

1. Background

The Information Team based in Legal, & Regulatory Services, HR & Corporate Policy 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 2023 to 30 September 2023, the number of informal complaints received against each category together with the numbers of those complaints closed against each outcome was as follows:

	Total number of informal complaints received	Number resolved by frontline staff/not upheld	Number Upheld	Number where investigation discontinued /investigation not merited/complaint about a service not provided by the Council/withdrawn	Still Ongoing
Adult Social Care	0	0	0	0	0
Benefits Administration	6	5	0	1	0
Children's Social Services	0	0	0	0	0
Community Facilities (including Recreation & Leisure)	11	8	0	2	1
Complaints handling	3	2	1	0	0
Education	14	12	0	2	0
Environment & Environmental Health	0	0	0	0	0
Finance & Council Tax	25	23	0	2	0
Housing	13	13	0	0	0
Planning & Building Control	7	6	0	0	1
Roads & Transport	1	1	0	0	0
Various/Other	32	22	4	2	4
Waste & Refuse	28	26	1	0	1

2.3 The Corporate Complaints team have only recently commenced the collation of Bridgend County borough Council Ward for informal complaints. It is therefore intended to provide this to the Governance & Audit Committee going forward.

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 29 formal complaints for the period from 1 April 2023 to 30 September 2023. The breakdown for the period is as follows:

	1 April 2023 to 30 September 2023
No. of Complaints Received	29
No. acknowledged in 5 working days	26
No. acknowledged outside 5 working days	3

- 3.3 The table below sets out the number of formal complaints the Council has received the financial half year 1 April 2023 to 30 September 2023 and the previous two financial half years:

Financial Half Year	Number of Complaints Received
1 April 2022 to 30 September 2022	26
1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023	27
1 April 2023 – 30 September 2023	29

- 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:

i) there was a delay in the Coporate Complaints team of 1 acknowledgement being sent.

ii) In 2 instances, the request for a Stage 2 was received directly by the responsible department who notified Corporate Complaints of the Stage 2 at the time of their response. Therefore, no acknowledgement had been sent for those complaints.

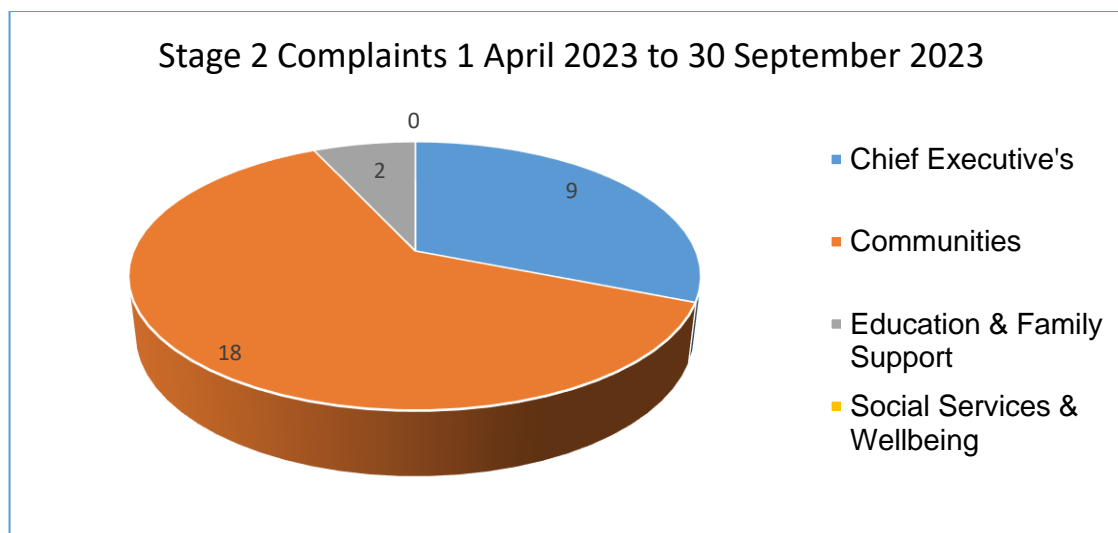
3.5 For the period from 1 April 2023 to 30 September 2023, the number of formal complaints received against each of the Public Services Ombudman criteria together with the numbers of those complaints closed against each outcome was as follows:

	Total number of formal complaints received	Number resolved by frontline staff/not upheld	Number Upheld	Number where investigation discontinued/investigation not merited/complaint about a service not provided by the Council/withdrawn	Still ongoing
Adult Social Care	0	0	0	0	0
Benefits Administration	1	1	0	0	0
Children's Social Services	0	0	0	0	0
Community Facilities (including Recreation & Leisure)	3	1	2	0	0
Complaints Handling	0	0	0	0	0
Education	2	2	0	0	0
Environment & Environmental Health	0	0	0	0	0
Finance & Council Tax	3	3	0	0	0
Housing	4	4	0	0	0
Planning & Building Control	6	5	0	0	1
Roads & Transport	4	4	0	0	0
Various/Other	4	2	1	0	1
Waste & Refuse	2	2	0	0	0

