



GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT - 8TH JUNE 2021

SUBJECT: ANNUAL REVIEW OF COMPLAINTS RECEIVED UNDER THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE COMPLAINTS POLICY 1ST APRIL 2020 TO 31ST MARCH 2021

REPORT BY: HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES AND DEPUTY MONITORING OFFICER



1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide Members with an overview of the corporate complaints received for the year 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021.
- 1.2 To advise Members whether any trends were identified during this period and if so the action to be taken.
- 1.3 To provide Members with an overview of the lessons learned in respect of the complaints which have been upheld or partially upheld.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 To provide members with a review of the corporate complaints received during the year 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021.
- 2.2 Complaints are one of the ways in which, the Council gains information on the level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction of the services provided corporately by the Council. The result of the monitoring enables each department to focus on areas of concern, to improve services and to monitor performance and ensure that any trends in issues raised are identified and dealt with to be avoided in the future.
- 2.3 The Corporate Complaints Policy ensures that corporate complaints are dealt with consistently and fairly across all service areas.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Members are asked to note the content of the report.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 One of the terms of reference for the Audit Committee is to monitor the complaints process to ensure effective delivery of Council services.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 Members of the Committee will recall that it received a report on 19th March this year to consider the provisions of an updated Concerns and Complaints Policy, based on guidance issued by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. This new Policy was endorsed by Cabinet on 24th March and has been uploaded onto the Council's website. From the 1st April this year we are implementing the changes on the way in which we collect and analyse data which will be the subject of future biannual reports to the Governance and Audit Committee and Cabinet. However, this report centres on the reporting mechanisms implemented under the previous Complaints policy which had been in place since April 2013, albeit the two-stage process has remained the same.

- 5.2 Stage 1 complaints should be dealt with within 10 working days and Stage 2 within 20 working days. If a complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of a Stage 2 response, he/she will have the opportunity to refer the matter to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.

- 5.3 The individual service areas are responsible for ownership of the conduct of the complaint process and investigate complaints at both stage 1 and 2, with the Stage 2 response being dealt with by the Head of Service or nominated representative. In addition, where complaints relate to more than one directorate these may be responded to by the Deputy Monitoring Officer.

- 5.4 Members will also be aware that officers have established a Learning from Complaints Group (referred to throughout this report as "the Group"), which is chaired by the Deputy Monitoring Officer (or nominated representative), and includes Complaints Officers from across the Council, the Council's Senior Policy Officer (Equalities and Welsh Language), a representative from the Council's Performance Management Unit and a representative from the Council's Internal Audit Section. The restrictions due to the pandemic has meant that the Group has not met as regularly as it would ordinarily meet, however the data for the last year has been discussed between complaints officers in order to provide members with the data in the attached report.

- 5.5 The Committee received the first Annual Report in 2015. This is the sixth annual report; it includes comparative data against the data reported for the year 2019/20. In addition to this report Committee also received a six-monthly update in January this year which provided members with an overview of the complaints received from 1st April 2020 to 30th September 2021.

5.6 Review of Corporate Complaints

- 5.6.1 The data included in the Report relates to the complaints formally logged as corporate complaints received from 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021. It includes comparative data for the year 2019/20 for each Directorate referred to and an overview of the response timescales. The data also includes the outcome of each

complaint; namely whether a complaint has been upheld, not upheld, or partially upheld. An overview of the outcomes in respect of Stage 1 complaints are set out in paragraph 5.6.4 and an overview of the outcomes in respect of Stage 2 Complaints are set out in paragraph 5.6.15 of the Report.

5.6.2 Members are asked to note that this report includes details of formally logged corporate complaints only and does not include detail of interactions with customers which are deemed to be service requests. In addition, Members are also reminded that complaints relating to Schools are dealt with under a separate policy as are complaints raised by services users within Social Services.

5.6.3 The total number of corporate complaints received across the Authority was **177**. This is a notable decrease on last years' total of **274** with the comparison with last years' figures by Directorate set out below. There were 161 complaints dealt with at Stage 1 and 53 complaints dealt with at Stage 2 (of which 37 escalated from a Stage 1 to a Stage 2 (including 18 in the Communities Directorate (one of which escalated from the previous years' stage 1 response) together with 14 in Housing and 5 in Social Services.

