

From: David Scott
Sent: 06 March 2012 22:16
To: Democratic Services
Cc: Drake, Gerry (Cllr); [Councillor.T.Mathews](#); Noon, John (Cllr); Osmond, Edward (Cllr); Parnell, Brian (Cllr); Turner, Maureen (Cllr); Burke, Derek (Cllr)
Subject: Re: Standards and Governance Committee -- submission for their consideration.

TO - SOUTHAMPTON CITY COUNCIL STANDARDS AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE.

6th March 2012.

CONFIDENTIAL – NOT TO BE CIRCULATED TO CIVIL SERVANTS WITHOUT THE PERMISSION OF THE COMMITTEE.

This note is being sent directly to the elected councillors on the committee.

This note (should be, as promised, being sent, via the Civil Servant serving the committee, to the three un-elected members.

COMPLAINTS MADE BY ME AS A COUNCIL TAX PAYER TO SOUTHAMPTON CITY COUNCIL (SCC)

The complaints made by to SCC and listed at the end of this note have not been resolved to my satisfaction.

I ask the committee to consider the need, in any report made to the committee, for;

1. SCC to list all unresolved complaints.
2. The committee to view any complaint sent to the LG Ombudsman as unresolved (except of course on those very rare occasions when the LGO finds in favour of the complainant).

and, to back this up and make sure that the report is true;

1. SCC to include in their procedures an opportunity for complainants to record complaints as unresolved.
3. SCC to submit to the committee their proposals for resolving any unresolved complaints.

Thank you,

David Scott

The present complaints procedure used by SCC is not 'fit for purpose' and does not accurately reflect the relationship between SCC and the 'captive consumers' of the services provided. The committee is being misled.

The present procedures, if used by a private company, would quickly drive that company out of business as customers found alternate suppliers or as that company faced action from the courts/regulator.

SCC, in directing their contractors to respond in writing to complaints, is acting in a manner that would be illegal in private industry and is poor and even dangerous management practice. SCC are either deceitful or incompetent.

My interest in the SCC complaints procedure started in 2008 as I watched a privately owned contractor, employed by SCC to collect council tax, harass, threaten and maliciously bully the weak among council tax payers – disabled, old, single mothers and ethnic minorities – congregated in the Magistrates Court. None of this bullying was warranted. All those I spoke to had been paying their council tax and had done nothing wrong. The contractor had deliberately engineered the confrontation for the sole purpose of meeting its internal targets.

I took a complaint about this through all the established procedures, including the LGO, only to have it brushed aside by a web of misleading statements and outright lies.

Curious to see whether this was a unique experience and if I was just unlucky, I started to submit written complaints about real matters with undisputable facts as they arose in my neighbourhood.

I always allowed SCC plenty of time to respond. SCC procedures do not extend the same courtesy to complainants but place a short deadline for any response otherwise they consider the complaint invalid.

In every case my complaints have been dismissed by SCC and have therefore not been resolved to my satisfaction.

To find out how many complaints were being dismissed or ignored by SCC I started a Freedom of Information action but this was quickly baulked by SCC.

Having discovered that the Standards and Governance Committee reviews an annual(?) summary of complaints I trawled through a number of meeting minutes looking for a breakdown of complaints and the action taken by SCC.

Finding nothing which in any way reflected my experience of the complaints system, I conclude that the committee is being deliberately misled by SCC and the committee is not aware of the real state of the relationship between SCC and council tax payers.