



City and County of Swansea

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

Multi-Location Meeting - Gloucester Room, Guildhall / MS

Teams

Tuesday, 14 March 2023 at 10.00 am

Present: Councillor C A Holley (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)

P M Black
L James
J W Jones

Councillor(s)

R Fogarty
D H Jenkins
M W Locke

Councillor(s)

P R Hood-Williams
M Jones

Other Attendee(s)

Cllr David Hopkins
Cllr Andrea Lewis
Cllr Louise Gibbard

Cabinet Member for Corporate Services & Performance
Cabinet Member for Service Transformation
Cabinet Member for Care Services

Officer(s)

Ian Davies
Tom Evans
Sarah Lackenby
Rachel Percival

Development Conservation and Design Manager
Place making and Strategic Planning Manager
Head of Digital and Customer Services
Scrutiny Officer

Apologies for Absence

Councillor(s): B J Rowlands

53 Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

There were no disclosures of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.

54 Prohibition of Whipped Votes and Declaration of Party Whips

None.

55 Minutes

Minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

56 Public Questions

There were no public questions received.

57 Planning Annual Performance Report 2021/22

Cllr David Hopkins and officers attended. They reported the following:

- Planning Annual Reports are no longer a requirement of Welsh Government however the Council still continue to provide this. Data for benchmarking performance against other Local Authorities has not been available since the pandemic.
- There has been a significant increase in the number of planning applications received, 29% more than in 2020/21.
- 97% of applications were dealt with within agreed time scales. The target set by Welsh Government is 80%.
- Despite the increase in the application numbers, planning fee income has not kept pace. Compared to 2018/19 there were 300 more planning applications but planning income in fees was £300,000 less which is down to the type of applications being submitted. Application fees are set by Welsh Government and an increase has not been indicated at this point.
- Appeals performance was up slightly and again above the previous years Welsh Government target. Where appeals are agreed, it generally relates to matters of design.
- The pandemic created a backlog of enforcement due to officers not being able to attend sites as easily. The team were also impacted by staff vacancies.
- Enforcement investigation is a two stage process. The initial investigation phase has a target of 84 days to investigate. The second stage is to take appropriate action which could be an enforcement notice, resolution, or granting planning permission.
- The number enforcement complaints investigated was a similar number to the previous year. Every complaint in investigated however only 32% of investigations were completed in the 84 day target a decrease from 51% in the previous year. Enforcement action is prioritised on the seriousness of the breach.
- The Local Development Plan (LDP) is due for updating. Data for the LDP is gathered from comprehensive modelling and the best available data from consultant partners to create economic forecasts with the aim of gaining highest level of accuracy possible.

58 Annual Complaints Report 2021/22

Cllr Andrea Lewis, Cllr Louise Gibbard and officers attended. They talked through the following:

- Due to the pandemic, complaints were suppressed during 2020/21 but then dramatically increased as we emerged from the lockdowns. The Ombudsman saw a 47% increase across the whole of Wales.
- There has been delays the launching the new IT system due to prioritising payments to support residents and businesses. The system is complete, staff training is in development and the system will go live as soon as possible.
- Stage one (informal) corporate complaints increased by 8% on the previous year. This was a total of 1274 complaints, 407 of which were justified. Stage two

complaints were up by 16%. This was a total of 154 complaints of which 25 were justified.

- Corporate requests for service were up significantly by 24%. There was also a significant increase in corporate comments which were up by 38%. Welsh language complaints remain relatively low.
- Adult Services stage one complaints were up by 11% and stage two only have an increase of 1 complaint on last year's figures. Justified complaints were up by 53% which was mainly to do with delays in arranging assessments or packages of care due to staff pressures including external providers. Service pressures and recruitment issues in Adult Social Services has been a challenge across Wales and the UK.
- Child and Family Services showed a decrease, stage one complaints went down by 19% and stage two was down by 1 complaint.
- The Ombudsman's annual letter reports 71 received complaints, down from 73 in the previous year.
- 76 Ombudsman's complaints were closed during 2021/22, of this 76, 10 received intervention. Of the 10 that received intervention, 6 had early resolution of voluntary settlement and 4 were upheld. Comparing to the previous year, 67 complaints were closed and 9 received intervention, of these 9, 5 had early resolution and 4 were upheld.
- The complaints team hold discussions with Heads to Service and Principal Officers looking at the nature of complaints and any trends or frequency to look for potential improvements.
- 360 corporate compliments were received with 96 for Adult Services and 100 for Child and Family Services.
- Year on year trends are not reported but can be made available in future reports.
- Reflection on compliments can be as useful as reflecting on complaints to compare areas where the Council are doing well.
- Complaint response times are reported to the Governance and Audit Committee.
- Complaints coming into Communications and Customer Engagement has increased.
- 25 of the 71 complaints received by the Ombudsman were for Planning and Building Control and Roads and Transport.

59 Letters

60 Work Programme

The Panel noted the work plan.

The meeting ended at 10.40 am

Chair