



COMPLAINTS COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

(Approved by Crofting Commission 9 March 2016)

INTRODUCTION

The Crofting Commission has established a Complaints Quality Assurance committee as a committee of the Commission Board, to support them in their responsibilities for issues of risk, control and governance, surrounding monitoring, scrutiny and associated constructive challenge, to ensure compliance with the approved Complaints Handling Procedure, as defined and approved by the Scottish Public Sector Ombudsman (SPSO). The Complaints Quality Assurance committee will provide support to the Board via detailed scrutiny of the Commission's internal Complaints Handling Procedure, particularly focussed on learning from complaints, in order to mitigate risk and improve customer service.

MEMBERSHIP

The Complaints Quality Assurance committee will comprise a minimum of three Board Members, including the Convener and will include the Head of Corporate and Customer Services as lead officer for this area of business. This is in accordance with the Crofting Reform (Scotland) Act 2010. However, in recognition of the way the committee has evolved from the original Short Term Working Group on complaints, committee meetings will be chaired by the Vice-Convener, who was the Chair of the original group.

The Complaints Quality Assurance committee will be provided with a secretariat function by the Chief Executive.

REPORTING

The Complaints Quality Assurance committee will formally report to the Board and Chief Executive after each meeting. A copy of the Minutes of the meeting will form the basis of the report along with a verbal update provided by the Vice-Convener, as Chair of the Complaints Quality Assurance committee.

The Complaints Quality Assurance committee will provide the Board and Chief Executive with quarterly statistics prior to submission to the Ombudsman, providing a summary of complaints made to and investigated by the Crofting Commission.

Quarterly statistics will include a statement outlining changes or improvements to services or procedures made as a result of the consideration of complaints and will also report on customer satisfaction with the complaints service provided.

It is important to distinguish and measure customer satisfaction relating to the service, in addition to the outcomes of complaints. Customer satisfaction will be measured on a qualitative basis.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The Complaints Quality Assurance committee will advise the Board and Chief Executive on:

- (a) Monitoring and scrutiny of the Commission's internal Complaints Handling Procedure
- (b) Scrutiny of closed complaints files, through "dip sampling" to ensure compliance with the Complaints Handling Procedure and the maintenance of quality standards
- (c) Monitoring the actions implemented by the Commission as a result of an investigation or recommendations made to enhance the service provided by the Commission, to embed learning from complaints
- (d) In reviewing the outcomes of Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints, the committee will be responsible for ensuring the root causes of upheld complaints are identified and that appropriate corrective actions have been established to ensure errors are not repeated
- (e) Through the monitoring of quarterly statistics of Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints, the Complaints Quality Assurance committee will review the information gathered from the Frontline Resolution log and Complaints Investigation Plans and consider whether services could be improved or internal policies and procedures updated
- (f) In publishing complaints outcomes, trends and actions taken as a result of complaints, the committee will use case studies and examples to demonstrate how complaints have helped improve services. These outputs will be considered at each quarterly meeting of the Complaints Quality Assurance committee.

COMPLAINT ISSUES

The Complaints Quality Assurance committee will, at each meeting, monitor the Complaints Handling Procedure performance to ensure compliance for both Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints.

The Committee will examine the quarterly performance reports prepared in accordance with SPSO's guidance before reporting to the Board and subsequently the Ombudsman. When reviewing the complaints information, the Complaints Quality Assurance committee should consider what actions are required to improve Commission services and report recommendations to the Board. The Committee will receive reports from Senior Management Team detailing actions taken.

The Complaints & Investigations Committee will review the action taken by the Commission to improve services.

It is important that the Complaints Quality Assurance committee report to the Board but that information on the lessons learnt from complaints is communicated externally as well. The Commission should let those who have complained about our services know what the Commission has done in response to complaints, for example through individual Decision letters, the website and the Annual Report. This should include a summary published quarterly, showing the types of complaints received, outcomes and actions taken.

The Complaints Quality Assurance committee may:

- Co-opt additional Members for a period of time or specific complaint review (in the event of a Member declaring an interest in a particular case, for example) or to provide specialist skills or knowledge and experience;

- Procure specialist ad-hoc advice at the expense of the Commission, subject to budgets agreed by the Board or Accountable Officer.

ACCESS

The Members of the Complaints Quality Assurance committee will have full and free access to all files, including those marked 'confidential' relating to Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints held by the Commission.

MEETINGS

Quarterly meetings of the committee will be held at least two weeks prior to Board Meetings, to allow Minutes of the meeting to be passed to the Board. Ad hoc meetings of the Complaints Quality Assurance committee will be held as necessary.