



GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE - 21ST JANUARY 2025

**SUBJECT: ANNUAL REPORT ON THE CORPORATE COMPLAINTS
RECEIVED FOR THE PERIOD 1ST APRIL 2023 TO 31ST
MARCH 2024**

**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 annual period 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024 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 annual period 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024, 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 annual period 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024.

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 is also included as a background paper.
- 5.2 This Committee received the first Annual Report on the complaints dealt with under this Policy for the period April 2021/2022 at its meeting on 11th October 2022. This report sets out details of the complaints dealt with for the annual period from 1st April 2023 to 31st March 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. For completeness the report to the relevant scrutiny committee outlining the complaints dealt with under the Social Services complaints process for the same annual period is attached at Appendix 7 to this report. 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. The timeframe for dealing with a stage 1 response is 10 working days whereas a stage 2 response should be provided within 20 working days. Although the timeframe for a stage 2 response can be extended should the need arise for example it is a complex matter, or further information is required in order to fully investigate the issues raised.
- 5.5 Each Directorate has their own nominated complaints officer(s) who manage the complaints for their service area; they provide advice and guidance on the complaints policy and raise awareness amongst their respective staff of the importance of recognising complaints and dealing with them in accordance with the Policy. The overall management of the complaints database sits within the Information Governance Unit overseen by the Information Governance Manager. The Committee will recall that this is a change from

previous management of the process which sat within Legal Services and the Deputy Monitoring Officer.

- 5.6 To support the process the Ombudsman has provided a number of training sessions over the last two years, the last session being held in May last year, in the main with officers within housing together with nominees from other service areas.
- 5.7 Members will recall from previous reports that testing was underway in relation to a new digital complaints system which was implemented on 1st May last year. Going forward, it is anticipated that the new system will provide a more timely and streamlined way to produce data for reports and improve data records within the complaints process. The system will be monitored with complaints officers feeding back on any issues they may identify within the system in order to further streamline the process.
- 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 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 were chaired by the deputy Monitoring Officer but will now be chaired by the Information Governance Manager. The Group aims to 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 2023 to 31st March 2024 under the Corporate Complaints policy is **559** and is broken down as follows:-

Directorate	Stage 1	Stage 2	Escalated	Total
Social Services	55	1	9	65
Education	6	2	3	11
Economy and Environment	239	19	38	296
Housing	147	8	22	177
Corporate	9	1	0	10
Total	456	31	72	559

The Outcomes are as follows

Directorate	Upheld	Not Upheld	Withdrawn	Ongoing	Total
Social Services	7	58			65
Education	5	6			11
Economy and Environment	107	189			296
Housing	38	126	13		177
Corporate	3	7			10
TOTAL	160	386	12		559

Ombudsman Referrals

Directorate	Number	Outcome
Social Services	12	9 Not Investigating 3 Early Resolutions
Education	1	Not Investigating
Economy and Environment	14	13 not investigating 1 withdrawn
Housing	14	13 Not Investigating 1 Early Resolution
Corporate	1	Not Investigating
TOTAL	42	

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 It is recognised that we must build and act on the knowledge gathered within the complaints data and use it as a positive source to promote improvement in relation to any customer contact with the authority, be it via telephone, electronic means or in writing. The implementation of the new digital complaints database, whilst in the bedding in process is hoped to have a positive impact on our data gathering abilities, streamline communication and produce a timely outcome for customers.

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

- 7.1 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
Carl Evans, Information Governance Manager
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
Anwen Cullinane, Senior Policy Officer (Equalities, Welsh Language and Consultation)

Deborah Gronow, Audit Group Manager
Leigh Brook, PA to the Interim Chief Executive
Lianne Fry, PA to Corporate Director Education and Corporate
Services
Sian Wilkes, PA to the Corporate Director of Economy and
Environment

Appendices

Appendix 1 **[Link to Corporate Complaints Policy](#)**

Appendix 2 Economy and Environment

Appendix 3 Housing

Appendix 4 Education and Libraries

Appendix 5 Corporate Services

Appendix 6 Social Services (Corporate complaints only)

Appendix 7 Report to Scrutiny Committee re annual complaints dealt with under the
separate Social Services complaints procedure

BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

[Link to Cabinet Report - Appendix 1](#)

[Link to Cabinet Report - Appendix 2](#)

[Link to Cabinet Report - Appendix 3](#)

[Link to Cabinet Report - Appendix 4](#)