

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MONITORING REPORT – COMPLAINTS, FREEDOM OF INFORMATION AND DATA PROTECTION

1. Background

The Information Team based in Operational and Partnership Services is responsible for processing all formal complaints in line with the Authority's Corporate Complaints Policy; logging and responding to requests made under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and Data Subject Access requests made under section 7 of the Data Protection Act 1998. The Team also process requests for information from bodies such as the Police, HMRC and the NHS.

Complaints

The Corporate Complaints Policy was approved by the Cabinet at its meeting held on 28 May 2013, to take effect from 1 June 2013.

The Policy sets out a two stage process as follows:

- **Informal Complaint Stage**
- **Formal Complaint Stage**

This Policy replaces the previous policy which allowed for a three stage process including the option for a review by an officer appointed by the Monitoring Officer. There is no option for a Monitoring Officer review in the current Complaints Policy, and complainants are advised to contact the Public Services Ombudsman if they are dissatisfied with the Authority's response. The policy is a national policy required by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.

2. Informal Complaints (Stage 1)

The Policy recognises that complaints should be dealt with as quickly as possible and where possible informally as part of the normal working of the Authority. It advises customers to contact the office or officer responsible for the service to provide an opportunity to solve the problem.

3. Formal Complaints (Stage 2)

- 3.1 Formal complaints are received by email, telephone, letter or complaint form. All formal corporate complaints with the exception of schools and social services (which have their own statutory procedures) are received, logged and acknowledged centrally by the Information Team within 5 working days. These complaints are then sent to the relevant Head of Service concerned for the appointment of a senior officer to investigate the complaint and respond directly within 20 working days. The Information Team is then provided with a copy of the response. If an investigation is more complex and more time may be needed, the customer is advised of the likely

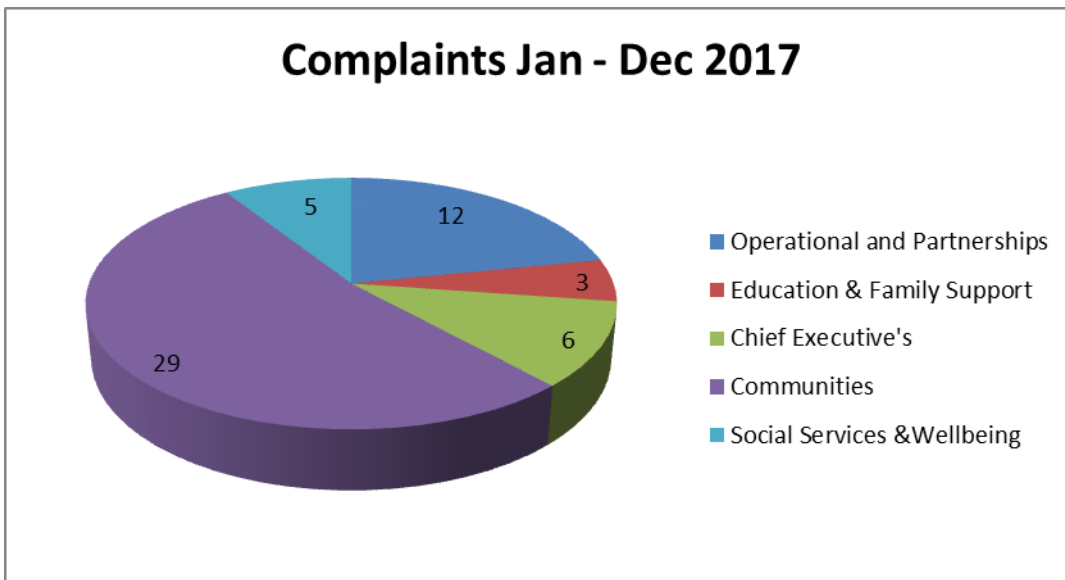
timescale and kept informed of progress.

3.2 The Information Team has received, logged acknowledged and referred a total of 55 formal complaints for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2017. The breakdown for the period is as follows:

	Jan – Dec 2017
No. of Complaints Received	55
No. acknowledged in 5 working days	53
No. acknowledged outside 5 working days	2

3.3 In the 2 instances where complaints have been acknowledged after five working days, it was in cases where complaints had not been sent directly to the Information Team in accordance with the Council’s Policy. In some instances the Team were not aware of the complaint until a copy of the response was provided. The relevant Directorates have since been reminded of the process, which has resulted in an increase in compliance with the policy.

