3.8.3 Withdrawing Vexatious Complaints Status

If the complainant subsequently demonstrates a more reasonable approach, the Director, along with the relevant Cabinet Member should consider withdrawing the status.

4 Comments and Compliments

4.1 Definition of a Comment

A comment is an observation, feedback that is neither critical nor complimentary and includes suggestions for changing or improving our service. All comments received will receive a full response within 10 working days.

4.1.1 Comment Response Letter

Target: 100% of comments to be responded to within 10 working days.

The full response letter to include:

- The date the comment was received.
- Acknowledgement of the content of the comment made.
- Action that will be taken as a result of the comment.
- Note of thanks for the customer's comment.
- That the customer may be contacted as part of a customer satisfaction survey.

4.2 Definition of a Compliment

A compliment is a statement of praise and satisfaction about any Council activity, or about an employee or representative of the Council. Where it is felt appropriate a thank you letter will be sent to the customer.

5 Customer Feedback

5.1 Recording customer feedback

All customer complaints and comments received by letter, e-mail, phone, fax, taken in person or via the Council's web site are recorded on Lagan. Correspondence received from the customer relating to the feedback must be scanned and attached to Lagan.

Every action taken relating to the customer feedback must be recorded within Lagan so that a complete audit trail is maintained regarding each customer. Any correspondence sent to the customer relating to their complaint, comment or compliment must be attached to Lagan.

Please note: complaints do NOT have to be put in writing. The customer can make a complaint over the telephone or via any other channel.

5.2 Monitoring customer feedback

Customer feedback will be monitored at business unit and corporate level.

It is the responsibility of each Director to ensure performance indicators are met within their business unit.

Customer Service will monitor customer feedback centrally and produce a monthly executive summary of the numbers and types of complaints/compliments received, how well the complaints have been resolved within targets and customer satisfaction levels. Monthly reports will be provided to each Director for their respective business unit. Quarterly reports will be provided to Corporate Board and Cabinet.

The CCO should monitor their business unit's complaints, compliments and observations on a regular basis and advise their Director about trends in the nature of the comments, this will identify areas of concern, ensure that any corrective action procedure is put in place thus preventing future complaints of that nature and also identify areas where we are doing well, or customers have suggested change.

Each Director will regularly review the complaints and comments received and consider how they can be used to drive service improvement. Each Director will produce a quarterly and annual report showing the numbers and causes of complaints and comments and the service improvements that have been put in place as a result.

6 Roles and Responsibilities

6.1 Customer Comments Officer (CCO)

Each group directorate has at least one Customer Comments Officer (CCO) whose role is to co-ordinate customer complaints within their business unit. The CCO works closely with their Business Unit's Director, to ensure that management and monitoring procedures are in place. The responsibilities of the CCO are to:

- Have full knowledge of the Council's Corporate Customer Feedback Policy and is their business unit's point of contact for all complaints, comments and compliments.
- Record all customer complaints, comments and compliments onto Lagan.
- Scan or attaching all correspondence received regarding a complaint, comment or compliment onto Lagan.
- Send an acknowledgement letter to the customer advising the name of the solution owner who will provide a full response.
- Identify and refer the customer feedback to the appropriate solution owner.
- Refer the customer feedback to the CCO for the correct business unit (via Lagan) if it has initially been sent to the wrong service area.
- Monitor Lagan to ensure all records are correctly and fully maintained, including the recording of complaints as justified or not justified and the correct closure codes used.
- Monitor all customer feedback for their business unit on a regular basis to ensure performance indicators are met and identify any trends with the nature of the feedback and bring these to the attention of the Director.
- Provide guidance and training to staff about the Council's Corporate Customer Feedback Policy and use of Lagan.
- Ensure, with the Lagan System's Administrator, that Lagan is developed and maintained with the correct coding for their business unit.
- Reply to any request for additional information from another CCO or business unit within 5 days of request.

