

<b>Meeting of:</b>	<b>GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE</b>
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>1 JUNE 2023</b>
<b>Report Title:</b>	<b>CORPORATE COMPLAINTS</b>
<b>Report Owner / Corporate Director:</b>	<b>CHIEF OFFICER – FINANCE, PERFORMANCE &amp; CHANGE</b>
<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	<b>PHILIP O'BRIEN GROUP MANAGER – TRANSFORMATION AND CUSTOMER SERVICES</b>
<b>Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:</b>	<b>There is no impact on the policy framework or procedure rules</b>
<b>Executive Summary:</b>	<b>This report provides an update following a review of how Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints are recorded and reported corporately.</b>

## **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update to the Governance and Audit Committee on the current process and a proposal on the way all corporate complaints will be monitored, recorded and reported going forward.

## **2. Background**

- 2.1 A report was presented to the Governance and Audit Committee on 9<sup>th</sup> September 2021 to note the Authority's corporate complaints process and to determine whether the Committee wished to make any recommendations in relation to the Authority's ability to handle complaints effectively.
- 2.2 The recommendation from this Committee was to set up a Working Party to ensure all complaints are monitored and recorded accurately to ensure complaints were not being under recorded.

## **3. Current situation / proposal**

- 3.1 Since the Committee meeting in September 2021, a small Working Party was established consisting of the Corporate Complaints team and the digital platform design team to explore opportunities for using a single system to record all complaints.
- 3.2 Work started to look at incorporating the corporate complaints into the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system that is in use in Customer Services for recording all customer service requests. However, it became apparent that significant development would need to be undertaken in the following areas:

- key information would need to be captured and recorded in the system such as emails, photos to support complaints made, and responses;
- there would be a need to integrate to the Legal case management system so legal files can be created;
- Service Level Agreements within individual service areas would also need to be determined, to factor in a suitable escalation process;
- A robust reporting tool would also need to be developed to ensure sets of data could be provided to various bodies, including the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (quarterly), ensuring all reports provided the relevant information for each.

- 3.3 Since the initial meeting on using a single system was held, it was suggested to look at the feasibility of also incorporating other Directorate complaints into the CRM system to provide an oversight of issues, trends etc. for Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints.
- 3.4 A further meeting was therefore held with each Directorate's Business Manager to review the way complaints are currently being monitored and recorded. Each Directorate already has an established process in place, that is bespoke to each Directorate, to record and report on complaints received. Nevertheless, there is close collaboration between each directorate and with the Authority's central complaint function managed by the Information Team within Legal Services, to ensure that any Directorate complaint escalated through the corporate complaints procedure is managed centrally.
- 3.5 Schools are their own data controllers and therefore manage and retain this data themselves. However, complaints received from schools are recorded centrally by the Education and Family Support Directorate but are not covered in the data included in the report attached in **Appendix 1**.
- 3.6 During the discussion, it was evident that significant development would be required to change current operational processes within each Directorate in order to develop a single system to record all complaints across the Council. It is also apparent that the management of complaints at a Directorate level is integrated within other administrative/business support functions to different extents within each Directorate.
- 3.7 It was also clear during the discussion with the Business Managers that complaint information is recorded and reported on in each Directorate, and this information is readily available to be incorporated in future report updates to the Governance and Audit Committee as and when needed.
- 3.8 Whilst it will not be feasible to incorporate all Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints into a central system, there are ways to improve the way complaints are reported to the Committee on an annual basis, to ensure full visibility across the organisation. It is proposed that all Directorates will provide their Stage 1 and Stage 2 data to the central team to enable this to be collated with the data already held centrally and included in the annual update report to the Committee.

3.9 An example of this report is attached as **Appendix 1** and includes data across all Directorates and service areas for both Stage 1 complaints (Informal) and Stage 2 complaints (Formal). The data also shows the number of both informal and formal complaints received, resolved and upheld, or discontinued. The example report attached covers the period 1<sup>st</sup> January 2023 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023 so Committee members can see the type of information that will be presented annually to the Committee going forward.

3.10 The data capture process will also be reviewed across the Authority to look at ways of enabling the complaints data to be analysed as a means of identifying potential areas for improvement and from this to establish areas for further learning and development. This will include:

- Issues that have arisen more than once
- Complaints regarding systems or control that have resulted in changes being made
- Complaints raised about services that have resulted in change
- Lessons learned from complaints received

#### **4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)**

4.1 The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act, Socio-economic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh Language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services and functions. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of this report.

#### **5. Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives**

5.1 The well-being goals identified in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 were considered in the preparation of this report. The monitoring of corporate complaints and the successful resolution of those complaints is consistent with the five ways of working within the Act as it supports the provision of higher quality and more effective services to the public across all service areas. In addition, it enables each service to focus on areas of concern, to improve services and to monitor performance, ensure that any trends are identified and dealt with to be avoided in the future and to ensure that complaints are dealt with consistently and fairly across all service areas.

By managing complaints effectively through to successful resolution, this assists in the achievement of the following corporate well-being objectives:

- A County Borough where we protect our most vulnerable
- A County Borough where we help people meet their potential
- A County Borough where people feel valued, heard and part of their community
- A County Borough where we support people to live healthy and happy lives

#### **6. Climate Change Implications**

6.1 Reviewing, improving and streamlining business processes is important to help protect and sustain the environment over the long term and in line with our climate change ambitions.

## **7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications**

7.1 All complaints received where there is safeguarding concern will be managed under Bridgend County Borough Council's Safeguarding Policy. This will safeguard and promote the wellbeing of children, young people and adults at risk of abuse or neglect and to ensure that effective practices are in place throughout the Council and its commissioned services.

## **8. Financial Implications**

8.1 There are no financial implications arising out of this report.

## **9. Recommendation**

9.1 The Committee is recommended to:

- note this report and agree the proposed process for collating all complaints data centrally to present to the Committee on an annual basis, without the need to develop a single corporate complaints computerised system.

## **Background documents**

None