

Neighbourhood and Community Services Scrutiny Panel

Response to increase in stage 2 complaints

At their meeting on 26 June 2017 the Neighbourhood and Housing Scrutiny Panel asked to be informed as to the reason why the number of complaints escalating to stage 2 of the complaints process had risen from 1 in quarter 1 to 7 in quarter 3.

2 Of these complaints related to the Strategic Housing Service, however the remaining 5 were in relation to Neighbourhood Services. The reasons for the escalation of these complaints was:

1. The complaint related to a complex neighbour dispute around the community hall in Harrow Road, Langley. The issue involved the community hall managers and the neighbours either side of the hall. The complainant was the perpetrator of anti-social behaviour themselves and the complaint was escalated due to their failure to allow time for officers to resolve the dispute.
2. The complaint related to property boundary lines and it was escalated due to the length of time taken to clarify this.
3. The complainant is well known to the service and the complaint related to a number of issues relating to the block they live in. The Information & Participation Manager and the Neighbourhood Manager were in regular communication (by telephone) with the complainant throughout, however they remained unhappy with the length of time it took to carry out the requested work, eg remove a bin store.
4. The complainant was persistent, bordering vexatious and the details of the complaint frequently changed. The complainant was the son of the tenant and there were issues gaining access to the property to inspect it. The complaint was eventually escalated at the complainant's request. The complainant was offered the opportunity to present their complaint to the Resident Complaints Panel (before approaching the Ombudsman) but the failed to agree a date/time on which to meet with them. They did not go on to approach the Ombudsman.
5. The complaint related to the removal of a dangerous dog which was later put down. The complaint was escalated at the complainant's request as they were not happy with the response at stage 1 which explained why the dog was removed and later put down.

Having reviewed the escalated complaints, 3 of the 5 complainants are well known to the service and were in regular contact with the Complaints Co-Ordinator, Information & Participation Manager and the Neighbourhood Teams throughout the investigation and management of their complaint. The complaints were escalated largely due to the complainant refusing to accept the service's response at stage 1 as it was not the response they sought.