



Report of the Head of Digital & Customer Services

Governance & Audit Committee – 13 July 2022

Annual Complaints Report – Six Month Update

Purpose:	To provide assurance on the complaints handling process and a six month update.
Policy Framework:	Complaints Policies and Achieving Better Together
Consultation:	Access to Services, Finance, Legal.
Report Author:	Sarah Lackenby
Finance Officer:	Ben Smith
Legal Officer:	Debbie Smith
Access to Services Officer:	Rhian Millar
For Information	

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Annual Complaints report for 2020-21 was presented to the Governance & Audit Committee on the 14th December 2021.
- 1.2 This report gives an update on progress six months on. The Annual Complaints Report 2021-22 will be presented as soon as the Ombudsman's annual letter is received.

2. Six Month Update

- 2.1 The Council attended the Public Services Ombudsman Wales (PSOW) annual sounding board meeting in March 2022. The PSOW uses these sessions to gather feedback from public bodies and then adapt or change ways of working.

- 2.2 In addition, training has been arranged for Social Services staff in October 2022 covering complaints handling and complaints investigation skills. The training is being delivered by the PSOW.
- 2.3 All section 40 submissions were provided to the PSOW on time.
- 2.4 Progress on the new IT system for complaints has been delayed due to the urgent priority to issue payments to residents around both cost of living support and ongoing issues from the pandemic, e.g. payments to carers. Work is resuming in July 2022 with the aim of going live in September following system testing and training for key users.
- 2.5 In December 2021 the Governance & Audit Committee requested development of key performance indicators around complaints. These have been developed in order to mirror the Council's complaints policies, Social Services legislation and statutory timescales, and section 40 submissions to the PSOW. A distinction must be made between corporate complaints and Social Services complaints. Social Services complaints can be complex and involve external investigators at stage two of the process. The Director of Social Services can approve extensions to timescales for dealing with Social Services complaints. KPIs include:

Corporate Complaints KPIs:

- % of stage one corporate complaints responded to within 10 clear working days
- % of stage two corporate complaints responded to within 20 clear working days, or within any extension agreed with the customer.

Social Services Complaints KPIs:

- % of stage one social services complaints acknowledged within 2 working days
- % of stage one social services complaints discussed with complainants, i.e. appointments with a Social Services Officer or Complaints Officer within 10 working days of acknowledgement
- % of stage two complainants receiving a written summary of the complaint within 5 working days
- % of stage two complaints responded to within 25 working days, or within any extension approved by the Director of Social Services.

3. Integrated Impact Assessment Implications

- 3.1 The Council is subject to the Equality Act (Public Sector Equality Duty and the socio-economic duty), the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure, and must in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Acts.

- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Deliver better outcomes for those people who experience socio-economic disadvantage
- Consider opportunities for people to use the Welsh language
- Treat the Welsh language no less favourably than English.
- Ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

3.1.1 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 mandates that public bodies in Wales must carry out sustainable development. Sustainable development means the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the 'well-being goals'.

3.1.2 Our Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process ensures we have paid due regard to the above. It also takes into account other key issues and priorities, such as poverty and social exclusion, community cohesion, carers, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Welsh language.

3.2 An IIA Screening Form has been completed with the agreed outcome that a full IIA report was not required.

The impacts have been categorised as medium as there is the potential to positively change and adapt services based on complaints received. The exception is where policies and processes are governed by statutory legislation, therefore the impact remains the same.

With regard to the summary of involvement, complaints from the public are used as a valuable tool to adapt, change and develop services.

Well-being and future generations considerations around this update report include:

- Using complaints information to adapt and shape services for the future
- Using Welsh Language complaints to ensure the Council not only meets the existing standards but also encourages and promotes the Welsh Language
- Using complaints information to prevent problems occurring or getting worse
- Viewing complaints in an integrated way, especially where a complaint may involve multiple public sector organisations.

The report adheres to the transformation and future council development well-being objective in the Corporate Plan - so that services are sustainable and fit for the future.

The annual report provides historic performance information and therefore risks are considered low.

With regard to the cumulative impact, this is a performance report. When a complaint is received by a service opportunities to adapt, review or change ways of working are considered at that point. However, some policies and procedures are related to statutory legislation and cannot be changed locally.

4. Financial Implications

4.1 The annual cost of investigating complaints will be included in the Annual Complaints Report 2021-22.

5. Legal Implications

5.1 There are no specific legal implications arising from this report.

Background Papers: None

Appendices:

Appendix A IIA Screening Form