6.2 Solution Owner

The solution owner is deemed to be the person responsible for responding in full to any feedback request following the guidelines set out in this Policy. The solution owner's responsibilities are to:

- Investigate the complaint fully.
- Send a full response within the target date.
- Send an interim response where it is not possible to send a full response within the target date.
- Record within Lagan all actions and copies of all responses sent to the customer.
- Use the correct codes to close Lagan.
- Record whether the complaint is justified or not justified.

6.3 Business Unit Director

Business unit Directors have full responsibility for ensuring all feedback is responded to appropriately and within target. They will work closely with their teams and the Customer Comments Officer to ensure the feedback handling meets the agreed corporate standard.

7 Appendix 1 - The Procedure to be followed in Adult Social Care

The Council's Customer Corporate Feedback Procedure should be followed except for services where the Community Care Act. In all these cases a complaints procedure applies which follows the guidelines laid down by the Department of Health. The procedure comprises three stages and is overseen by the designated Complaints Manager.

7.1 Stage 1

This is the same as the Corporate Customer Feedback Policy.

Excepting for stage 2 and Stage 3 below, all complaints and compliments whether received by letter, e-mail, fax, phone or taken in person about Social Services will be recorded and monitored within the guidelines of the Corporate Customer Feedback Procedure.

In addition, the department is only required to respond to complaints made within a one-year time frame.

7.2 Stage 2

If the final response to a complaint is not felt to be satisfactory by the complainant, the designated complaints officer in conjunction with the Director of Adult Social Care will arrange for an investigation to take place. An impartial and independent manager (investigating officer), who has no management responsibility for the service that is the subject of the complaint, will carry out the investigation. The investigating officer will prepare a report for the attention of the Director of Adult Social Care, who will compile a letter of response to the complainant. This investigation report should be, where possible, be completed within 25 working days of Stage 2 commencing. This may be extended to 65 working days with the extension being reached through mutual agreement. The Community Care Act provides a maximum target of 3 months, although the complainant should be updated on progress during this period.

7.2.1 Children's Act Complaints

The complaints, made by looked after children, or by adults on their behalf, will be considered under section 26 of the Children Act. An independent person not employed by Swindon Borough Council must accompany the investigating officer, in these cases. The designated complaints officer will arrange for the appointment of both officers, in conjunction with the Director of Adult Social Care.

In some circumstances complaints by looked after children, or by adults on their behalf, will be considered as Stage 2 even though the problem solving has not been pursued. Complaints with respect to the Children Act must be responded to within 28 days. The complainant will receive copies of all investigation reports prepared under the Children Act or Community Care Act.

7.3 Stage 3

If a complaint has not been resolved at Stage 2, the complainant may request that a review panel is held and must lodge the request within 20 days of receiving the investigation report and the letter of response from the head of service. The panel must be held within 30 days of the request being made. The panel is convened by the designated Complaints Manager and consists of one council Member and two panellists who are independent of the council, one of whom acts as an independent chair.

The designated complaints officer will ensure that the panel arrangements accord with the Department of Health guidelines. The panel has to record its recommendations within 5 working days and the Director of Adult Social Care must inform the complainant of his/her response to the findings within 15 days after the receipt of the panels report.

Those who remain dissatisfied with the director's response and the findings of the panel have the opportunity to contact the Local Government Ombudsman.

8 Appendix 2 - The procedure to be followed in Children's Service

Complaints made by looked after children or children who receive social care services should be considered independently of the Council's Corporate Customer Feedback Policy. Also complaints in relation to specific schools or what occurs within them are the responsibility of the governing bodies, so will not be covered by the Corporate Customer Feedback Policy, unless specifically referred to the Council for a response.

With the above exceptions all other comments about Children Services will be recorded within the definitions of the Corporate Customer Feedback Policy and recorded on Lagan and will be dealt with within the corporate target timeframes.

Complaints made by looked after children should be considered under The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations.

Complaints can be made verbally to a member of staff or in writing (including electronically). Complaints made to the local authority will be handled in a way that is accessible for children and young people and appropriate to the age and understanding of the child. If a child or young person wishes to make a complaint, Swindon Borough Council will provide him with information and advice about independent, confidential advocacy services and will offer help to obtain an advocate.