5.6.4 A breakdown of the Stage 1 corporate complaints by reference to service area, together with comparative data from last year is set out below.

	20/21	19/20
Corporate Services	4	18
Education	0	3
Communities	62	110
Housing	51	75
Social Services	44	37
Total	161	243

Outcomes of Stage 1 complaints

5.6.5 Of the **161** Stage 1 complaints responded to, **15** have been upheld, **98** were not upheld, **39** have been partially upheld, and **8** did not proceed (DNP) and **1** is on hold. The breakdown by service area is listed below together with the outcomes and comparative data for the year 2019/20.

	<u>Upheld</u>		<u>Not Upheld</u>		<u>Partially Upheld</u>		<u>DNP</u>	
	20/21	19/20	20/21	19/20	20/21	19/20	20/21	19/20
Corporate Services	2	5	1	12	1	0	0	1
Education	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	0
Communities	3	34	30	44	29	31	0	1
Housing	9	7	36	61	6	7	0	0
Social Services*	1	2	31	33	3	2	8	0
Total	15	48	98	152	39	41	8	2

* One complaint is on hold within the Social Services Directorate.

- 5.6.6 The overall number of complaints dealt with at stage 1 this year when compared to 2019/20 has decreased by 82 (161 this year compared to 243 last year).
- 5.6.7 The number of Stage 1 complaints upheld has decreased by 33 (15 this year compared to 48 last year); the number of complaints not upheld has decreased by 54 (98 this year compared to 152 last year) and the number of complaints partially upheld has decreased by 2 (39 this year compared to 41 last year).
- 5.6.8 The data for this year has been analysed by the service areas who have provided the following synopsises.
- 5.6.9 In terms of **Social Services** complaints responded to under the Corporate Complaints Procedure were varied in nature and related to both Adult Services and Children's Services, there was no particular trend. The adults complaints referred to residents being unhappy that carers were disposing of PPE equipment outside property and parking dangerously outside, family member not wanting Social Services to take over finances, family unhappy with the care provided to parents, care plan review did not accurately reflect mother's needs, being refused a Disabled Persons Parking Place, family unhappy that late mother's property was under the directorate's supervision and that it was not kept in good condition, staff attitude, behaviour of staff in a private care home towards the residents and the staff not adhering to lockdown guidance, unhappy with the comments made by grandmother's social worker, staff member not being aware of the social services structure.
- 5.6.10 The children's complaints referred to personal information being shared, grandparents concerned about their grandchildren, concerns raised not being answered by the social work team and the Safeguarding team not being informed of allegations, grandparent unhappy that child has been removed, grandparent unhappy that PNC completed without her consent, false claims made during Court hearing, social services contacted family to advise that complainant's contact with child should not be unsupervised and did not contact the complainant and were related to family concerns regarding Covid-19, contact and restrictions.
- 5.6.11 The Corporate Complaints policy has continued to be utilised in more circumstances where complainants were unable to progress their complaints through the separate Social Services Complaints procedure. That said of the complaints dealt with 31 were not upheld, 1 upheld and 3 partially upheld, 8 did not proceed and 1 is on hold.
- 5.6.12 In terms of **Corporate Services** complaints there has been a variety of complaints and no trends identified. They related to a customer services contact, correspondence in relation to Council tax matters, a complaint about the attitude of a member of staff and a disputed business rates calculation. Examples of the complaints which have been upheld or partially upheld are set out in paragraph 5.11
- 5.6.13 In relation to **Communities**, the number of complaints which have been upheld has substantially decreased this year from 34 to 3, partially upheld complaints from 31 to 29 and complaints not upheld from 44 to 29. The three complaints upheld related to different services within the Directorate: one street lighting, one repeated missed collection and one in relation to road markings for parking bays. In terms of the partially upheld complaints, the majority, 22, related to repeat missed bin collections and were a combination of food waste, recycling, and garden waste and were throughout the County Borough. Members will recall the six-monthly report noted the issue in relation to missed collections and were advised that the *Waste Management department have faced resource challenges during the pandemic due to increased tonnages which have influenced the collection systems. However,*

going forward the lessons learned during this period have been to utilise and monitor resource on a regular basis to ensure services are delivered effectively and to undertake and implement a review of collection round size/structure over the next 12-18 months.

