

## 1. Background

The Information Team based in Legal, HR & Regulatory Services is responsible for processing all formal complaints in line with the Authority's Corporate Complaints Procedure.

### Complaints

The Complaints and Concerns Policy was approved by the Cabinet at its meeting held on 17 November 2020, to take effect from 23 November 2020.

The Policy sets out a two stage process as follows:

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

This Policy replaces the previous policy which was approved in 2013. The policy is a national policy required by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.

## 2. Informal Complaints (Stage 1)

- 2.1 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. All informal complaints should be logged in the Corporate Complaints office as the Council is now required to report on these every quarter to the Public Services Ombudsman.
- 2.2 The Public Services Ombudsman now sets criteria for complaint types to be logged. For the period from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021, the number of informal complaints received against each category together with the numbers of those complaints closed against each outcome was as follows:

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	<b>Total number of informal complaints received</b>	<b>Number resolved by frontline staff/not upheld</b>	<b>Number Upheld</b>	<b>Number where investigation discontinued/investigation not merited/complaint about a service not provided by the Council/withdrawn</b>
Adult Social Care	2	2	0	0
Benefits Administration	11	7	4	0
Children's Social Services	7	5	0	2
Community Facilities (including Recreation & Leisure)	11	10	1	0
Education	126	111	6	9
Environment & Environmental Health	89	77	8	4
Finance & Council Tax	21	9	2	0
Housing	16	13	2	1
Planning & Building Control	2	2	0	0
Roads & Transport	58	49	1	8
Various/Other	27	24	0	3
Complaints Handling	0	0	0	0

### 3. Formal Complaints (Stage 2)

3.1 Formal complaints are received by email, telephone, letter or online 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 sent to the relevant Head of Service who appoints a senior officer within the service to investigate the complaint and respond directly within 20 working days. The Information Team is provided with a copy of the response. If an investigation is more complex and more time may be needed, the complainant 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 51 formal complaints for the period from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021. The breakdown for the period is as follows:

	1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021
No. of Complaints Received	57
No. acknowledged in 5 working days	50
No. acknowledged outside 5 working days	7

3.3 The table below sets out the number of formal complaints the Council has received in year 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021 and the previous years two years:

Year	Number of Complaints Received
1 April 2018 – 31 March 2019	74
1 April 2019 – 31 March 2020	87
1 April 2020 – 31 March 2021	57

3.4 The Information Team endeavour to ensure that all complaints (both informal and formal) are acknowledged within 5 working days. However in some circumstances and for a variety of reasons this is not always possible. The reason for the delay in the these cases was as follows:

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- i) The team did not receive two complaints until the response was sent to the complainant by the department;
- ii) 2 referrals were directly from the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales which resulted in a delay in acknowledgement;
- iii) the acknowledgment was delayed while it was determined if it was a Stage 1 or Stage 2 complaint;
- iv) the acknowledgement was delayed as the complaint was originally logged as a Social Services complaint however it transpired that part of the complaint should be responded to under the corporate complaints procedure;
- v) the acknowledgement was delayed as the responsible department contacted corporate complaints to advise that part of appeal letter should be responded to under corporate complaints.

3.5 For the period from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021, the number of formal complaints received against each of the Public Services Ombudsman criteria together with the numbers of those complaints closed against each outcome was as follows:

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	<b>Total number of formal complaints received</b>	<b>Number resolved by frontline staff/not upheld</b>	<b>Number Upheld</b>	<b>Number where investigation discontinued/investigation not merited/complaint about a service not provided by the Council/withdrawn</b>
Adult Social Care	3	2	1	0
Benefits Administration	1	0	1	0
Children's Social Services	4	3	1	-
Community Facilities (including Recreation & Leisure)	1	1	0	0
Education	15	14	1	0
Environment & Environmental Health	6	4	2	0
Finance & Council Tax	4	2	2	0
Housing	7	7	0	0
Planning & Building Control	1	1	0	0
Roads & Transport	8	8	0	0
Various/Other	7	4	2	1
Complaints Handling	0	0	0	0

