



GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE – 24TH JANUARY 2023

**SUBJECT: SIX MONTH UPDATE ON CORPORATE COMPLAINTS
RECEIVED FOR THE PERIOD 1ST APRIL 2022 TO 30TH
SEPTEMBER 2022**

**REPORT BY: HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES AND DEPUTY
MONITORING OFFICER**

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Governance and Audit Committee with an overview of the complaints dealt with under the Corporate Complaints policy for the six month period 1st April 2022 to 30th September 2022 together with the outcomes and lessons learned. This report will also be presented to a meeting of the Cabinet.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 This report provides a summary of the complaints dealt with under the Corporate Complaints Policy during the six month period 1st April 2022 to 30th September 2022, the outcomes and lessons learned.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Committee is asked to note the complaints data contained in this report and to review and assess the effectiveness of complaints handling for the six month period 1st April 2022 to 30th September 2022.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The Local Government and Elections Wales Act 2021 sets out provisions for the Governance and Audit Committee to "review and assess the authority's ability to handle complaints effectively and to make reports and recommendations in relation to the authority's ability to handle complaints effectively".
- 4.2 The guidance from the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales also requires the data to be reviewed by Cabinet, hence the report will also be presented to Cabinet.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 By way of background, Cabinet at its meeting on 24th March 2021 adopted a new Corporate Complaints Policy (the Policy) along with an updated policy dealing with unacceptable and unreasonable actions by complainants under the complaints policy. The Policy became effective on 1st April 2021 and a copy is included at Appendix 1 of this report for members information. The report considered by Cabinet is also included as a background paper.
- 5.2 This Committee received the first Annual Report on the complaints dealt with under the new Policy for the period April 2021/2022 at its meeting in October last year which was also considered by Cabinet. This report sets out details of the complaints dealt with for the six month period from 1st April 2022 to 30th September 2022 and will also be considered by Cabinet at a forthcoming meeting.
- 5.3 Members will recall that the Policy deals with corporate complaints only. There are separate complaints processes for dealing with social services complaints and school-based complaints. The Social Services Complaints Procedure Wales Regulations 2014 outlines the procedure for handling complaints from persons receiving a service from social services and school-based complaints are dealt with by the School and Governing Body. In addition, Freedom of Information complaints and complaints about Data Protection matters are within the remit of the Information Commissioner.
- 5.4 The Policy consists of an internal two stage process with the right for a complainant to refer their complaint to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales should they be dissatisfied with the response.
- 5.5 Since the adoption of the new Policy, complaints officers across the various directorates continue to raise awareness amongst their respective staff of the importance of recognising complaints and dealing with them in accordance with the Policy. One of the benefits of recording complaints more effectively is that we can recognise trends more readily and take steps to put things right and learn from any issues identified within the relevant directorate and beyond where appropriate.
- 5.6 The Ombudsman providing training to over 80 staff in 2021 on complaints handling generally and further training is being rolled out across the Directorates in February and April this year on complaint investigation skills and managing difficult behaviours and expectations. The Complaints Officers within each Directorate will continue to provide advice, guidance and support to their respective service areas on how to deal with complaints efficiently and effectively and are supported by the Corporate Complaints Officer based within Legal Services who maintains the overall database. The Corporate Complaints Officer is also the contact officer for the Ombudsman's office.
- 5.7 Members will recall from the Annual Complaints report received at the last meeting that complaints officers are trialling a new digital complaints system with assistance from colleagues in Digital and Customer Services the aim of which is to streamline controls and improve data records within the complaints process. Officers are currently providing feedback on the trials which has been taken onboard and adjustments are being made prior to the system going live. However until that time officers are continuing to utilise existing data systems which still require much

administration and manual interrogation in order to produce meaningful intelligence and learning.

5.8 To support the work of complaints officers and each directorate, officers have a long established Learning from Complaints Group (“the Group”) comprising Complaints Officers from each directorate, the Corporate Complaints Officer, the Council’s Senior Policy Officer (Equalities Welsh Language and Consultation), representatives from the Council’s Corporate Policy Unit and a representative from the Council’s Internal Audit Section. The meetings are chaired by the deputy Monitoring Officer and meet at least quarterly to discuss the complaints data and reporting procedures.