The complainant will be put in contact with the Complaints Manager, who will record the complaint. The Complaints Manager will ensure that a suitable person meets the child or young person with their advocate to discuss the complaints process and ensure that any questions or concerns that the complainant may have are fully addressed. Where an advocate is being used, the local authority will ensure that the advocate is acting with the informed consent of the young person. Alternatively, the young person is able to select an advocate of their own choosing e.g. a foster carer, teacher etc. in whom they have confidence.

8.1 Stage 1 – Local Resolution

A complaint is made on the date on which it is first received by the local authority. Staff at the point of service delivery and the child or young person should discuss and attempt to address the complaint as quickly as possible. Regulation 14(1) places a ten working day time limit on this part of the process. Most Stage 1 complaints should be concluded within this time limit, but where a local authority cannot provide a complete response, it can implement a further 10 days extension, or where necessary can suspend Stage 1 until an advocate has been appointed. The maximum amount of time that Stage 1 should take is 20 working days.

If the local authority or complainant believes that it would not be appropriate to consider the complaint at Stage 1, or if the Stage 1 timescale has elapsed, they should discuss this together. Where both parties agree, the complaint can move directly to Stage 2.

If the matter is resolved, the local authority will write to the complainant confirming the agreed resolution and the Complaints Manager will be informed of the outcome.

8.2 Stage 2 – Investigation

Consideration of complaints at Stage 2 is normally achieved through an investigation conducted by an Investigating Officer and an Independent Person. If the complaint has been submitted orally, the Complaints Manager will ensure that the details of the complaint and the complainants desired outcome are recorded in writing and agreed with the complainant.

The Complaints Manager will arrange for a full and considered investigation of the complaint to take place without delay. He may request (in writing) any person or body to produce information of documents to facilitate investigation, and consideration will be given to matters of disclosure or confidentiality. The Complaints Manager will ensure that the authority appoints an Investigating Officer to lead the investigation of the complaint and prepare a written report for adjudication by a senior manager. The Investigating Officer will have access to all relevant records and staff. An Independent Person will be appointed to the investigation and will be involved in all aspects of consideration of the complaint.

The Stage 2 investigation should be completed and the response sent to the child or young person within 25 working days. However, this may be impractical in some cases, and where it is not possible to complete the investigation in this timescale, Stage 2 may be extended to a maximum of 65 working days, with all extensions agreed with the Complaints Manager.

On completion of their consideration of the complaint, the Investigating Officer will write a report of their investigations, and this report will be considered by an Adjudicating Officer, who will then prepare a response to the report, with the decision on the complaint and actions that will be taken with timescales for implementation.

The Local Authority will then write to the complainant with their response containing a complete copy of the investigation report, any report from the Independent Person and the adjudication. The Complaints Manager will monitor implementation and report to the Director on what action has been taken.

8.3 Stage 3 – Review Panel

Where Stage 2 of the complaints procedure has been concluded and the complainant is still dissatisfied, they will be eligible to request further consideration of the complaint by a Review Panel consisting of three independent people, independently chaired, and conducted in the presence of all the relevant parties with equity of access and representation for the complainant and local authority.

The purpose of the Review Panel is to consider the complaint and wherever possible, work towards a resolution. The Panel will be particularly aware of the need to be focused on the needs and sensitivities of children attending the Panel, and the complainant has the right to bring a representative/advocate to speak on their behalf.

The Panel will produce a written report containing their recommendations within 5 working days of the Panel meeting. This will be sent to the complainant, the local authority and the

Corporate Customer Feedback Policy

Independent Person from Stage 2. The local authority must then send its response to the Panel's recommendations within 15 days of receiving the report.

The complainant should be advised of his right to refer his complaints, if still dissatisfied, to the Local Government Ombudsman.

The complaint may be withdrawn verbally or in writing at any time by the complainant, and the local authority must write to the complainant to confirm the withdrawal of the complaint.