

Committee: **Governance & Audit Committee**
Date of meeting: **7th December 2021**
Report Subject: **Complaints information for Quarter 1 and Quarter 2 – 2021/2022**
Portfolio Holder: **Cllr N Daniels, Leader/ Executive Member Corporate Services**
Report Submitted by: **Andrea Jones Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance**

Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
			07.12.21					

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The report is to inform Members and Officers of the Council's performance with regards to investigations into Stage 1 and Stage 2 Corporate Complaints received for the period 1 April 2021 – 30 September 2021.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 The Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2019 created the Complaints Standards Authority (CSA). Policy and Guidance were issued under the powers contained within Section 36 of the Act and they apply to public service providers in Wales.
- 2.2 The CSA produced a model Concerns and Complaints Policy to ensure consistency of complaints handling throughout Wales. The updated Concerns and Complaints Policy was adopted by the Council in July 2021.
- 2.3 It has been reported previously that by virtue of section 115 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, the Governance and Audit Committee now has additional functions to include a role in oversight for complaints.

The Committee now has new statutory powers to:

- Review and assess the authority's ability to handle complaints effectively
 - Make reports and recommendations in relation to the authority's ability to handle complaints effectively.
- 2.4 The Council is required to provide the CSA with complaints data on a quarterly basis and report to the Governance and Audit Committee the number and types of complaints received and their outcomes. Governance and Audit Committee agreed in June 2021 that this report is presented to Committee twice a year.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 **Option 1**

To provide the Governance and Audit Committee with assurance that the process for the monitoring of complaints is robust and the performance information provided reflects these practices.

3.2 **Option 2**

To seek further clarification on any areas within the report and/or to highlight any areas of interest or concern that need to be considered in future monitoring and reporting of complaints.

4. **Evidence of how does this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**

4.1 There is a legislative requirement to provide information on the number of complaints the Council received to the Complaints Standard Authority.

4.2 The monitoring of complaints and compliments is a key performance indicator within the Council's Corporate Plan, under the Well-being Theme, 'Efficient Council'.

4.3 From the Well-being Plan the monitoring of complaints links into 'A resilient Wales' as it provides an opportunity for citizens to take an active and empowered role. The Council is required to present the complaints information to members of the Governance and Audit Committee twice a year.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

5.1 ***Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)***

In certain circumstances the Council may award compensation to the complainant. In such circumstances, the compensation will be paid by the relevant department/service area.

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

Complaints are investigated in accordance with the Councils Corporate Complaints Policy.

5.3 ***Legal***

There are no legal implications associated with this report.

5.4 ***Human Resources***

There are no human resource implications associated with this report.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

See appendix 1

- 6.2 ***Expected outcome for the public***
This report is positive information to share with the public and is evidence that the Council's Corporate Complaints Policy is working effectively to resolve complaints at Stage 1 with few complaints escalating to Stage 2.
- 6.3 ***Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)***
By providing a complaints process, the Council is enabling active participation of the public and partners to identify areas of concern that need to be addressed.
- 6.4 ***Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)***
The Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2019 created the Complaints Standards Authority and they have produced a model Concerns and Complaints Policy to ensure consistency of complaints handling throughout Wales.
- 6.5 ***Preventative focus***
The complaints process enables the Council to rectify processes that have been highlighted within a complaint. This in turn supports the Council to prevent similar complaints being provided.
- 6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***
The CSA will publish data to the PSOW website and comparisons are made across all Council's across Wales.
- 6.7 ***Integration (across service areas)***
The Complaints process is undertaken across all sections of the Council in order to provide a full picture across the Council.
- 6.8 ***Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions***
N/A
- 6.9a ***Socio Economic Duty Impact Assessment***
N/A
- 6.9b. ***Equality Impact Assessment***
An Equalities Impact Assessment is not required for the performance monitoring of complaints, however, if a complaint requires consideration of the Equalities Act an EqlA would be undertaken for the specific complaint.
7. **Monitoring Arrangements**
- 7.1 Complaints monitoring is undertaken across the Council and a report will be presented to Governance and Audit Committee twice a year providing information on the number of Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints received and their outcomes.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- Appendix 1