5.9 These meetings have resulted in the establishment of the formal template included at Appendices 2 to 6 which provides a more in depth information and analysis on all aspects of the complaints data and its relevancy to the service areas within the directorates.

5.10 General Overview

The total number of complaints dealt with during the period 1st April 2022 to 30th September 2022 under the Corporate Complaints policy is **203** and is broken down as follows

Directorate	Stage 1	Stage 2	Escalated	Total
Social Services	22	0	2	24
Education	2	0	1	3
Economy & Environment	72	9	12	93
Housing	58	2	13	73
Corporate	7	2	1	10
TOTAL	161	13	29	203

The Outcomes are as follows

Directorate	Upheld	Not Upheld	Withdrawn	Ongoing	Total
Social Services	3	21	0	0	24
Education	0	3	0	0	3
Economy & Environment	53	38	2	0	93
Housing	22	47	3	1	73
Corporate	5	5	0	0	10
TOTAL	83	114	5	1	203

Ombudsman Referrals

Directorate	Number	Outcome
Social Services	1	Not Investigating
Education	1	Not Investigating
Economy & Environment	10	9 Not Investigating 1 Early Resolution offer to waive drafting fee
Housing	3	Not Investigating

Corporate	1	Early Resolution to Monitor Junk Email inbox & Apologise
TOTAL	16	

5.11 Detailed Data broken down by Directorate

The data is broken down in more detail per Directorate in the following Appendices which are attached to this report.

Economy and Environment	Appendix 2
Housing	Appendix 3
Education and Libraries	Appendix 4
Corporate Services	Appendix 5
Social Services (Corporate only)	Appendix 6

5.12 Members will note from the data set out in the Appendices, that officers are continuing to respond to complaints under the Policy. Work is ongoing to make the digital system fit for purpose which will provide officers with the tools needed to analyse the data and improve performance. The ongoing training outlined in paragraph 5.5 above will also equip officers with the necessary knowledge to deal with complaints efficiently and effectively with the forthcoming training focussing on investigation skills and managing difficult behaviours. The Learning from Complaints group will continue to meet to discuss the process as a whole and the lessons learned and Directorate complaints officers will actively continue to educate their respective service areas and provide support as and when required.

5.13 Conclusion

Members are asked to consider and note the information contained in this report and Appendices.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

6.1 No assumptions are necessary as the content of the report is based on data collected and analysed.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

As the report is for information only an Integrated Impact Assessment is not required.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no personnel implications arising from this report.

10. CONSULTATIONS

- 10.1 The report has been circulated to the consultees listed below and any comments have been incorporated into this report.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2019

Author: Lisa Lane Head of Democratic Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer

Consultees: Corporate Management Team
Robert Tranter, Head of Legal Services and Monitoring officer
Gemma Hoare, Senior Housing Officer (Customer Services)
Gareth Jones Housing Officer (Customer Services)
Karen Williams, Customer Services Digital Hub Manager
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
Andrea Jones, Corporate Complaints Officer
Anwen Cullinane, Senior Policy Officer (Equalities, Welsh Language and Consultation)
Deborah Gronow, Audit Group Manager
Karen L Williams, PA to Chief Executive
Leigh Brook, PA to the Director of Social Services and Housing
Lianne Fry, PA to Corporate Director Education and Corporate Services
Sian Wilkes, PA to the Interim Corporate Director of Communities
James Penfold, Transformation Manager
Ian Raymond, Business Improvement Officer

Appendices

- Appendix 1 [Link to Corporate Complaints Policy](#)
Appendix 2 Economy & Environment
Appendix 3 Housing
Appendix 4 Education and Libraries
Appendix 5 Corporate Services
Appendix 6 Social Services (Corporate complaints only)

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Report to Cabinet 24th March 2021

- Link to Cabinet Report
Link to Appendix 1
Link to Appendix 2
Link to Appendix 3
Link to Appendix 4