

Restricted Customer Contact Arrangements

Summary

- 1 This report seeks Members' views on formalising arrangements for restricting certain customer contacts. The proposed arrangements specify when it might be appropriate to restrict customer contact and set out what steps might be taken.

Background

- 2 The Council deals with very large numbers of customer contacts each day through a variety of means including face to face, telephone, e-mail, social networking and other internet based means. The great majority of this contact is conducted in a proper manner. The nature of some of the services offered by the Council, however, means that some individuals may be undergoing considerable stress at the time they need to make contact and this may affect their behaviour. Council staff are used to dealing with such situations and they are managed as part of routine business.
- 3 Unfortunately, very occasionally, some customer contact is wholly inappropriate. On occasions Council staff and Members have found themselves subject to abuse or threats. The most serious of these cases may result in referrals to the police or other legal action being taken. In other cases customers may raise the same issues repeatedly and frequently, often using a scatter gun approach to refer the issue to several people at once. This can be severely disruptive to the effective conduct of Council business.

- 4 On very rare occasions the Council has decided that some action needs to be taken to restrict the number of people that a customer can have contact with or the communications channels which are made available to them. Until now there has been no overall framework governing how such decisions are made. It is felt that it would be appropriate to put such arrangements in place and proposed procedures are annexed to this report. Members' views on these procedures are requested prior to them being formally adopted.

Consultation

- 5 This report is coming to this Committee for consultation prior to new procedures being adopted. The Customer Services team have been consulted on the proposals.

Options

- 6 The Committee may express support for the current proposals or suggest amendments or additions.

Analysis

- 7 Not relevant for the purpose of the report.

Corporate Priorities

- 8 This report contributes to the corporate objective of making the Council an effective organisation.

Implications

- 9 **Legal** – the Council has a legal obligation to protect the health and welfare of its staff. Taking the steps described in this report may be necessary in a limited number of cases to comply with that duty.
- 10 **Equalities** – the proposed procedures recognise that some groups of customers have particular difficulties which may contribute to their behaviour being inappropriate and ensure that such issues are considered in decision making.

Recommendation

- 11 Members are asked to:

- (a) Confirm their support for the adoption of the procedures set out in the annex to this report subject to such amendments as Members may consider appropriate

Reason

To ensure that the Council has clear arrangements in place to deal with restricting customer contact

Contact Details

Author and Chief Officer Responsible for the report:

Andy Docherty

Assistant Director, Governance and ICT

Telephone: 01904 551004

**Report
Approved**



Date 05/03/13

Wards Affected: Not applicable

All



For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers

None

Annex

Restricted Customer Contact Policy and Procedures