Other complaints related to the rules in place for the Civic Amenity site due to Covid restrictions, fly tipping, over hanging trees, pre planning advice, dog nuisance and noise nuisance. Examples of complaints upheld or partially upheld are set out in paragraph 5.11 below.

- 5.6.14 The complaints recorded within **Housing** span a wide service provision area and no defined trends or systemic problems were identified. Overall, the number of Stage 1 complaints recorded for the Housing service has decreased by approximately 28 percent on the year 20/21 compared to 19/20.

The **Housing Management Service** has seen a decrease in the number of Stage 1 complaints. No specific area for the Stage 1 complaints have been identified, however examples would include neighbouring garden conditions, maintenance of communal areas and boundary fence disputes.

There has been a notable decrease in Stage 1 complaints recorded for the **Leasehold Services Section**. This is due to the volume of Welsh Housing Quality Standard works being carried out on blocks including Leasehold properties reducing within the last year. Additionally, the **Welsh Housing Quality Standards** external and internal works Stage 1 complaints have decreased. This is due to the Tier 4 restrictions that have been put in place by the Welsh Government following the Covid-19 pandemic reducing the volume of work undertaken.

The small increases in **Homelessness** and **Anti Social Behaviour** Stage 1 complaints are likely to be related to the Covid-19 pandemic, due to increases in the numbers of people presenting as homeless, and lockdown restrictions impacting on people's behaviours and routines.

- 5.6.15 In **Education** there were no complaints dealt with in this service area for this reporting period.

- 5.6.15 A breakdown of Stage 2 corporate complaints by reference to the service area, together with comparative data for 2019/2020 is set out below.

	20/21	19/20
Corporate Services	1	4
Education	0	0
Communities	27	46
Housing	20	35
Social Services	5	2
Other (cross directorate)	0	2
Total	53	89

- 5.6.16 Members will note the number of complaints dealt with at Stage 2 are noticeably less than the number from 2019/20 with the Communities Directorate and Housing seeing the largest decrease in numbers.

5.6.17 Of the 53 Stage 2 complaints responded to **1** has been upheld, **40** were not upheld and **12** were partially upheld. The breakdown by service area is listed below together with the outcomes and comparative data for the year 2019/20.

	<u>Upheld</u>		<u>Not Upheld</u>		<u>Partially Upheld</u>		<u>DNP</u>	
	19/20	20/21	19/20	20/21	19/20	20/21	19/20	20/21
Corporate Services	0	0	3	1	1	0	0	0
Education	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Communities	11	1	26	19	9	7	0	0
Housing	3	0	27	16	5	4	0	0
Social Services	0	0	1	5	1	0	0	0
Cross/Directorate	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
Total	14	1	59	41	16	11	0	0

5.8.16 Overall there has been a lower number of complaints upheld at Stage 2 this year (1 this year compared to **14** last year and a slight decrease in the number of complaints partially upheld (**11** this year compared to **16** last year).

5.8.17 With regard to **Housing**, the overall figures have decreased by 15. As previously mentioned there has been a notable decrease in Stage 2 complaints recorded for the Leasehold Services Section and Welsh Housing Quality Standards external and internal works. This could be attributed to the reduced volume of Welsh Housing Quality Standard works being carried out on blocks, including those containing Leasehold properties, reducing within the last year due to the Tier 4 restrictions that have been put in place by the Welsh Government following the Covid-19 pandemic. There has been an increase in Stage 2 complaints recorded for Anti Social Behaviour. As previously mentioned, this is likely to be due to lockdown restrictions impacting on people's behaviours and routines.

