

Title of Report:	Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP)
Committee Report Submitted To:	Corporate Policy and Resources
Date of Meeting:	23rd April 2024
For Decision or For Information	For Decision
To be discussed In Committee YES/NO	NO

Linkage to Council Strategy (2021-25)	
Strategic Theme	Cohesive Leadership
Outcome	Council has agreed policies and procedures and decision making is consistent with them.
Lead Officer	Democratic and Central Services Manager

Budgetary Considerations	
Cost of Proposal	
Included in Current Year Estimates	YES/NO
Capital/Revenue	
Code	
Staffing Costs	

Legal Considerations	
Input of Legal Services Required	YES/NO
Legal Opinion Obtained	YES/NO

Screening Requirements	Required for new or revised Policies, Plans, Strategies or Service Delivery Proposals.		
Section 75 Screening	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	EQIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Rural Needs Assessment (RNA)	Screening Completed	Yes/No	Date:
	RNA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	DPIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of the report is to present some minor amendments to the previously adopted Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP).

2.0 Background

2.1 The Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO) issued the final draft of the Model Complaints Handling Procedure (MCHP) in June 2023 following a period of public consultation and the involvement of Local Government Officers on an operational network. Following Council approval of the MCHP the Council adopted the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council Complaints Handling Procedure Parts 1, 2 and 3 in October 2023.

3.0 Amendments to the Complaints Handling Procedure

3.1 NIPSO and officers from the 11 Councils sit on a Best Practice Network during the implementation phase of the new policy. NIPSO has advised Councils that compliance checks will be carried out in June 2024 to ensure that local councils are complying with their obligations in terms of implementing the complaints handling policy.

3.2 As part of the pre-compliance checks a few issues have been highlighted and Councils have been asked to ensure that their CHPs reflect the wording in the final Model Complaints Handling Procedure.

3.3 The following amendments are required and are as follows:

- References to guidance documents: CHPs should not include reference to unpublished NIPSO guides. The only reference which can be included is 'Issuing An Apology'.
- Timeframes for escalating a complaint: In terms of the timeframe for escalating a complaint from Stage 1 to Stage 2 to ensure consistency within and between sectors NIPSO requires a minimum period of 30 working days be provided to enable a person to consider whether to continue with their complaint. NIPSO advises organisations to apply the 30 days timeframe.
- Wording in different versions of the MCHP: NIPSO has asked organisations to use the wording in the final published version. The Council's CHP has been amended as advised. The changes required are minor in nature e.g changing Complaints Handler Network to Best Practice Network.
- Supporting the Customer: NIPSO asks organisations to add examples of how they are going beyond equality legislation in considering more widely what factors may impact on people's

access to complaints handling. Officers will examine ways that this can be facilitated and report further to Committee.

4.0 Recommendation

It is recommended that the amendments detailed in the report in relation to reference to NIPSO guidance documents, timescales for escalating a complaint, wording throughout to be in line with the final published Model Complaints Handling Procedure and provisions in relation to supporting the customer be approved and the Complaints Handling Procedure amended accordingly.