3.4 For the period from 1 January to 31 December 2017, the number of formal complaints received by each Directorate was as follows:



3.5 For the period 1 January to 31 December 2017 one complaint was received by the Welsh Language commissioner about a service provided by the Authority; however the Commissioner took the decision not to investigate the complaint. One Welsh Language complaint was received direct and this was upheld but resolved informally.

3.6 As required by the Equalities Strategy, an equalities monitoring questionnaire has been developed to accompany the Corporate Complaints Form. The information collected will inform an annual report.

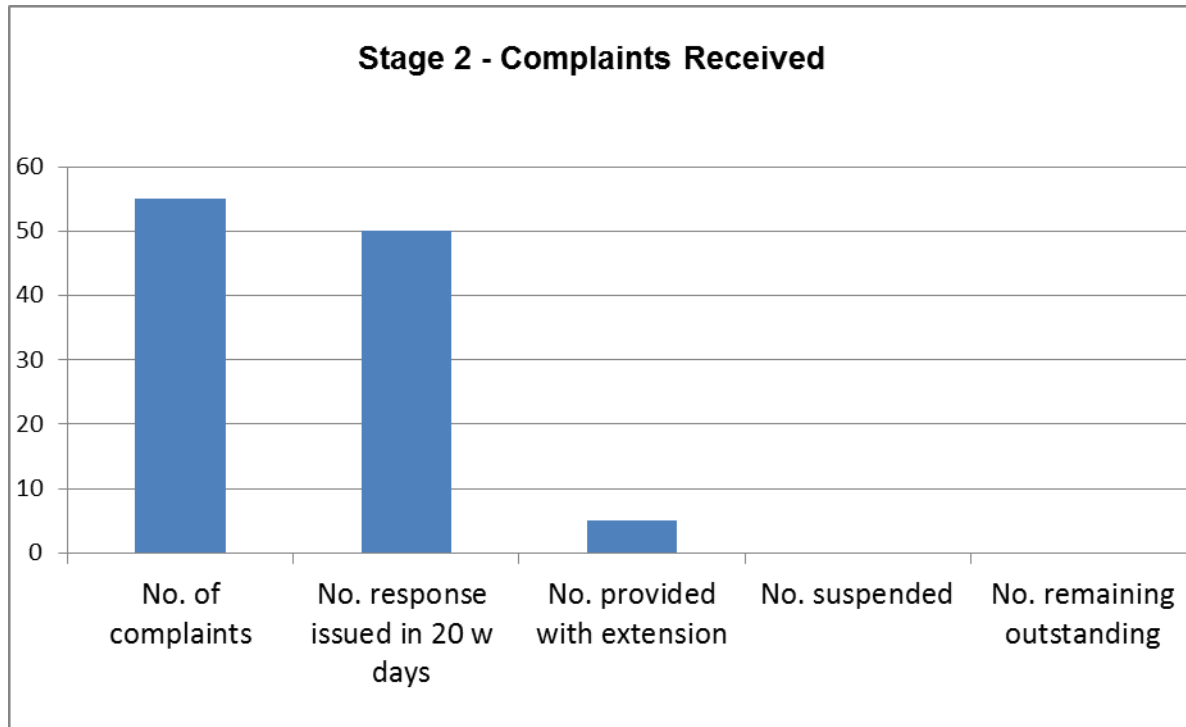
3.7 A breakdown of the complaints received for the period 1 January to 31 December 2017 by subject, is shown in the following table:

Service Area	No of Complaints
Adult Social Care	3
Building Control	1
Children's Social Services	1
Council Tax	5
Customer Services	2
Education	3
Green Spaces	1
Highways	6
Housing	6
Human Resources	1
Licensing	2
Parking	1
Parks & Playing Fields	1
Planning	10
Property	1
Regeneration	1
Rights of Way	1
Social Services Finance	1
Sports & Recreation	1
Waste	7
	55

3.8 The following information sets out the breakdown of formal complaints received regarding each County Borough Council Ward shown, which has been requested by elected Members:

Ward	No. of complaints
Bettws	1
Blaengarw	1
Bryntirion, Laleston & Merthyr Mawr	6
Bryncethin	2
Brackla	3
Caerau	2
Cefn Glas	1
Coity	6
Llangewydd and Brynhfryd	1
Llagynwyd	1
Maesteg East	2
Maesteg West	1
Morfa	1
North Cornelly	1
Nottage	1
Oldcastle	3
Penyfai	3
Porthcawl West Central	1
Pyle	4
Not known	10
Out of county	4
	55

3.9 The chart below provides a breakdown of the number of formal Complaints received, those responded to within 20 working days, those for which it was necessary to request an extension to the response deadline, those that remain outstanding and those complaints currently under investigation within the respective 20 working days.