5.8.18 In relation to **Communities** there was only 1 complaint upheld this year compared to 11 last year; 7 partially upheld compared to 9 last year. Of these complaints six had escalated from a stage 1 response and 2 commenced at Stage 2. These complaints related to the following: two fly tipping issues, one relating to the out of hours emergency repairs helpline, one in relation to road markings for parking bays, and four in respect of repeated missed bin collections.

5.9 Ombudsman's Referrals

5.9.1 There were 47 complaints referred to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales for this period.

In relation to Education 2 complaints were referred prematurely and not investigated. One related to an Education Appeal which are dealt with outside the Corporate Complaints process and one related to a decision the Council had already made which the Ombudsman advised had been properly made and no further action was to be taken. In relation to Corporate Services there were no complaints referred to the Ombudsman. In relation to Housing 6 referrals were made prematurely and 3 had received stage 2 responses and were not investigated.

In relation to Communities 10 referrals were made prematurely and 5 had received a stage 2 response and not investigated.

In relation to Social Services, there were 2 referrals made under the separate Social Services Complaints policy which were not investigated. In addition, there were 12 premature referrals 2 of which resulted in an early resolution, the remainder were not investigated, and 6 referrals were made following receipt of a stage 2 response under the corporate complaints process of which 1 resulted in an early resolution and the remainder were not investigated.

There were 3 referrals which could not be allocated to a service area; one was withdrawn, one was referred to the Information Commissioner and one did not progress within the Ombudsman's office.

5.10 Target time for responses

5.10.1 In terms of response times there were 24 stage 1 complaints which did not meet the target and 3 stage 2 responses. The comparable figures with 2019/2020 are set out below.

Year	Total Stage 1	Target not met	Total Stage 2	Target not met
2020/2021	161	24	53	3
2019/2020	243	28	89	4

The data in relation to this indicates that overall compliance with the response deadlines is 90.36%, 1.46% up on last years' figure of 88.9% as identified in the graph at Appendix 1.

5.10.2 The reasons for not meeting the deadline include the following: response waiting approval, administrative error, workload pressures, consultation required, officers on leave, initial impact of the Covid 19 pandemic. The Group will continue to remind officers to request an extension of time from the complainant should it become clear that the deadline for responding cannot be met.

5.11 Review of Trends and Lessons Learned

5.11.1 The volume of complaints is not always as important as the nature and the content of the complaint. Each complaint can be an opportunity to make small changes or service improvement on a small or greater scale. Sometimes the smallest change can result in the greatest increase in customer satisfaction. An overview of any trends, anonymised summaries of a sample of upheld/partially upheld complaints for each directorate are set out below.

Corporate Services

Example 1

Customer complained that they had received a letter which expressed condolences in hearing that a family member had passed away due to Covid 19, but the letter continued to ask for financial details for the surviving family member. The department acknowledged that the timing of the letter was inappropriate as the family were grieving and had not held the funeral at this stage.

Lessons learned are that more care needs to be taken when sending out further information letters of the particular circumstances of the matter in hand.

Example 2

A customer complained that she and her husband had received a letter from the Council with her husband's ex-partner incorrectly named as one of the addressees. The customer was unhappy with the error as she and her husband had been married for a number of years and so the correspondence should not have been incorrectly addressed.

Lessons Learned: - All staff are reminded to be vigilant when checking information received from other departments to mitigate this type of error and to prevent this from happening again.

Example 3

A customer complained that a neighbour's bin had not been emptied, the neighbour had passed away and the bin was left out and remained full. The customer called a number of times to report the missed bin collection and was transferred to officers within the waste department but the customer was cut off a number of times and was not able to speak to an officer within waste. The customer called back to Customer Services each time and the operator tried to transfer the call.

The officer dealing with the complaint identified a technical issue with one of the telephone numbers and unfortunately this resulted in the customer's call not being answered and eventually their call being terminated. The customer was advised that the arrangements had been made for the bin to be emptied and the customer was satisfied that the matter was dealt with.

Lessons learned – Where a telephone line drops out on a call with a customer, staff have been advised to check for any technical issues with that particular line. Staff must also ensure that the customer is called back in such circumstances and connected to the appropriate department.

