



LEE VALLEY REGIONAL PARK AUTHORITY
AUTHORITY MEETING
21 JANUARY 2016 AT 14:00

Agenda Item No:

8

Report No:

A/4223/16

CUSTOMER COMMUNICATIONS PROCEDURE

Presented by the Director of Corporate Services

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to seek Member approval of a revised procedure for resolving customer communications and in particular, complaints.

The procedure has been revised following the creation of the Lee Valley Leisure Trust and after recent experience showed that there needs to be a more robust procedure in place. The revised procedure includes the creation of a new final stage of a Member panel to consider complaints that have been unable to be resolved internally.

RECOMMENDATION

Members Approve: (1) adoption of the revised Customer Communications Procedure attached as Appendix B to this report.

BACKGROUND

- 1 The Customer Communications Procedure deals with all complaints, compliments, suggestions, enquiries and requests relating to Freedom of Information (FOI), Data Protection (DP) and Environmental Information Regulations (EIR).
- 2 The current procedure (attached at Appendix A to this report) for dealing with complaints comprises a 3 stage internal process following which if the customer is still unsatisfied the matter is referred to a final external stage.
- 3 When the Customer Communications Procedure was adopted the Authority's then external auditors (the Audit Commission) agreed to undertake this final external stage.
- 4 During 2015 the Authority received three complaints (or cases) from a complainant which were unable to be resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant through the 3 internal stages of the process. This resulted in the complainant escalating their cases through to the external stage of the process.

The Authority had not received any complaints until this which had reached the final stage of the process.

- 5 Following the closure of the Audit Commission, Ernst & Young became the Authority's new external auditors. Ernst & Young carried out a review of the 3 complaints but concluded that it was not their role to carry out the third stage of the complaints procedure.
- 6 Ernst & Young suggested that the Authority seek an independent review of the three cases. This was agreed by Members at the Executive Committee meeting on 24 September 2015.
- 7 The Authority is awaiting the outcome of this independent review.

CUSTOMER COMMUNICATIONS PROCEDURE – INTERNAL STAGES

- 8 These 3 complaints are the first time that the Authority's Customer Communications Procedure has been tested all the way through and revealed some areas of weakness, including the lack of a Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) for independent review
- 9 The revised procedure has been refined into a three stage internal review followed by a final Member stage.
- 10 If a complaint is received it should be sent to the Authority's Information Officer to log on CRM and then it will be sent to the appropriate officer for investigation and resolution.
- 11 Stage 1 will be investigated by a relevant officer of the service area or venue the complaint is about.
- 12 If the complainant is unhappy with the handling and resolution of the case it will be escalated to stage 2, where it will be investigated by the line manager of the stage 1 investigating officer.
- 13 If the complainant remains unhappy with the investigation and resolution at stages 1 & 2, the case will be escalated to stage 3 where it will be considered by senior Authority officers, the Director of Corporate Services and the Director of Finance and Resources, supported by the Information Officer.
- 14 Finally, if the complainant is unhappy with the resolution and investigation at the conclusion of the internal stages they may ask for a Member review. This will be the final stage of the Authority's Customer Communications Procedure.

CUSTOMER COMMUNICATIONS PROCEDURE – FINAL STAGE

- 15 The case or cases shall be considered by a panel made up of 3 Members including one or both the Chairman and Vice Chairman plus one or two Members from a pool of six Members previously appointed by the Executive Committee. The panel will be given all communication, background information and documentation to investigate and resolve any open case.
- 16 To ensure the process is robust an independent advisor will be retained by the Authority to assist Members in the resolution of the complaint.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

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

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

18 There would be a financial commitment to the new procedure in the form of retained work from an independent advisory figure who would work with the Member panel to find a complaint resolution.

HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

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

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

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

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

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

EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

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

Author: Gavin Embley, 01992 709 819, gembley@leevalleypark.org.uk

APPENDIX ATTACHED

Appendix A Current Customer Communication Procedure
Appendix B Updated Customer Communications Procedure

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

E&Y Ernst & Young
LGO Local Government Ombudsman
FOI Freedom of Information
DP Data Protection
EIR Environmental Information Regulations

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Current

Customer Communications Procedure

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

All communications (including complaints) we formally receive are logged on our Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software and a Case Number is issued. The complaint is then passed to the relevant officer who will respond within ten working days.

If the service needs more time to respond, they'll advise the reason for the delay and provide a revised date for a response.

If the complainant is subsequently unhappy with the way that the complaint has been dealt with at Stage 1, the complaint will be escalated as follows:-

Stage 2

When an Authority Officer receives a complaint that a previous complaint has not been dealt with in a satisfactory fashion.

The complaint is dealt with by the line manager of the officer who dealt with the original complaint in Stage 1. They will investigate the details of the complaint and ensure that any actions have been implemented and respond back to the complainant.

Stage 3a

This stage occurs when a complaint is escalated due to dissatisfaction with the outcome of stage 2. The complaint is dealt with by the Department's Director.

Stage 3b

This stage occurs when a complaint is escalated due to dissatisfaction with the outcome of stage 3a. At this stage the complaint will be dealt with by an Officer Panel, which will consist of two Directors, the Head of Legal and Head of Performance and Information. The panel will review the complaint and then send a response by the due date given.

External Stage

If the customer is still unsatisfied with the outcome at stage 3b the complaint will be forwarded to an external authority (the Authority External Auditor).

The external authority will consider the case and make a decision on the correct outcome. Both parties (the customer and the Authority) must abide by this decision, and the case will be closed.

To make a complaint, enquiry or compliment on the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, contact our Information Service.

Contact Details: Tel - 08456 770 600

Address: Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, Myddelton House, Bulls Cross, Enfield Middlesex, EN2 9HG

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Complaints 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 a customer wishes to contact the Authority they may do so:

- 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 a customer 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 a customer 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.

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

If the complaint requires more investigation, the customer 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.

Member Stage

If the complainant is dissatisfied by the investigation at stage 3 the complaint can be referred to a panel of Authority Members who will review the case.

The Members' panel shall be made up of three 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 six serving Members previously appointed by the Executive Committee. The panel shall also include an independent advisor who will be retained by the Authority as an available resource. Information and communication regarding the case shall be provided by the Information Officer. The panel will meet 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 panel meeting date.