

**STRATEGY AND PERFORMANCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**03 December 2013 at 7.00 pm**  
**Conference Room, Argyle Road, Sevenoaks**

**AGENDA**

**Membership:**

Chairman: Cllr. Fleming Vice-Chairman: Cllr. Dickins  
Cllrs. Abraham, Mrs. George, Neal, Mrs. Parkin, Piper, Mrs. Purves, Miss. Stack and  
Miss. Thornton

	<b><u>Pages</u></b>	<b><u>Contact</u></b>
<b>Apologies for Absence</b>		
1. <b>Minutes</b> Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 8 October 2013.	(Pages 1 - 4)	
2. <b>Declarations of Interest</b> Any interests not already registered		
3. <b>Update from Portfolio Holder</b>		Councillor Peter Fleming Tel: 01732 227180
4. <b>Referrals from Cabinet or the Audit Committee (if any)</b> None		
5. <b>Annual Complaints Report 2012/13</b>	(Pages 5 - 14)	Amy Wilton Tel: 01732 227280
6. <b>Feedback from the Communications Strategy Working Group</b> Verbal Update		Lee Banks Tel: 01732 227161
7. <b>Work Plan</b>	(Pages 15 - 16)	

**EXEMPT ITEMS**

(At the time of preparing this agenda there were no exempt items. During any such items which may arise the meeting is likely NOT to be open to the public.)

To assist in the speedy and efficient despatch of business, Members wishing to obtain factual information on items included on the Agenda are asked to enquire of the appropriate Contact Officer named on a report prior to the day of the meeting.

Should you require a copy of this agenda or any of the reports listed on it in another format please do not hesitate to contact the Democratic Services Team as set out below.

For any other queries concerning this agenda or the meeting please contact:

**The Democratic Services Team (01732 227241)**

**STRATEGY AND PERFORMANCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the meeting held on 8 October 2013 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Fleming (Chairman)

Cllr. Dickins (Vice-Chairman)

Cllrs. Abraham, Mrs. George, Mrs. Parkin, Piper, Mrs. Purves, Miss. Stack and Miss. Thornton

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr. Neal

Cllr. Fittock were also present.

9. Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the Strategy and Performance meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2013 be approved and signed as a correct record.

10. Declarations of Interest

There were no additional declarations of interest.

11. Actions from Previous Meeting

The Chairman reported that actions arising from the previous meeting would be addressed later in the agenda.

12. Update from Portfolio Holder

The Chairman, who was also the Portfolio Holder for Strategy and Performance reported that the Local Government Association (LGA) Peer Review would be conducted from Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2013 to Friday 6<sup>th</sup> December 2013. The Peer Review Team had been put together and would include the Chief Executive of Rugby and the Leader of Staffordshire Council. It was also possible that the Director General from the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) would also be visiting Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) at this time.

In response to a question the Chairman confirmed that the Peer Review Team would be reviewing information that was already publically available and that the final report would be owned by SDC and not the LGA.

13. Referrals from Cabinet or the Audit Committee (if any)

There were no referrals from the Cabinet or Audit Committee.

## Agenda Item 1 Strategy and Performance Advisory Committee - 8 October 2013

### 14. Financial Prospects and Review of Service Plans

The Committee considered a report setting out updates to the 2014/15 budget within the existing framework of the 10-year budget and 4-year savings plan. The report considered by the Committee represented the second stage of the budget process and would be presented to all Advisory Committees. The purpose of the report was for the Advisory Committees to advise Cabinet on growth and savings ideas for the Services within their terms of reference and Appendix C to the report contained a list of growth and savings ideas proposed by the Portfolio Holders.

The Head of Finance reported that the Financial Prospects report had shown a shortfall of £667,000 over 10 years. However, by making two changes to assumptions and including the growth and savings proposed by the Portfolio Holders there would be a surplus. It was proposed to place the remaining balance of £70,000 per annum into the Financial Plan reserve which would be able to fund a further year, essentially year 11, 2024/25. If assumptions changed in a negative way, the remaining balance of £70,000 per annum could be used to reduce the need to make additional savings.

The Chairman highlighted the importance of broadband as a growth item as many parts of the District suffered from low broadband speeds. The funding would be used to work with a private provider to develop a proposal for broadband across Sevenoaks.