Housing

Example 1 Leaseholder Example

A Leaseholder contacted Customer Services regarding an ongoing issue relating to a leak from the toilet at the Leaseholder's property. The Leaseholder was told the leak was their responsibility and it was for them to arrange for a plumber to fix however after further investigation, it was established that the leak was caused by a council operative drilling a hole into the soil pipe. The complaint was upheld, and the Leaseholder was provided with an apology. The lesson learned from this case involved the Leasehold Team and the Housing Repair Operations Team being made aware of the circumstances of the complaint to encourage due consideration in the future of leaseholders' views as to the potential cause of repair issues.

Example 2 Housing Repair Operations Example

A tenant's daughter contacted the Central Repairs Team to request an operative look at her mother's bathroom taps as they were leaking. The daughter was advised that due to the taps being the tenant's own, it would be their responsibility to have the leak fixed. The daughter explained they had recently reported an issue with the taps and a Caerphilly Homes operative had called to fix them. The operative in question was spoken to and it was later established they did go and repair the taps as they were not aware, they had been replaced by the tenant. The complaint was upheld and due

to the previous error, on this occasion a Caerphilly Homes operative called to fix the leak on the taps but it was explained to the tenant that as part of the landlords consent procedure, they would have been advised it was their responsibility to maintain the taps should any faults occur. In light of this, to discuss the lessons learned in this case, the all operatives were advised by way of a tool box talk not to carry out any repairs to non council materials or items which would have required landlord's consent.

Example 3 Housing Advice Centre Example

A local resident contacted Customer Services to advise they had received a letter from CCBC's Housing Advice Section detailing they were in mortgage arrears and a Possession Order had been obtained from their mortgage company. The resident was very upset by this letter as they explained they were not in arrears and were in fact currently changing mortgage providers and were concerned this letter would put the process in jeopardy. The details of this complaint were passed to the Housing Solutions Manager to consider and following an investigation it was established the letter was misread by the Administrative Officer, resulting in the complaint being upheld. The resident received an apology for the upset caused and by way of a lesson learnt, the Administrative Officer was reminded to read correspondence thoroughly and if in doubt of its contents, a query should be raised with a senior officer.

Social Services

Example 1

A complaint was received from a solicitor on behalf of relatives who were unhappy that their late mother's property was not kept in good condition whilst under the Directorate of Social Services supervision and requested a copy of any visit logs or maintenance that the Directorate carried out at the property whilst it was under its supervision. On collection of the keys, the relatives found the property to be in a state of disrepair which distressed them. Relatives took photographs of the condition of the property, also the representative who handed over the keys to the relatives took photographs as well.

Following an investigation into the complaint it was identified that an area of the ceiling in the front bedroom that was sagging and that there was an active leak in the roof of the property, the garden should have been maintained to a better standard than it was. Whilst the visits did happen on a monthly basis the visit logs showed very little detail of any substantive checking or inspection. The Directorate apologised to the relatives for the property not being maintained as it should have whilst subject to a Protection of Property and it and the Facilities Department would undertake a review of the documentation in order to make it clearer in future. Relatives were advised that the damage to the ceiling as well as the garden clearance and any damage to property will be processed via a CCBC insurance claim process.

Lessons Learned - Substantive checking and inspection to be carried out in future. Documentation also to be reviewed to ensure it is clearer in future.

Example 2

A complaint was received from a complainant who was unhappy with the attitude of the member of staff she spoke to regarding the final invoice for her late mother-in-

law's care, that she was unhelpful, rude towards her and downright obstructive as the staff member would not give her any information in respect of her late-in-law mother even though she was the executor.

Following an investigation it was identified that the member of staff was correct in not providing information to the complainant as on Directorate records, the complainant's husband was the named person as dealing with the his late mother's account, who had signed the Financial form authorising the complainant's husband to deal with her finances and there was no actual consent form to deal with the complainant. The staff member was not obstructive and had attempted to explain that information could only be provided to the complainant's husband and agreed to send this, however, was unable to provide the information over the telephone due to Data Protection requirements. During the investigation another issue was identified, in that the information in respect of the complainant's mother-in-law was not passed on in a timely manner and therefore there was a delay in closing the account and passing the information to the appropriate section to raise the final invoice. The Directorate apologised for the delay in the invoice and for any upset and distress caused by the complainant having to make contact on several occasions during such a difficult time for their family.