- 3.6 The following information sets out the breakdown of formal complaints received by County Borough Council Ward:

Ward	No. of complaints
Bridgend Central	3
Bryntirion, Laleston & Merthyr Mawr	1
Cornelly	1
Garw Valley	1
Maesteg East	1
Maesteg West	2
Porthcawl West Central	1
St Bride's Minor & Ynysawdre	1
Unknown/By e-mail	18

- 3.7 For the period from 1 April 2023 to 30 September 2023, the number of formal complaints received by each Directorate was as follows:

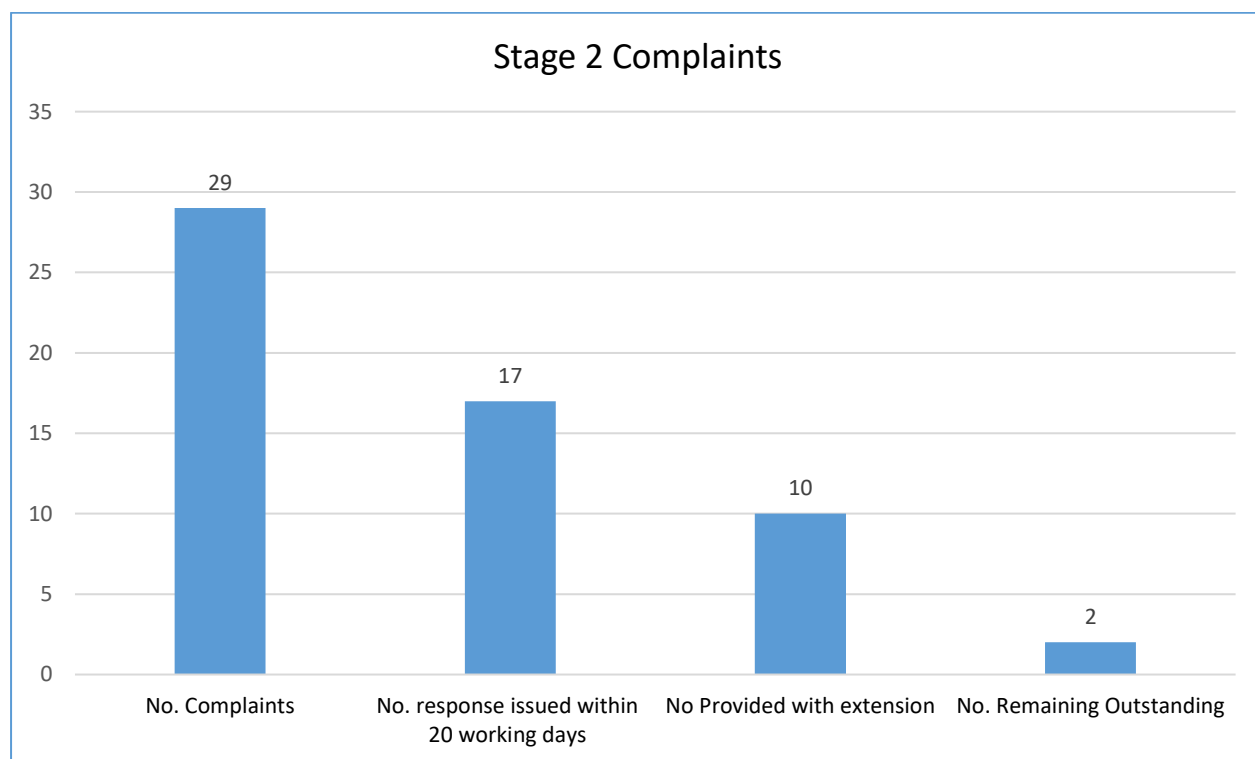


- 3.8 For the period 1 April 2023 to 30 September 2023 one complaint was received from the Welsh Language Commissioner about a service provided by the Authority; the complaint related to Council Tax bills not being available in “My Account” on the Welsh language side of the Council’s website. However, as the Commissioner was already investigating the Council's compliance with standards 52 and 56, the Commissioner chose not to investigate the complaint. The Commissioner has since received written confirmation that the complaint had

been resolved and that council tax bills can now be viewed and read on Bridgend Council's website in Welsh.

3.9 As required by the Equalities Strategy, a voluntary 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.



3.11 So that the Committee can be provided with a Lessons Learned Section going forward, the Corporate Complaints team are now requesting departments to provide them with a note of any system or process changes the service has made as a result of a complaint.