Members considered the loss of glass recycling at Sainsburys and noted that this may be the start of a trend across a number of supermarkets. A Member suggested that the Council should consider giving residents bins for the collection of glass recycling but acknowledged that the cost of this proposal would have to be thoroughly reviewed.

In response to a question relating to the checks and balances placed on other precepting authorities, the Chairman confirmed that all upper tier authorities (i.e. County and District Councils) faced the same restrictions imposed by Government, the increases that could be imposed by the Police and Fire authorities were also restricted however, Town and Parish Council did not yet face any restrictions.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

### 15. Business Transformation

The Chairman gave a presentation on Business Transformation. The presentation highlighted the need to consider the future direction of the Council in light of the changes that were being made to local authority funding. The presentation highlighted the need to work in partnership with other organisations, both in the public sector and in the voluntary sector. The Council would also need to consider innovative ways to provide and deliver services.

The Committee discussed the need to make more of the excellent travel links from Swanley into London as the return of young professionals would help encourage the night time economy and develop the town centre. The Leader reported that Kent County Council (KCC) had been asked to do all they could to encourage Transport for London (TfL) and the Mayor of London to include Swanley in Zone 6. If necessary Sevenoaks District Council would also lobby TfL.

A Member suggested that more could be done to encourage large corporations to locate their head quarters in Sevenoaks. The good transport links to London by rail, the M25 and the Channel Tunnel made Sevenoaks a very desirable location. It was also suggested that Sevenoaks Town would benefit from another good hotel.

A Member cautioned that it was important for any risks to be seriously considered as the Council would be using public money and a decision had to be taken on the level of risk that was considered acceptable. The Committee agreed that the reasons for any risks that were taken would need to be clearly explained. The Chairman emphasised the risks associated with remaining reliant on decreasing levels of government funding. The need to understand the risk of not taking action was also emphasised.

The Committee agreed that it would be helpful for Members to separate into smaller groups to review all the available options with the Chairman arranging these groups.

*Action 1: That the Chairman liaise with Members and establish smaller groups to review all the available options for Business Transformation.*

#### 16. Draft Corporate Plan

The Head of Transformation and Strategy introduced the [draft Corporate Plan](#) explaining that the Plan was primarily designed as an internal document to provide both Members and Officers with clarity about the future direction of the Council. The document would also be made publically available and shared with other organisations such as the Council's external auditors. The majority of the draft content had a focus on the Council's Promises and was intended to be very clear in what the Council had achieved over the past two years and what it aimed to achieve in the coming years.

Members reported that they felt the new format for the Corporate Plan was striking and eye catching. A Member suggested that the Plan should include new, more up-to-date photographs of the Portfolio Holders.

The Chairman reported that the draft Corporate Plan would be considered by Cabinet on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2013 and asked Members to provide any feedback before this date.

Resolved: The draft corporate plan be noted and Members provide suggestions for areas for improvement to the Leader of the Council to enable him to present a revised and updated version to Cabinet for its consideration.

#### 17. Communications Strategy and Work Plan

The Committee considered a report setting out the Council's Communications Strategy and 2013/14 work plan. Communications activity across local government had seen a significant rise in profile in recent years as Council's managed the impact of funding cuts. As a result of this local authorities had sought to increase dialogue with their residents, local businesses and other stakeholders to prioritise savings and efficiencies that reflected community wants and needs and ensured that the community was well informed about services and the value provided by the local authority.

**Agenda Item 1**  
**Strategy and Performance Advisory Committee - 8 October 2013**

The Council's Communication Strategy and Work Plan had been reviewed in recent years to reflect the changing priorities for the Council and had been improved to clearly reflect the purpose of all communications activity for the Council and set a clear framework for the Communications Team.

The Chairman suggested that a Working Group should be established to review the Communications Strategy. The first meeting of the Working Group would take place in mid-November 2013 and would report back to the Advisory Committee in January 2014. It was agreed that Councillors Mrs George, Mrs Parkin, Miss Stack and Miss Thornton would sit on the Working Group. Terms of Reference for the Working Group would be agreed at the first meeting.

Resolved: That a Working Group to include Councillors Mrs George, Mrs Parkin, Miss Stack and Miss Thornton be established to review the Council's Communications Strategy.

18. Work Plan

The Committee considered its Work Plan and noted that the Committee would receive a report from the Communications Strategy Working Group in January 2014.