Lessons Learned - Staff to pass on information in a timely manner via email as given the current Covid situation staff have restricted access to the office and are not in the office enough for previous procedures to be followed.

Example 3

A complaint was received from a complainant on behalf of his mother who was unhappy with the criteria and process for Disabled Persons Parking Places(DPPP) which is part of the council's Works and Adaptations Policy. The issues were that the application for the DPPP took 15 months to be processed, was unfairly considered based on the criteria set out and inconsistency in the Council's approach to dealing with the application, there was no information provided to advise of an appeals process, the lack of consideration for the complainant's mother's carer, expecting them to unnecessarily expose themselves to risk in suggesting they should have to travel further than necessary when assisting an individual using a mobility aid. The complainant also felt that there had been discrimination based on protected characteristics, and disability, also, failure to consider reasonable adjustments by using a set criterion/policy resulting in a service/provision not being provided due to an individual's disabilities not being taking into account.

Following an investigation, it was identified that unfortunately there was a delay in processing the DPPP application and the Directorate apologised for this error. The application was dealt with in accordance with the DPPP criteria. The information on the appeals process was not sent out in the email correspondence, however it would have been had it been requested and that sending of this information would be the usual practice when responding by post. The Directorate apologised for this oversight. When Social Services apply the criteria that consideration also needs to be given to other residents and when a resident already has a dedicated parking facility, in this case in the form of a garage, then it could be deemed unfair by other residents who may not have access to such a facility and the Directorate advised the complainant that it would be more than happy to assess the property in order to determine if there is potential to adapt the property to facilitate wheelchair access to the rear of the property where the garage is located. The complainant was advised that there is clear guidance for DPPP provision which unfortunately in this instance had not been met and that the complainant's mother's disabilities were taken into

account in accordance with the established criteria which was agreed by elected council members.

Lessons Learned – the process by which such applications are administered is being reviewed to prevent the potential for any such errors occurring in the future.

Communities

Example 1

A Complaint was received to report repeated missed waste collections and ongoing problems with collections of all waste for their property together with others in the street. This was investigated and it was discovered that as a result of different crews operating in the area and collections were missed. The complaint was partially upheld.

Lessons learned - To remain committed to complying with the statutory service requirements for waste collection and for better communication to be required between supervisor and driver.

Example 2

A Customer submitted a complaint about the delays on gaining access to a Civic Amenity site and felt more cars should be permitted access at the same time. This complaint was made in October 2020 and was responded to having regard to the Covid restrictions in place at that time.

Due to Covid restrictions the number of vehicles permitted into the CA site were limited which caused delays in residents gaining entry.

Officers explained that queues at our HWRC sites were in line with those experienced at other HWRCs across the country and stressed the importance of complying with the protection of public health and staff. Having learnt from other experiences where sites were open before the Welsh Council facilities, a conscious effort was made to design out the risk of people getting into unnecessary contact, conflict, and tension by to and froing between skips.

A specific risk out design was implemented and from the user feedback many commented on this system as being a safe and re-assuring tipping experience. At the time the complaint was made, local lockdowns were in place and the situation with Covid continuing to worsen the Authority was committed to retain this safe user system and thus not increasing the risks any further to staff and residents. Whilst it was necessary to queue from time to time they were provided with a safe and contactless tipping opportunity.

Officers explained that the Council was constantly reviewing site operations and responding to the ever-increasing changes due to the Covid rules which would continue and residents would be advised of any user rules implemented.

The customer was advised that our facilities were operating on the premise of trying to recycle as much material as possible and in turn achieve the strict Government recycling targets and that the interim site layouts maintain the opportunities for material recovery.