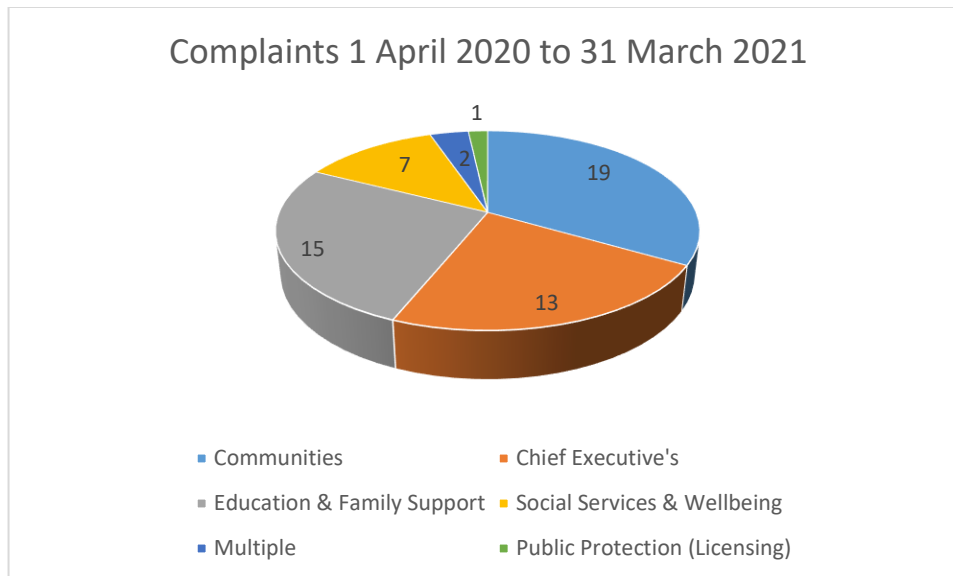
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- 3.6 The following information sets out the breakdown of formal complaints received regarding each County Borough Council Ward shown, which has been previously requested by Elected Members:

<b>Ward</b>	<b>No. of complaints</b>
Aberkenfig	1
Bryntirion, Laleston and Merthyr Mawr	5
Caerau	3
Cefn Glas	1
Coity	1
Cornelly	1
Coychurch Lower	1
Llangynwyd	2
Maesteg East	1
Maesteg West	2
Morfa	1
Nantymoel	1
Newton	1
Oldcastle	1
Pendre	1
Penprysg	1
Porthcawl West Central	2
Rest Bay	2
Ynysawdre	2
Unknown/by e-mail	27

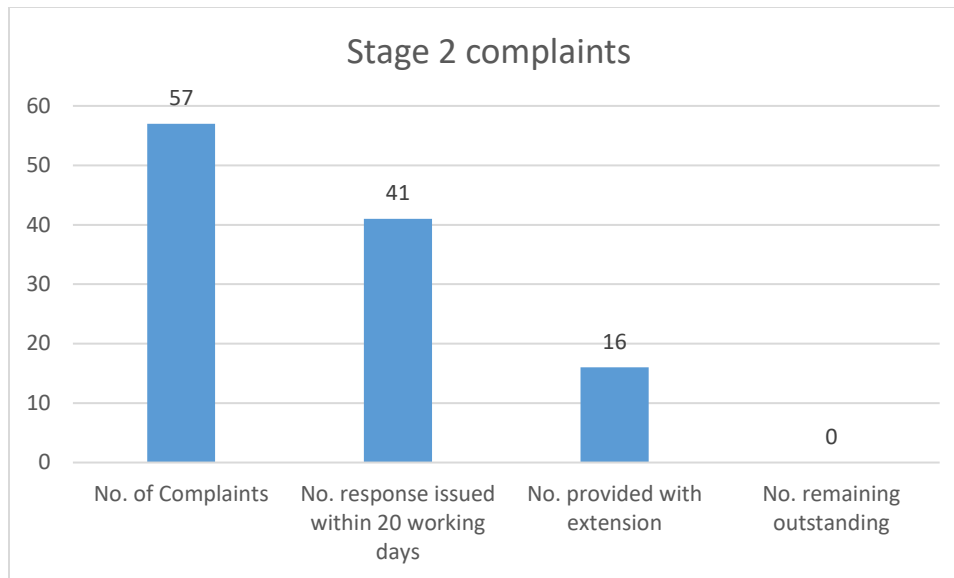
- 3.7 For the period from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021, the number of formal complaints received by each Directorate was as follows:

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- 3.8 For the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021 one complaint was received by the Welsh Language commissioner about a service provided by the Authority; this complaint is still being investigated by the Welsh Language Commissioner.
- 3.9 As required by the Equalities Strategy, an equalities monitoring questionnaire has been developed to accompany the Corporate Complaints Form. The information collected informs the Strategic Equality Plan.
- 3.10 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.

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### 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 12 complaints about the Authority during the period 1 April 2020 – 31 March 2021, of these 5 were referred back to the Authority for investigation, 2 were outside the Ombudsman's remit, 1 was outside the time limit, 3 were premature and in 1 case the Ombudsman found there was no case to answer. A breakdown of the complaints by service area is set out below.

Council Tax	1
Highways	1
Housing	3
Planning	1
School Transport	1
Social Services	5
Total:	12