



AUDIT COMMITTEE - 14TH JUNE 2017

SUBJECT: UPDATE ON THE NUMBERS OF COMPLAINTS RECEIVED UNDER THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE COMPLAINTS POLICY

REPORT BY: INTERIM HEAD OF LEGAL SERVICES AND MONITORING OFFICER

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide Members with an update on the number of complaints received under the Corporate Complaints Policy for the period 1st October 2016 to 31st March 2017.
- 1.2 To advise Members whether any trends have been identified and if so the action to be taken.
- 1.3 To update Members on the use of the Policy and Procedure to deal effectively with unacceptable, persistent or unreasonable actions by complainants.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 To provide members with an overview of the corporate complaints, which, is 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 so as to be avoided in the future.
- 2.2 To ensure that corporate complaints are dealt with consistently and fairly across all service areas.
- 2.3 To update members on the implementation of the Policy and Procedure to deal effectively with unacceptable, persistent or unreasonable actions by complainants.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 Monitoring of the Council's corporate complaints and successful resolution of those complaints contributes to the following Well-Being goals within the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 as it supports the provision of higher quality and more effective services to the public across all service areas. In addition monitoring provides information on the level of satisfaction 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, ensure that any trends or issues raised are identified and dealt with so as to be avoided in the future and to ensure that corporate complaints are dealt with consistently and fairly across all service areas.

- A prosperous Wales
- A resilient Wales
- A healthier Wales
- A more equal Wales
- A Wales of cohesive communities and thriving Welsh language
- A globally responsible Wales.

4. THE REPORT

4.1 On 1st April 2013, the Council implemented a new Corporate Complaints Policy (referred to as the Policy in this report) in order to reflect the model policy introduced by the Welsh Government which was amended and updated in January 2016 and is available on the Council's website.

4.2 This Committee has received regular updates on the implementation of the Policy, details of which are set out in the background papers.

4.3 This report provides an update on the complaints received for the period 1st October 2016 to 31st March 2017.

4.4 Review of Corporate Complaints

4.4.1 The data referred to below represents the number of complaints received from 1st October 2016 to 31st March 2017 for each Directorate referred to, together with an overview of the response timescales.

4.4.2 In addition, the complaints data captured 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 4.4.5 (c) and an overview of the outcomes in respect of Stage 2 Complaints are set out in paragraph 4.4.5 (g) below.

4.4.3 Members are reminded that the number of complaints listed for Social Services and Education are significantly lower than those of other Directorates such as Housing and the Environment. The reason for the difference is that this report only includes details of corporate complaints received for those service areas. Social Services operate a separate complaints policy for service users. Within Education the respective schools deal with their own complaints. Members have received separate reports on both issues in the past.

4.4.4 The total number of corporate complaints received across the Authority during this period is 91 comprising the following: -

% of total number of complaints received October 2016 – March 2017

| | | |
|----|---------------------------|-------|
| 10 | Corporate | 10.99 |
| 2 | Education | 2.20 |
| 34 | Environment | 37.36 |
| 40 | Housing | 43.95 |
| 0 | Social Services | 0 |
| 5 | Other (cross Directorate) | 5.50 |

4.4.5 A breakdown of the types of complaints are summarised as follows: -

Stage 1 Corporate Complaints

| (a) | Title | Actual |
|-----|---|--------|
| | Number of Stage 1 complaints received in Corporate Services | 10 |
| | Number of Stage 1 complaints received in Education | 2 |
| | Number of Stage 1 complaints received in Environment | 28 |
| | Number of Stage 1 complaints received in Housing | 37 |
| | Number of Stage 1 complaints received in Social Services | 0 |
| | Number of Stage 1 complaints received Other (cross directorate) | 0 |

(b) The total number of complaints received at Stage 1 were 77, of those 71 were responded to within timescale and 5 outside the timescale (6.49%), and 1 did not proceed.

- (c) Of the 77 Stage 1 complaints, responded to, 13 have been upheld, 42 were not upheld and 21 have been partially upheld and 1 did not proceed. The breakdown of outcomes for each Directorate is listed below.

Outcomes of Stage 1 complaints

| | Upheld | Not Upheld | Partially Upheld | Did Not Proceed |
|----------------------------------|---------------|-------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| Corporate Services | 2 | 4 | 4 | 0 |
| Education | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Environment | 5 | 13 | 10 | 0 |
| Housing | 5 | 24 | 7 | 1 |
| Social Services | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Other (cross directorate) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | 13 | 42 | 21 | 1 |

Stage 2 Corporate Complaints

| (d) Title | Actual |
|---|---------------|
| Number of Stage 2 complaints received in Corporate Services | 0 |
| Number of Stage 2 complaints received in Education | 0 |
| Number of Stage 2 complaints received in Environment | 14 |
| Number of Stage 2 complaints received in Housing | 14 |
| Number of Stage 2 complaints received in Social Services | 0 |
| Number of Stage 2 complaints received Other (cross directorate) | 5 |

- (e) The total number of complaints received at Stage 2 were 33 of those 33 were responded to within timescale.
- (f) Of the Stage 2 complaints, 14 were commenced at Stage 2 and 19 were escalated from Stage 1 to Stage 2; 11 within Housing and 8 within Environment.
- (g) Of the 33 Stage 2 complaints responded to, 6 have been upheld, 16 were not upheld, 11 were partially upheld. The breakdown of outcomes for each Directorate is listed below.

