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|  <p>LEE VALLEY REGIONAL PARK AUTHORITY</p> <p>EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE</p> <p>25 FEBRUARY 2016 AT 11:00</p> | <p><u>Agenda Item No:</u></p> <p>9</p> <p><u>Report No:</u></p> <p>E/439/16</p> |
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CUSTOMER COMMUNICATIONS PROCEDURE

Presented by the Director of Corporate Services

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At the Authority meeting of 21 January 2016 Members approved, with minor amendments, the adoption of a revised Customer Communications Procedure (paper A/4223/16). It was requested that further information be submitted to the Executive Committee on the appointment of Members and Independent Advisor for the final stage of the process. This report outlines those processes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Members Approve:
- (1) the process for appointment of Independent Advisor as detailed in paragraphs 7 to 9 of this report; and
 - (2) the process for appointment of Members to the final stage panel as detailed in paragraphs 10 to 13 of this report.

BACKGROUND

- 1 Following creation of the Lee Valley Leisure Trust and recent experience following a complaint being escalated to the final stage of the procedure the Customer Communications Procedure was reviewed.
- 2 Members approved, with minor amendments, the adoption of a revised Customer Communications Procedure (paper A/4223/16) in January 2016, attached as Appendix A to this report.
- 3 The revised procedure includes the creation of a new final stage of review by an Independent Advisor and final decision by a Member panel.

INDEPENDENT ADVISOR

- 4 To ensure the complaint process is robust an Independent Advisor is to be retained by the Authority to assist Members in the resolution of the complaint.

- 5 The purpose of the Independent Advisor is to review the process of a complaint and deliver recommendations to the panel of Authority Members to enable them to make a final decision on the outcome of the complaint.
- 6 The proposed Independent Advisor Person Specification is attached as Appendix B to this report.

APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT ADVISOR

- 7 Local Authorities have a long history of engaging Independent Persons to assist them in a variety of areas, such as Standards, Remuneration and Audit, so although the Authority is not subject to the related local government legislation, it is proposed to take advantage of such experience for the appointment of an Independent Advisor.
- 8 The Authority is a member of Public Law Partnership (PLP), the legal services partnership of authorities in Essex, Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire and Suffolk (see Appendix C to this report), who work together to share resources and ensure legal support is provided to all clients.
- 9 Exploratory contact with PLP members has generated the recommendation of several highly experienced persons who could undertake the role of Independent Advisor. Contact has also been made with a couple of London Boroughs.
- 10 Subject to Member approval of this process, upon the need for an Independent Advisor to review a complaint these persons will be contacted and dependant on their availability at such time one will be appointed for a specific complaint. This retains flexibility and enables persons with different experience and expertise to be available depending on the nature of the complaint. Alternatively if a particular specialist Independent Advisor were required it would be open to the Authority to procure separately.

APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS TO THE FINAL STAGE PANEL

- 11 The Members' panel is to be made up of 3 Authority Members and will include the Authority's current serving Chairman and/or the Vice Chairman with the remaining panel Members to be selected from a pool of 6 serving Members previously appointed by the Executive Committee.
- 12 Therefore the Executive Committee (minus the Chairman and Vice Chairman) will form the pool of 6 Members and the panel will be required to be a sub-committee of the Executive Committee. This is necessary to ensure that the "panel" can be decision making.
- 13 Upon the need for a final stage panel to be set up, Executive Committee will be asked to appoint 1 (if the Chairman and Vice Chairman are included) or 2 (if only one from the Chairman and Vice Chairman are included) of its members to form the sub-committee. This is similar to the approach many local authorities have in relation to their licensing committees.
- 14 The sub-committee will then meet to consider the recommendations of the Independent Advisor and decide the outcome of the complaint. The decision of the sub-committee will be final.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 15 There are no environmental implications arising directly from the recommendations in this report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 16 There would be a financial commitment to the new procedure in the form of retained work from an Independent Advisor, who would work with the Member panel to find a complaint resolution. The intention would be to pay on a daily rate basis; to include all expenses, which is likely to be between £300 and £400 per day for a maximum number of days depending on the complexity of the actual complaint.

HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 17 There are no human resource implications arising directly from the recommendations in this report.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 18 There are no legal implications arising directly from the recommendations in this report.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 19 There are no risk management implications arising directly from the recommendations in this report.

EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 20 There are no equality implications arising directly from the recommendations in this report.

