



City and County of Swansea

## Minutes of the **Scrutiny Performance Panel – Service Improvement & Finance**

Remotely via Teams

Monday, 12 April 2021 at 10.00 am

**Present:** Councillor C A Holley (Chair) Presided

**Councillor(s)**

P M Black  
L James  
J W Jones  
D W W Thomas

**Councillor(s)**

P Downing  
M H Jones  
I E Mann

**Councillor(s)**

P R Hood-Williams  
P K Jones  
B J Rowlands

**Officer(s)**

Emily-Jayne Davies  
Sarah Lackenby

Scrutiny Officer  
Chief Digital & Transformation Officer

**Apologies for Absence**

Councillor Andrew Stevens

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**1 Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.**

In accordance with the Code of Conduct adopted by the City and County of Swansea, no interests were declared.

**2 Prohibition of Whipped Votes and Declaration of Party Whips**

In accordance with the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011, no declarations of Whipped Votes or Party Whips were declared.

**3 Minutes of Previous Meeting(s)**

The minutes of the Service Improvement and Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel meeting, held on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021, were agreed as an accurate record.

**4 Public Questions**

There were no public questions

**5 Corporate Complaints Annual Report**

Sarah Lackenby, Chief Transformation Officer, attended the meeting to present the Corporate Complaints Annual Report and answer questions.

The Panel held a brief discussion about the circumstances surrounding the availability of the report, and the data therein, as impacted upon by the pandemic. The Panel's attention was drawn to the fact that this report was late coming to Scrutiny due to these unavoidable repercussions, both on workforce and resources. The Panel understood that this data was, therefore, somewhat out of date and look forward to a full discussion on this topic when the next report becomes available.

Discussions included:

- Effects of the pandemic on reporting relevant data – such as reduced operation of The Public Services Ombudsman and lack of complaints submitted during lockdown.
- Freedom of Information Act (FOI) Requests – Panel had previously asked for information regarding the cost of officers processing FOI requests. The Panel heard that this varies and that keeping timesheets has been difficult, especially during lockdown. The Council is continuing to look into ways of measuring this going forward.
- Officers wanted to make the Panel aware of the following points, which will be addressed in the next report:
  - Complaints team have had Ombudsman training this year (2020/21)
  - New IT system being implemented, promoting better monitoring of performance and will help officers in logging and monitoring cases.
  - Council has reviewed the complaints policies and procedures in line with the new Public Service Ombudsman Wales Act 2019.
  - The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 has new reporting requirements around complaints. The Council is working with the Monitoring Officer on this, update to follow in next report.
- This report shows no major trends of concern - Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints reduced compared to 2018/19.
- Regarding complaints within the context of Social Services (Adults and Children) there is a different process for handling these cases and the Council can engage an independent investigator.
- Adults; 19% of complaints justified, down on previous year.
- Children; 25% of complaints justified, slightly down on previous year.
- £10 fee for Subject Access Requests (SARs) removed so Council expected to see an increase in requests, however saw less. Officers believe this will increase in future and requests are becoming more complicated, touching on more service areas.
- Refresher training has taken place with FOI officers and around FOI reviews.

**AGREED** that Members request further information about The Ombudsman criteria around *justified* and *not justified* cases. Officers agreed that further detail would be sent to the Panel about these classifications. Members also requested further information regarding the (4 out of 93) cases that went to early resolution.

The Panel took the opportunity to acknowledge the efforts of staff, particularly during the last year of lockdown. The Panel considered the information provided, asked

questions, and gave views on the available data. The Chair thanked all for their input.

**6 Work Plan 2020-21**

The meeting ended at 10.31 am