Resolved: That the Work Plan be noted.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 8.29 AM

CHAIRMAN

**ANNUAL COMPLAINTS REPORT 2012/13**

**Strategy & Performance Advisory Committee – 3 December 2013**

Report of Chief Officer Corporate Support

Status: For Information

Key Decision: No

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**Executive Summary:** This report updates Members regarding customer complaints and feedback monitoring for the year 2012/13, as compared to 2011/12 and provides projected figures for 2013/14.

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**This report supports the Key Aim of** improving the key services we deliver to the public

**Portfolio Holder** Cllr. Peter Fleming

**Contact Officer(s)** Amy Wilton x7280 Julie Heather x7125

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**Recommendation to Strategy & Performance Advisory Committee:** That the report be noted

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**Introduction and Background**

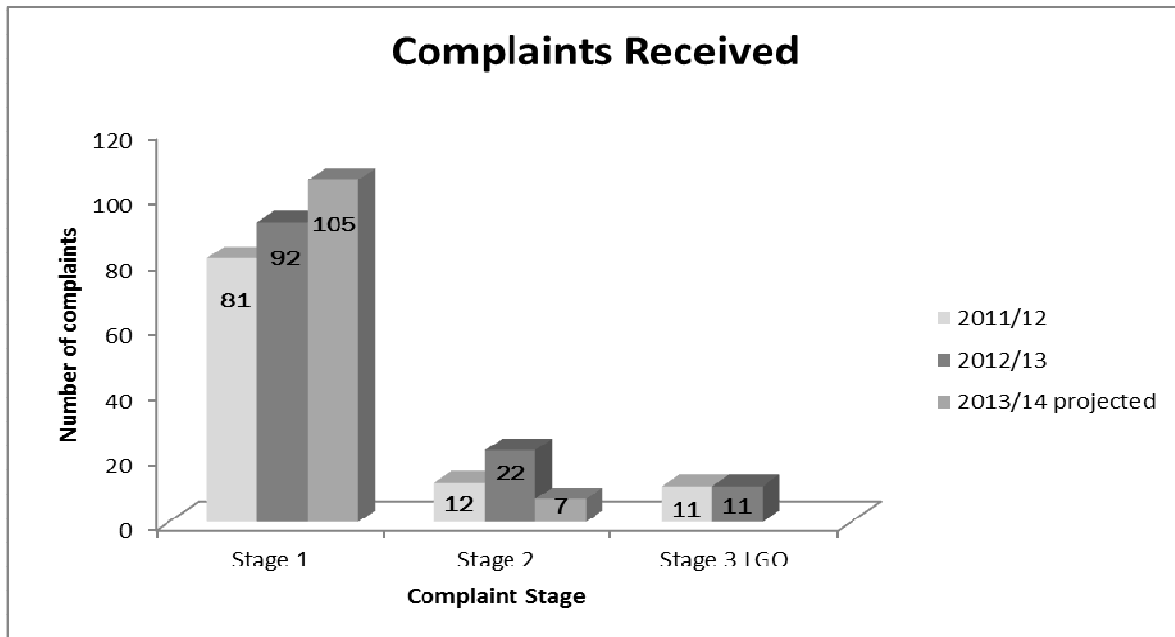
1. This report provides details of formal complaints received by Sevenoaks District Council during the period 1st April 2012 to 31st March 2013. Complaints data is viewed by the Council as providing a useful tool to highlight specific concerns, assist in the identification of trends and act as a guide to which remedial action may be required to deliver service improvement.
2. The Council's formal complaints procedure defines a complaint as '*any expression of dissatisfaction with our services whether justified or not*'. If a customer is contacting the Council for the first time regarding assistance for a Council service then this will be dealt with as a service request. The complaints process will be used if a customer specifically states they would like us to follow the "complaints process" and/or they make reference to items from within the formal process (e.g. Stage 1) or the customer is contacting us for a second time regarding the same matter and wishes to make a complaint.
3. The procedure is based on a two-stage internal process. If complainants are still dissatisfied with the outcome after both Stage 1 and Stage 2, they can then request the Local Government Ombudsman investigate at Stage 3.

