

Report to	<b>Standards Committee</b>
Date	<b>11 February 2011</b>
By	<b>Director of Corporate Services</b>
Title of Report	<b>Complaints and Feedback Policy</b>
Purpose of Report	<b>To invite the Committee to comment on the attached Complaints and Feedback Policy and recommend it, as amended if necessary, to the Authority</b>

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**Recommendation: The Standards Committee is recommended to comment on the attached Complaints and Feedback Policy and recommend it, as amended if necessary, to the Authority.**

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**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 A draft Complaints and Feedback Policy is **attached** which sets out how people can offer feedback or complain about the services of the South Downs National Park Authority (the Authority).

**2. Background**

- 2.1 The Authority needs to establish a policy on handling complaints about its services. This is important to ensure that complaints are handled effectively and resolved.
- 2.2 The attached draft policy is intended to help people to make a complaint, initially informally and then, if required, more formally. It also sets out the approach to be followed by employees within the Authority.
- 2.3 Complaints are a valuable way of collecting information about the performance of the Authority's services and providing the opportunity to improve. The draft policy also provides the opportunity for people to offer feedback about services. It is expected that there will be an annual report summarising the complaints / feedback received and the lessons learnt.
- 2.4 The draft policy has followed the guidance offered by the Local Government Ombudsman.
- 2.5 It should be noted that special and separate provision is made for handling complaints against Members of the Authority. There are also arrangements to handle complaints which are received in respect of planning applications, the majority of which will be handled by the 15 local planning authorities.
- 2.6 The Committee is being invited to comment / amend the policy and then recommend it to the full Authority meeting on 29 March 2011. Once agreed, the policy and the associated complaint / feedback forms will be made available including through the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) website.

- 2.7 There are related policies being developed in respect of Freedom of Information requests and whistleblowing.

### **3. Resources**

- 3.1 The costs of operating a complaints policy are expected to be relatively small and will be covered in the Authority's annual budget.

### **4. Risk Management**

- 5.1 There is a potential risk to the Authority's reputation if complaints are not handled effectively and resolved.
- 5.1 In general the level of complaints is not anticipated to be high. Information from other National Parks suggests that 50 complaints per year may be the average.

### **6. Human Rights, Equalities, Health and Safety**

- 6.1 The complaints policy will also help to identify any areas where the SDNPA's services are felt to be discriminatory or unsafe.

### **7. External Consultees**

- 7.1 None.

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Appendices	Appendix 1 – Complaints and Feedback Policy Appendix 2 – Customer Feedback form
SDNPA Consultees	Chief Executive Officer, Head of Planning, Head of Operations, Chief Finance Officer, Monitoring Officer and Senior Solicitor.