4. Complaints made to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

4.1 Customers have the right at any stage to refer their complaint to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales for his consideration of maladministration e.g. unfairness or delay. However, the Ombudsman will usually give the Authority a reasonable opportunity to investigate and respond to a complaint, before he investigates.

4.2 The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales received 28 complaints about the Authority during the period January to December 2017, of these 20 did not proceed to investigation, 6 were referred back to the Authority for investigation and 2 were resolved by means of a 'quick fix'. A breakdown of the complaints by service area is set out below. In 2 cases it was not possible to identify the service areas they relate to as the letters from the Ombudsman's Office notifying that they did not intend to investigate did not provide this detail.

Adult Social Care	2
Children's Social Services	10
Council Tax	1
Education	2
Housing	3

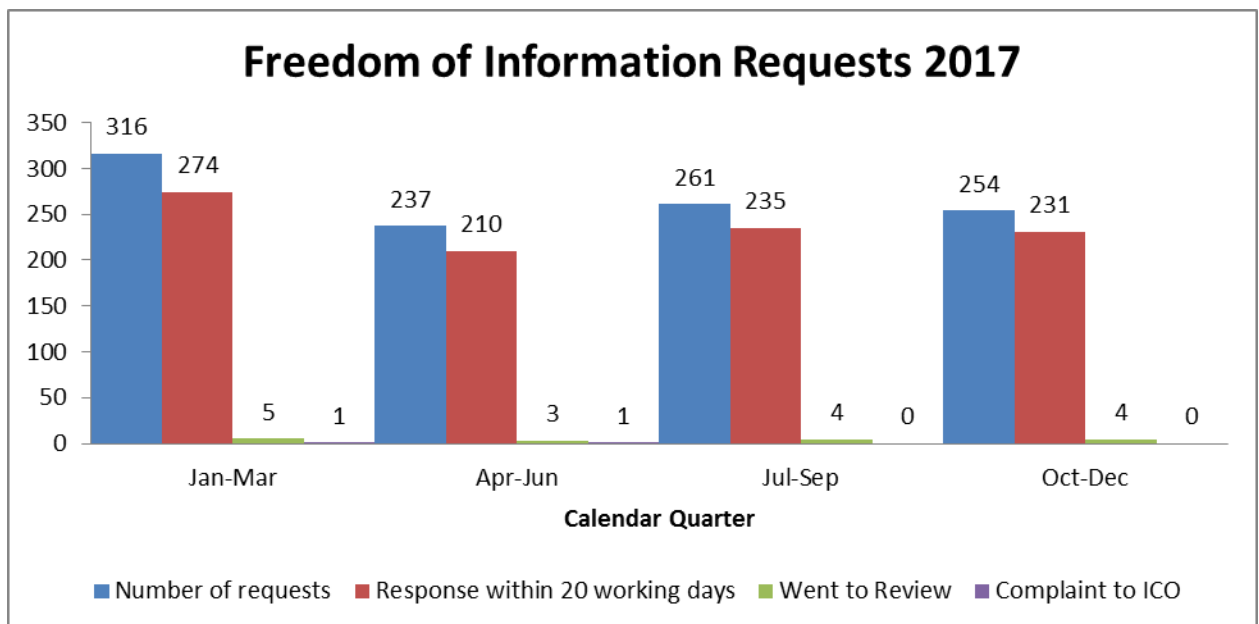
Highways	1
Licensing	1
Planning	2
Regulatory Services	2
Social Services Finance	1
Waste	1
Service area not specified	2
	28

5 Code of Conduct Complaints

5.1 During the period January to December 2017 there were 14 complaints to the Ombudsman that a Community Councillor or County Borough Councillor had broken the Model Code of Conduct.

6 Freedom of Information Requests

6.1 During the period January – December 2017 the Information Team logged and acknowledged a total of 1068 requests made under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. The chart below illustrates the number of responses provided within the statutory deadline of 20 working days and the number of internal reviews requested. A requester may ask for a review to be undertaken if they are not satisfied with the Authority’s response, and these are generally undertaken by the Principal Solicitor. All internal reviews were responded to in 20 working days as recommended in the guidance provided by the Information Commissioner’s Office.



7 Data Subject Access Requests

7.1 During the period January to December 2017 the Information Team processed a total of 52 data subject access requests.

8 Information Requests from Public Bodies

8.1 During the period 1 January to 31 December 2017 the Information Team processed the following requests for information from public bodies: 20 continuing health care requests; 227 requests for information under section 29 (crime and taxation) and section 35 of the Data Protection Act, and 6 proof of life enquiries from UK police forces.