Complaints Review 2013

## Agenda Item 5

4. A review of the Complaints process has been carried out through the summer by the Customer Service Manager. The purpose of the review was to build on existing processes to further improve customer focus and to increase officer understanding from lessons learnt. Responsibilities for complaints were also re-aligned with the new Senior Management structure commencing September 2013.
5. Stage 1 complaints are now investigated by the relevant Service Manager or Head of Service and signed off by the Customer Service Manager and Stage 2 complaints are now investigated by an independent Service Manager or Head of Service and signed off by an independent Chief Officer.
6. By signing off all Stage 1 complaints, the Customer Service Manager is ensuring a consistent and customer focused approach is being used across the organisation. Letters are being reviewed to include empathy, compassion and humility where appropriate. In addition the Corporate Complaints Officer is now co-ordinating all complaints administration for the Council and a vetting stage has been introduced at each stage of the complaints process to verify that complaints letters are being logged appropriately and to the correct Officer.
7. The results year to date for 2013/14 show a significant decrease in the number of Stage 2 complaints being received, which suggests more complaints are being resolved satisfactorily at Stage 1 of the new process.
8. Monthly reports are being prepared for Service Managers and the appropriate Chief Officer to provide detail on complaints received in individual areas and highlight areas for lessons to be learnt. Quarterly reports will be shared with Senior Management Team to show trends across the organisation and to feedback how lessons learnt have been implemented across Service Areas.
9. The Council received 125 complaints in 2012/13, an increase of 21 received in 2011/12. The following graph shows at which stage of the complaints process each of the complaints were received and includes data for 2013/14, based on projections for the full year.





**Stage 1 complaints**

10. Stage 1 complaints received

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14*	Projected figures 2013/14
<b>Total</b>	81	92	61	105

\*YTD figures (April 13 to Oct 13)

- 11. 2012/13 saw an 11% increase in the number of stage 1 complaints received. Development Services and Local Tax and Benefits are the main areas of complaint. For a break down of stage1 complaints received by service area see appendix A.
- 12. Of the 92 Stage 1 complaints received during 2012/13, 36% were found to be not valid. This was because customers had made incorrect claims, unrealistic claims or had contacted the wrong organisation. 54% were given partial consideration/ consideration with no local settlement and 10% of were given consideration with settlements agreed.

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### 13. Outcome of complaints at Stage 1

	Total 2012/13	YTD 2013/14
Complaint invalid	33	27
Complaint given partial consideration – no local settlement	9	10
Complaint given partial consideration – local settlement	3	0
Complaint given consideration – no local settlement	41	21
Complaint given consideration – local settlement	6	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>61</b>

14. Four financial payments were made at stage 1 totalling £1,029.04, £500 relating to a building control complaint, £40 relating to a direct services complaint, £60 in respect of a local tax complaint and £429.04 in respect of a business rates complaint. These payments were met from within the relevant service budget.

### Stage 2 complaints

#### 15. Stage 2 complaints received

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14*	Projected figures 2013/14
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>

16. There was a 54% increase in the number of Stage 2 complaints received during 2012/13 with Development Services attracting the highest number at this stage. For a breakdown of Stage 2 complaints received by service area see appendix B.
17. Out of the 22 Stage 2 complaints investigated during 2012/13, 50% were found to be not valid. This was because customers had made incorrect claims. 41% of complaints were given consideration with no local settlement and 9% were given consideration with a non financial local settlement agreed.

18. Outcome of complaints at Stage 2

	Total	YTD 2013/14
Complaint invalid	11	3
Complaint given partial consideration – no local settlement	0	0
Complaint given partial consideration – local settlement	0	1
Complaint given consideration – no local settlement	9	0
Complaint given consideration –local settlement	2	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>4</b>

19. No compensation payments were made at Stage 2.

**Stage 3 complaints – Local Government Ombudsman**

20. In 2012/13 the Local Government Ombudsman received 11 complaints about this authority. Of the 11 complaints 8 decisions were made. This compares to the following average number:

District/Borough Councils – 10 complaints  
 Unitary Authorities - 36 complaints  
 Metropolitan Councils - 49 complaints  
 County Councils - 54 complaints  
 London Boroughs - 79 complaints

21. This year the Ombudsman only presented the total number of complaints received and did not provide more detailed information as it has done in previous years. The reason for this is they changed their business processes during the course of 2012/13 and would not be able to provide a consistent set of data for the entire year. More detailed information will be provided in next year’s letter. For Local Government Ombudsman complaints received by service area see Appendix C.