Outcomes of Stage 2 Complaints

| | Upheld | Not Upheld | Partially Upheld |
|---------------------------|---------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| Corporate Services | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Education | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Environment | 2 | 7 | 5 |
| Housing | 4 | 7 | 3 |
| Social Services | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Other (cross directorate) | 0 | 2 | 3 |
| | 6 | 16 | 11 |

4.4.6 Equalities and Welsh Language complaints dealt with under the Corporate Complaints Policy are monitored and reported to members of this committee as part of the overall figures but detailed information also forms part of the statutory annual reporting framework to the Equality and Human Rights Commission and the Welsh Language Commissioner's Office. The Council's Policy and Resources Committee and Cabinet receives an annual report regarding progress against the targets in the Council's Strategic Equality Plan 2016-2020 and against the Welsh Language Standards, prior to submission to the relevant commission.

4.4.7 Members will note that 5 stage 1 complaints were not responded to within the required timescale, although all response times for Stage 2 were met. The responses were provided between 1 and 3 days over the deadline due to various reasons such as officers on leave or additional information needed in order to respond. The response times are being monitored and complaints officers have been asked to remind staff of the requirement to comply with the timescales and where this is not possible to seek agreement from the customer to extend the deadline for providing the response. These figures will continue to be monitored.

4.5 Review of Trends and types of complaints

4.5.1 This information is being gathered and an analysis will be provided in the Annual Report.

4.5.2 The types of complaints received during this six month period have been wide ranging for example; damage to property by refuse collectors, Civic Amenity sites, hygiene rating at café, planning application, housing repairs, contact centre administration, noise complaint, speed of traffic on street, planning land drainage complaint and lack of service in council tax. The Appendix sets out anonymised examples of complaints dealt with.

4.6 Ombudsman referrals

4.6.1 Since the last report to Audit Committee, 9 complaints have been referred to the Ombudsman following the issue of the Council's Stage 2 response; none were taken to investigation. In addition the Council has agreed two quick fixes one relating to a Social Services matter and one relating to Communities and Leisure services.

4.7 Update on the Use of a Vexatious Complainants Policy

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

5. WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS

5.1 This report contributes to the Well-being Goals as set out in Links to Strategy above. It is consistent with the five ways of working as defined within the sustainable development principle in the Act in that the monitoring of the Council's corporate complaints handling across all service areas and enables departments to focus on areas of concern, to improve services and to monitor performance to ensure that any issues raised are identified and dealt with so as to be avoided in future.

6. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Monitoring of complaints via the Corporate Complaints policy addresses the Council's statutory duties under the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 and the Welsh Language Measure (Wales) 2011 in two ways. It addresses specific complaints to the Council around alleged discrimination by service areas and also addresses the monitoring of complaints from people who fall under the categories protected by these statutory duties.

6.2 The full details of these issues (that cover wider matters than are recorded as Corporate Complaints in this report) are included in the annual reports provided to the Equalities and Human Rights Commission and the Welsh Language Commissioner's Office. Policy and Resources Scrutiny and Cabinet consider these reports prior to being published.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no direct financial implications associated with this report.

8. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no personnel implications associated with this report.

9. CONSULTATIONS

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

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 It is recommended that Members note the contents of the report.

11. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

11.1 To monitor the complaints process to ensure effective delivery of Council services.

12. STATUTORY POWER

12.1 Local Government Act 1972 - 2003.

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Kim Davies, Customer Services/Complaints Officer
Karen Williams, Support Officer
Judith Morgans, Customer Services Manager
Ros Roberts, Performance Manager
Andrea Jones, Corporate Complaints Officer
Anwen Rees, Senior Policy Officer – Equalities and Welsh Language
Richard Harris, Internal Audit Manager
Deborah Gronow, Auditor
Leigh Brook, Corporate Finance
Lianne Dallimore, Medium Term Financial Plan Programme Coordinator

Background papers:

Report to Audit Committee 14th December 2016 Update on the Numbers of Complaints Received under the Council's Corporate Complaints Policy
Report to Audit Committee 14th September 2016 - Update on the Numbers of Complaints received under the Corporate Complaints Policy
Report to Audit Committee 9th March 2016 - Update on the Numbers of Complaints received under the Corporate Complaints Policy
Report to Audit Committee 9th September 2015 - Update on the Numbers of Complaints received under the Corporate Complaints Policy
Report to Audit Committee 11th March 2015 - Update on the Numbers of Complaints received under the Corporate Complaints Policy
Report to Audit Committee 10th September 2014 - Update on the Implementation of the Council's Corporate Complaints Policy
Report to Audit Committee 5th March 2014 - Update on the Implementation of the Council's Corporate Complaints Policy
Report to Audit Committee 17th September 2013 - Update on the Implementation of the Council's New Corporate Complaints Policy

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Brief overview of a selection of complaints