Officers agreed to review the layouts to determine if they could optimise space whilst not compromising servicing of such containers. As a result the majority of sites were reconfigured to allow additional traffic whilst still providing for the recycling of all types of materials. Officers listened to the feedback and as a result liaised with Authorities across the country about their experience of new waste solutions. The result of this review was a new working proposal which it was hoped would improve further the HWRC experience we offer to our residents.

Lessons Learned - Remain committed to the mantra of continuous service improvement and dealing appropriately with customer feedback.

Example 3

A resident had fallen down a set of steps where the area was poorly lit due to a broken/faulty light. This was investigated and was upheld.

Lessons Learned – It was identified that parts for the lighting system were not available. In future where there are obsolete fixtures suppliers to be contacted earlier to find suitable alternatives.

Example 4

A customer had reported incidents of dog nuisance to Environmental Health and were advised to report the concerns as a formal complaint about the constant barking and dog faeces. When logging the complaint with the contact centre the details of the complaint were not taken down correctly which resulted in an officer from a different section contacting the customer who then needed to refer the matter on to the correct officer, delaying the matter being dealt with. This was investigated and it was partially upheld acknowledging that the matter was not passed to the correct officers.

Lessons learned - as the nature of the complaint was wrongly recorded at contact centre but our response was in line with policy it was allocated to wrong officer.

Example 5

A complaint was received in relation to payment for a pre-planning application that was submitted and paid for and no decision was provided for a number of months. The complaint was investigated and was partially upheld.

Lesson learnt – Ensure resources are sufficient to meet demand and that any advice given over the telephone is immediately followed up with a written response. However, the current Uniform planning system was due to be upgraded in Autumn and will diarise such matters which will in turn set triggers for action to be taken by an officer in, order to meet deadlines.

Causes of complaints

5.12.3 Members will recall at the meeting of the Audit Committee in March 2016 it was agreed that the causes of complaints would be recorded in accordance with the following agreed list.

- 1 Collaborative Working
- 2 Decision Making
- 3 Delay in Service Provision

- 4 Officer/Contractors Conduct with public (including sensitivity/empathy of staff/politeness)
- 5 Following Council Policies/relevant Legislation
- 6 Accessibility of Services
- 7 Clarity/Accuracy/Timeliness of information
- 8 Quality of Work
- 9 Openness/ Fairness and Honesty
- 10 Compliance with Complaints procedure
- 11 A combination of categories

This data has been analysed within each directorate and is set out in the table at Appendix 2 and a graph of the causes is attached at Appendix 3.

5.13 Vexatious Complainants Policy

- 5.13.1 Members are advised that there have been no referrals made under this policy, although the officer Learning from Complaints Group will continue to monitor its use. The Group does however acknowledge that it is a useful aide in dealing with potential vexatious complainants.

5.14 Conclusion

- 5.14.1 Whilst the number of complaints received and dealt with under the Corporate Complaints Process over the last year has decreased the areas of complaint remain wide ranging across the authority. It is important to recognise that the outcome of many complaints dealt with enable us to implement changes and improve on our services provided. An important part of dealing with complaints are the lessons learned and any actions agreed as a result of recognising when we need to put things right for the customer and the service.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

- 6.1 The information contained in this report is based on data collected over the year and therefore it has not been necessary to make assumptions.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 As the report is for information only there is no requirement to undertake an Integrated Impact Assessment.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no direct financial implications associated with this report.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no direct personnel implications associated with this report.

10. CONSULTATIONS

- 10.1 The views of the consultees have been incorporated into this report.

11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 Local Government Act 1972 – 2003

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Rob Waggett, Customer Services Development Officer
Liam Miles, Customer Services/Complaints Officer
Nicola Broom, Complaints and Information Manager Social Services
Michelle Moore, Social Services Complaints and Information Officer
Ros Roberts, Business Improvement Manager
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Karen Williams, PA to Chief Executive
Leigh Brook, PA to the Director of Social Services and Housing
Lianne Fry, PA to Corporate Management Team
Sian Wilkes, PA to the Interim Corporate Director of Communities

Appendix 1 Comparable data in respect of targets not met
Appendix 2 Table outlining causes of complaints
Appendix 3 Graph highlighting causes of complaints