

ARRANGEMENTS FOR HANDLING COMPLAINTS

Summary

1. This report asks the Committee to adopt new procedures for dealing with complaints and new criteria for making decisions as to whether a complaint should be investigated.

Background

2. This matter was considered by the Committee at its last meeting following which revised procedures and criteria were drafted and circulated to Members. As a result of a comment made by a Member an addition has been made to section 7 of the complaints procedure which recognises that full Council has the constitutional right to remove the Leader from office and that is therefore a further sanction which a Hearing Panel could recommend.
3. A question has been asked as to whether the procedures should specify the make up of Hearing Panels and identify the Chair. Under the previous arrangements it was the practice to establish Sub Committees so as to exclude City Councillors from the same political group as either a complainant or the subject Member. It may be more difficult to do that now given the removal of Independent Members. It may still be sensible to aim to establish Panels in that way but whether that should be specified within the procedures is open to question.
4. Assessment, review and hearing sub committees were all chaired independently. That will not be the case for hearing Panels. As hearings will be rare it may be that an appropriate working practice would be to have hearings chaired by either the Chair or Vice Chair of the main Committee unless that is inappropriate in a particular case.

Recommendations

5. Members are recommended to:

- 1) Consider the issues raised in paragraphs 3 and 4 of this report and identify and additional changes to the draft procedures which may be considered necessary.

Reason: To add further clarity to the procedures

- 2) To adopt the revised procedures and assessment criteria as the Committee's arrangements for handling complaints.

Reason: To ensure consistency in the judgements made about complaints.

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Report
Approved

Date 0702/13

Wards Affected: *List wards or tick box to indicate all*

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

None

Annexes

Annex A – Procedures for handling complaints

Annex B – Assessment Criteria