



Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

MEETING	Overview and Audit Committee
DATE OF MEETING	23 September 2015
OFFICER	Graham Britten, Director of Legal and Governance
LEAD MEMBER	Councillor David Watson (Chairman, Overview and Audit Committee)
SUBJECT OF THE REPORT	Compliments, Complaints & Concerns
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	<p>This report has two purposes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To introduce a suite of documents to replace the existing procedures and manage the handling of compliments, concerns and complaints based on current best-practice advice from the office of the Local Government Ombudsman. 2. To advise on any trends and corrective action taken to reduce or remove the problem that led to a complaint being made and to identify opportunities to improve public perception of the services Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority (BMKFA) provide. <p>The last complaints report was made to the Overview and Audit Committee on 29 August 2014 and included data for the financial years 2011/12, 2012/13 and 2013/14. To continue to provide three years of rolling data this report covers the financial years 2012/13, 2013/14, and 2014/15.</p> <p>Since 2013 BMKFA has been proactively working to identify and record anything that could be considered a concern or complaint and, after a rise from ten in 2012/13 to thirty-three in 2013/14 has reduced to twenty three in 2014/15 with only seven of these being upheld.</p> <p>Fifty-four letters of thanks were received from members of the public who were pleased with services they received. There will have been many more verbal compliments paid directly to Authority staff that were not recorded.</p> <p>The "After the Incident" survey findings were not available for inclusion in the report this year.</p>
ACTION	Information and decision.

<p>RECOMMENDATIONS</p>	<p>It is recommended that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) the document suite be approved; and 2) the report be noted.
<p>RISK MANAGEMENT</p>	<p>Both the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) and the Information Commissioner will not, normally, investigate a complaint until an organisation's own complaints process has been exhausted. If BMKFA do not have a rigorous complaints policy in place there is a risk that issues will be raised with the LGO (or Information Commissioner for complaints under information legislation) and the opportunity to resolve the complaint internally will be lost and, if the complaint is upheld, may lead to reputational damage and/or financial penalty.</p> <p>BMKFA encourage the public to raise concerns /make complaints and complainants are given assistance to do so and to understand the investigation process.</p> <p>BMKFA investigating officers have been given complaints handling training by the Local Government Ombudsman to assist in ensuring that complaints are rigorously investigated, resolved as quickly as possible and, wherever possible, to the satisfaction of the complainant.</p> <p>To protect the privacy of the complainant, all personal data is removed when no longer needed to support investigations and the remaining anonymised data has no residual information risk.</p>
<p>FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS</p>	<p>There are no negative financial implications associated with this report. Process improvements may assist in avoiding financial penalties or compensation costs.</p>
<p>LEGAL IMPLICATIONS</p>	<p>There are no negative legal implications associated with this report.</p>
<p>CONSISTENCY WITH THE PRINCIPLES OF COLLABORATION</p>	<p>The author of this report undertakes a similar role for both BMKFA and Royal Berkshire Fire Authority and best practice is able to be shared across the two Authorities.</p>
<p>HEALTH AND SAFETY</p>	<p>There are no negative implications on health and safety compliance.</p>
<p>EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY</p>	<p>The People Impact Assessment has been reviewed and the process for raising concerns and complaints is fair to all people.</p>
<p>USE OF RESOURCES</p>	<p>Communication with stakeholders; During the development of the Compliments, Concerns & Complaints documentation consultation was undertaken with :</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A trainer from the Local Government Ombudsman • Investigating Officers <p>and reviewed by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance Management Board at its 21 May meeting • Strategic Management Board at its 16 June meeting <p>Following approval of the document suite it will be promulgated to all employees and published on BMKFA Document Management System. The customer facing document "Complaints About Us" will be published on the BMKFA website.</p> <p>The system of internal control; The development of the complaints document suite and annual reporting arrangements to the Overview and Audit committee complements the governance framework and business processes by helping to maintain high quality service delivery.</p> <p>Concerns and complaints are subject to internal scrutiny during the investigation process and an escalation process is in place to enable complaints to be elevated to Corporate level.</p> <p>The arrangements to promote and ensure probity and propriety; The purpose of having robust procedures for managing concerns and complaints is to promote and ensure probity and propriety by encouraging the public to raise concerns /make complaints and to give them assistance to do so and to understand the investigation process.</p> <p>BMKFA investigating officers have been given complaints handling training by the Local Government Ombudsman to ensure best practice investigation techniques are adopted.</p>
<p>PROVENANCE SECTION & BACKGROUND PAPERS</p>	<p>Background papers</p> <p>Annual reports to the Overview and Audit Committee (last report 24 September 2014).</p> <p>http://bucksfire.gov.uk/files/3814/1079/8548/ITEM_6_Review_of_Compliments_and_Complaints_and_Appendix_A.pdf</p> <p>Current procedure for compliments, concerns and complaints available on the BMKFA Document Management System on the intranet and a public facing procedure on the website.</p> <p>Best practice recommendations from the Local Government Ombudsman.</p>

APPENDICES	A. Performance report B. Complaints policy C. Compliments concerns and complaints procedure D. Unreasonably persistent complainants and unreasonable complainant behaviour procedure. E. Complaints about us – a customer facing short version of the complaints procedure for the website.
TIME REQUIRED	10 minutes.
REPORT ORIGINATOR AND CONTACT	Gerry Barry, Information Governance and Compliance Manager gbarry@bucksfire.gov.uk 01296 744442 or 07920 710637