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PREVIOUS COMMITTEE REPORTS

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|-----------|-----------|-----------------------------------|-----------------|
| Authority | A/4223/16 | Customer Communications Procedure | 21 January 2016 |
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APPENDICES ATTACHED

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| Appendix A | Customer Communications Procedure |
| Appendix B | Person Specification – Independent Advisor |
| Appendix C | Public Law Partnership partners |

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

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| PLP | Public Law Partnership |
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Customer Communications Procedure

Our customer communications procedure deals with complaints, compliments, suggestions, enquiries, and requests relating to Freedom of Information (FOI), Data Protection (DP) and Environmental Information Regulations (EIR).

If you wish to contact the Authority you may do so via one of the following:

- In writing to Myddelton House, Bulls Cross, Enfield, Middlesex, EN2 9HG
- Emailing crm@leevalleypark.org.uk
- Visiting www.VisitLeeValley.org.uk and filling in the [contact us form](#)

FOI, DP and EIR communications received are formally logged on the internal Customer Relationship Management (CRM) database and a case number is assigned.

Enquiries and suggestions are logged and the relevant area of service is informed of the details and comments are logged as customer feedback.

If someone wishes to complain about a certain area of the Park the details of the complaint will be passed to a relevant area of service.

Stage 1

If someone wishes to make a formal complaint against an action or service of the Authority it will be logged, assigned a case reference number and delegated to an officer from the relevant area of service. In the event that the complaint is about an individual, the complaint will be passed to the line manager of that individual.

The lead officer will fully investigate the complaint and provide a response within ten working days.

If the complaint requires more investigation, the complainant will be contacted and a reason for the delay will be provided along with a revised date for a response.

Stage 2

If the complainant is dissatisfied after the stage 1 investigation the complaint can be escalated to stage 3.

Please note that for a case to be escalated the complainant must outline exactly why they are dissatisfied after stage 1, whether that is the process of investigation, the way the case has been handled by the lead officer or the recommended course of action.

A stage 2 complaint will be investigated by a Head of Service officer of the Authority.

The officer will review the stage 1 investigation, any outcomes of the investigation and consider whether it has adequately satisfied the details of the stage 1 complaint. A response will be sent within 10 working days.

Stage 3

If the complainant is dissatisfied after the stage 2 investigation the complaint can be escalated to stage 3.

Please note that for a case to be escalated the complainant must outline exactly why they are dissatisfied after stage 2.

The complaint is investigated by the Director of Corporate Services and Director of Finance and Resources. Information and communication regarding the case shall be provided by the Information Officer.

The panel will review how the case was investigated, any outcomes and whether any further course of action or further investigation is needed. A response will be sent within 10 working days.

Authority Member Stage

If the complainant is dissatisfied by the investigation at stage 3 the complaint can be referred to an independent advisor for investigation. The independent advisor will review the process of the complaint and deliver recommendations to a sub-committee who will make a final decision on the outcome at a designated meeting.

The Members' sub-committee shall be made up of three Members and will include the Authority's current serving Chairman and/or the Vice Chairman with the remaining sub-committee Members to be selected from a pool of six serving Members from the Executive Committee.

The independent advisor will be retained by the Authority as an available resource in such an event and information and communication regarding a complaint shall be provided by the Authority's Information Officer.

This process will be completed as soon as practicably possible but in any event the complainant will be notified of the date and should receive a response within 10 working days of the sub-committee meeting.

Customer Communications Procedure

Independent Advisor

Background

The Lee Valley Regional Park Authority would like to appoint an Independent Advisor to assist in the final stage of the Customer Communications Procedure by providing a source of independent, informed and effective review. The independent advisor will be retained by the Authority as an available resource and will receive information and communication regarding a complaint from the Authority's Information Officer.

Purpose

To review the process of a complaint and deliver recommendations to a panel of Authority Members to enable them make a final decision on the outcome of the complaint.

Experience

Preferably with public sector experience either at senior officer level or been engaged as a local authority "Independent Person" for Standards Committee. Ideally this person would have some experience of dealing with and responding to complex complaints.

Skills

- Good analytical, investigative and problem solving skills
- To empower the complainant by listening to them and affording them opportunity to express their views
- To ensure the process of the review is open and transparent to the complainant
- Ability to be impartial and to take an objective overview of the complaint
- To analyse information gathered from reading files, interviews carried out if necessary, and other relevant documents for the purpose of making constructive, proportionate and achievable recommendations as appropriate
- Able and willing to devote the necessary time to complaint referrals



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