22. No compensation payments were made at this stage.

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### 23. Complaints investigated by the LGO – Comparison to other Kent Councils

Local Authority	2011/12	2012/13
Tonbridge & Malling	5	4
Gravesham Borough	17	4
Ashford Borough	25	9
Shepway Borough	15	9
Swale Borough	8	10
Thanet District	14	10
Sevenoaks District	11	11
Tunbridge Wells Borough	8	11
Dartford Borough	11	13
Maidstone Borough	29	14
Canterbury City	9	18
Dover District	15	21
Medway	59	48
Kent County	147	129

Source: Local Government Ombudsman website

### Key Implications

#### Financial

The Council made four financial payments as compensation in 2012/13 to resolve complaints. Any such payments are met from within the relevant service budget.

	Compensation Paid (£)	
	2011/12	2012/13
Stage 1	150	1,029.04
Stage 2	100	0
LGO	250	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>1,029.04</b>

#### Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

The complaints process meets all legal requirements, and recognises Human Rights through the comprehensive 3 stage process. The complaints process gives good opportunity to identify and deal with any service problem from a customer perspective.

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The operation of the system is subject to external rigorous appraisal by the LGO stage 3 processes. This and the results of the last year indicate that the current system is working well.

### Equality Impacts

Consideration of impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty:		
Question	Answer	Explanation / Evidence
a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to disadvantage or discriminate against different groups in the community?	No	This is an information report. A full Equality Impacts Assessment in place for the Customer Services Team.
b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have the potential to promote equality of opportunity?	No	
c. What steps can be taken to mitigate, reduce, avoid or minimise the impacts identified above?		Include steps that could be taken for all decision options being presented.

### **Appendices**

Appendix A - Table to show Stage 1 complaints received by service area.

Appendix B – Table to show Stage 2 complaints received by service area

Appendix C – Table to show LGO complaints received by service area

### **Background Papers:**

None

**Jim Carrington-West**  
**Chief Officer for Corporate Support**

## Agenda Item 5

### Appendix A – Stage 1 complaints received by service area

	Stage 1 Complaints received			
	2011/12	% of total	2012/13	% of total
Benefits	5	6.2	6	6.5
Building Control	0	0	3	3.3
Communications	0	0	0	0
Community Development	2	2.5	2	2.2
Customer Services	0	0	1	1.1
Democratic Services	0	0	0	0
Development Services	22	27.2	27	29.4
Direct Services	11	13.6	14	15.2
Electoral Services	1	1.2	0	0
Environmental Health	4	4.9	4	4.3
Finance	0	0	0	0
Housing	10	12.3	7	7.6
Human Resources	0	0	0	0
IT Services	0	0	0	0
Legal	0	0	0	0
Licensing	2	2.5	0	0
Local Tax	14	17.3	13	14.1
Parking and Amenities	10	12.3	11	12
Planning Policy	0	0	0	0
Property	0	0	4	4.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>100</b>

Appendix B – Stage 2 complaints received by service area

	Stage 2 Complaints received			
	2011/12	% of total	2012/13	% of total
Benefits	1	8.3	0	0
Building Control	0	0	1	4.5
Communications	0	0	0	0
Community Development	1	8.3	0	0
Customer Services	0	0	0	0
Democratic Services	0	0	0	0
Development Services	7	58.3	9	41
Direct Services	0	0	3	13.6
Electoral Services	0	0	0	0
Environmental Health	0	0	3	13.6
Finance	0	0	0	0
Housing	0	0	1	4.5
Human Resources	0	0	0	0
IT Services	0	0	0	0
Legal	0	0	0	0
Licensing	0	0	0	0
Local Tax	2	16.7	1	4.5
Parking and Amenities	1	8.3	3	13.6
Planning Policy	0	0	0	0
Property	0	0	1	4.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>100</b>

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### Appendix C – Local Government Ombudsman complaints received by service area

LGO Complaints received 2012/13	
Community Development	1
Development Services	3
Environmental Health	3
Parking and Amenities	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8</b>



Strategy & Performance Advisory Committee Work Plan 2013/14

8 October 2013	3 December 2013	28 January 2014	June 2014
Annual Customer Services Update Report (information item) Financial Prospects Draft Corporate Plan Communication Plan Business Transformation Policy 1 Working Group Report	Ombudsman’s Annual Complaints Report and Annual Complaint Monitoring Feedback Communications Strategy Working Group – Verbal update	Workforce & HR Equality LGA Peer Review Business Transformation Members & Democratic Services Policy 3 Working Group Report	Performance Indicators & Targets for 2014/15

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