



GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE – 16TH APRIL 2024

**SUBJECT: SIX MONTH UPDATE ON THE CORPORATE COMPLAINTS
RECEIVED FOR THE PERIOD 1ST APRIL 2023 TO 30TH
SEPTEMBER 2023**

**REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR EDUCATION AND
CORPORATE SERVICES**

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 to 30th September 2023 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 to 30th September 2023, the outcomes and lessons learned.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 The 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 to 30th September 2023.

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 requires the data to be reviewed by Cabinet.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 By way of background, Cabinet at its meeting on 24th March 2021 adopted the current 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 at that time is also included as a background paper.
- 5.2 This Committee has received two Annual Reports since the implementation of this policy; for the year April 2021 to March 2022 at its meeting on 11th October 2022 and for the year April 2022 to March 2023 on 7th November 2023. A six month update report for the period April to September 2022 was presented to this committee on 24th January 2023. This report sets out details of the complaints dealt with for the first six month period of 2023/2024 and will also be considered by a forthcoming meeting of Cabinet.
- 5.3 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 Complaints officers within their respective Directorates provide support to officers in order to deal with complaints effectively and in accordance with the Policy. Training has been provided by the Ombudsman's office to staff and enquiries are being made regarding training for committee members on the complaints process and for further staff training which has been well received to date.
- 5.6 Since the last report to committee, management of the Corporate Complaints process has been transferred to the Corporate Governance Unit. The single nominated Corporate Complaints Officer role has been replaced by a team of officers who manage contacts received including via the Corporate Complaints inbox, mail, telephone and in person contacts. Whilst it was anticipated that the new digital process would be implemented towards the end of last year further testing was required. The new "go live" date will be the 1st May 2024. In the interim the Customer Services Manager and the Deputy Monitoring Officer are jointly managing the complaints process. The reporting process will be transferred in due course to the Information Governance Manager.
- 5.7 The Committee will be familiar with the formal template included in the Appendices to this report which was produced by the Learning from Complaints Group. Going forward this Group will include Complaints Officers from each directorate, representatives from the Corporate Governance Unit, 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. There will be handover arrangements with the Deputy Monitoring Officer and the Information Governance Manager in terms of Chairing the Group, although the

Deputy Monitoring Officer will remain involved in the process until such time as the transition is completed.

5.8 General Overview

The total number of complaints received during the period 1st April to 30th September 2023 under the Corporate Complaints policy is **288** and is broken down as follows:-

Directorate	Stage 1	Stage 2	Escalated	Total
Economy & Environment	126	15	25	166
Housing	65	4	5	74
Education	3	0	3	6
Corporate	7	1	0	8
Social Services	26	1	7	34
TOTAL	227	21	40	288

The Outcomes are as follows.

Directorate	Upheld	Not Upheld	Withdrawn	Ongoing	Total
Economy & Environment	58	108			166
Housing	13	55	6		74
Education	4	2			6
Corporate	3	5			8
Social Services	5	29			34
TOTAL	83	199	6		288

Ombudsman Referrals

Directorate	Number	Outcome
Economy & Environment	3	Not Investigating
Housing	6	5 not investigating 1 Early Resolution
Education	1	Not Investigating
Corporate Services	1	Not Investigating
Social Services	3	2 Not Investigating 1 Early Resolution
TOTAL	14	

5.9 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

5.10 Members will note that the data produced at Appendices 2-6 of this report outlines in particular the upheld complaints for each directorate. As this report covers a six month period a fuller analysis of the data will be undertaken when presenting the Annual report.

5.11 **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. **CONSULTATION**

10.1 The report was circulated to the consultee list below and any comments received have been reflected in the 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
Carl Evans Information Governance Manager
Karen Williams, Customer Services Digital Hub Manager
Gemma Hoare, Senior Housing Officer (Customer Services)
Gareth Jones Housing Officer (Customer Services)
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
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

Appendices

[Link to Appendix 1 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

[Link to Cabinet report 24th March 2021](#)

[Link to Appendix 1](#)
[Link to Appendix 2](#)
[Link to Appendix 3](#)
[Link to Appendix 4](#)