

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**

The policy is a national policy required by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. The Policy was reviewed in July 2024.

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 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 1 April 2024, 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where investigation discontinued /investigation not merited/complaint about a service not provided by the Council/withdrawn	Still Ongoing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	1	0	1	0	0
Community Facilities (including Recreation & Leisure)	15	13	0	2	0
Complaints handling	3	2	1	0	0
Education	23	20	0	3	0
Environment & Environmental Health	0	0	0	0	0
Finance & Council Tax	33	29	4	0	0
Housing	22	22	0	0	0
Planning & Building Control	16	16	0	0	0
Roads & Transport	48	41	3	4	0
Various/Other	48	36	7	5	0
Waste & Refuse	60	56	3	1	0

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 67 formal complaints for the period from 1 April 2023 to 1 April 2024. The breakdown for the period is as follows:

	1 April 2024 to 30 September 2024
No. of Complaints Received	67
No. acknowledged in 5 working days	50
No. acknowledged outside 5 working days	17

3.3 The table below sets out the number of formal complaints the Council has received the financial half year 1 April 2023 to 1 April 2024 and the previous two financial half years:

Financial Half Year	Number of Complaints Received
1 April 2021 to 1 April 2022	57
1 April 2022 to 1 April 2023	53
1 April 2023 to 1 April 2024	67

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 Corporate Complaints team of 10 acknowledgements being sent due to a large backlog of complaints

ii) In 1 instance, 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 1 April 2024, 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:

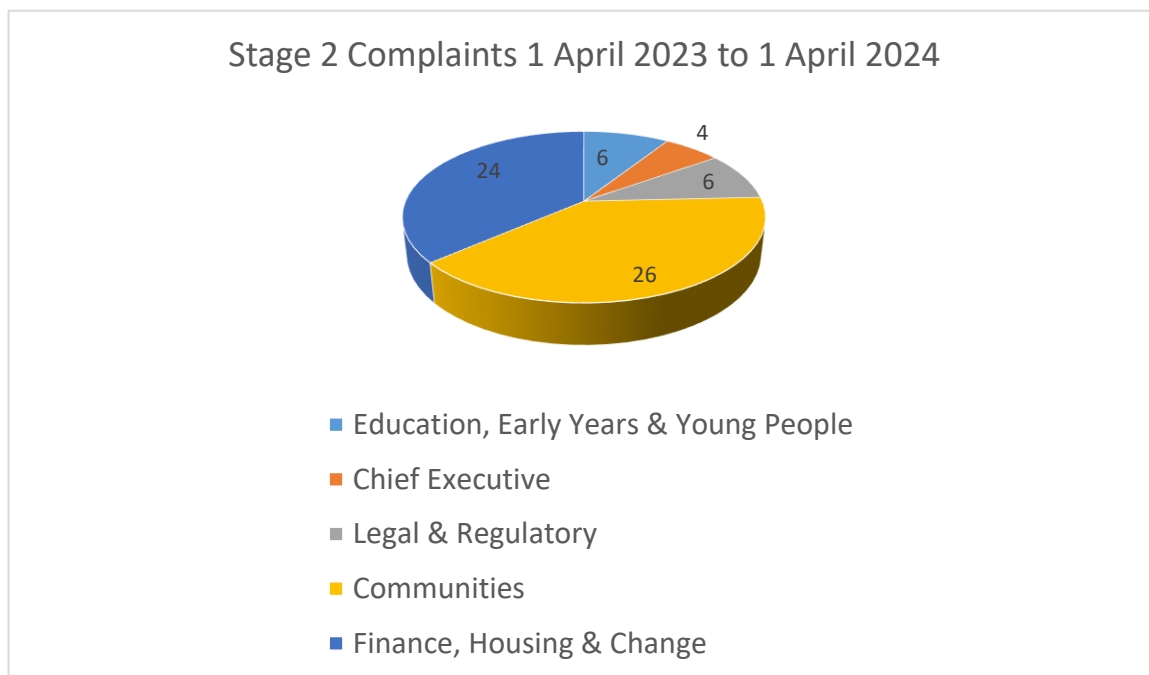
Appendix 3

	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	1	0	1	0	0
Community Facilities (including Recreation & Leisure)	4	2	2	0	0
Complaints Handling	0	0	0	0	0
Education	8	5	3	0	0
Environment & Environmental Health	0	0	0	0	0
Finance & Council Tax	6	6	0	0	0
Housing	14	13	0	1	0
Planning & Building Control	11	11	0	0	0
Roads & Transport	8	8	0	0	0
Various/Other	10	6	3	1	0
Waste & Refuse	4	3	0	1	0

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

Ward	No. of complaints
Brackla East & Coychurch Lower	1
Brackla West Central	2
Bridgend Central	3
Bryntirion, Laleston & Merthyr Mawr	2
Cornelly	1
Garw Valley	2
Llangynwyd	1
Maesteg East	2
Maesteg West	3
Newton	1
Ogmore Vale	1
Pencoed & Penprysg	3
Porthcawl East Central	1
Porthcawl West Central	1
Pyle, Kenfig Hill & Cefn Cribbwr	1
St Brides Minor & Ynysawdre	2
Unknown/By e-mail	40

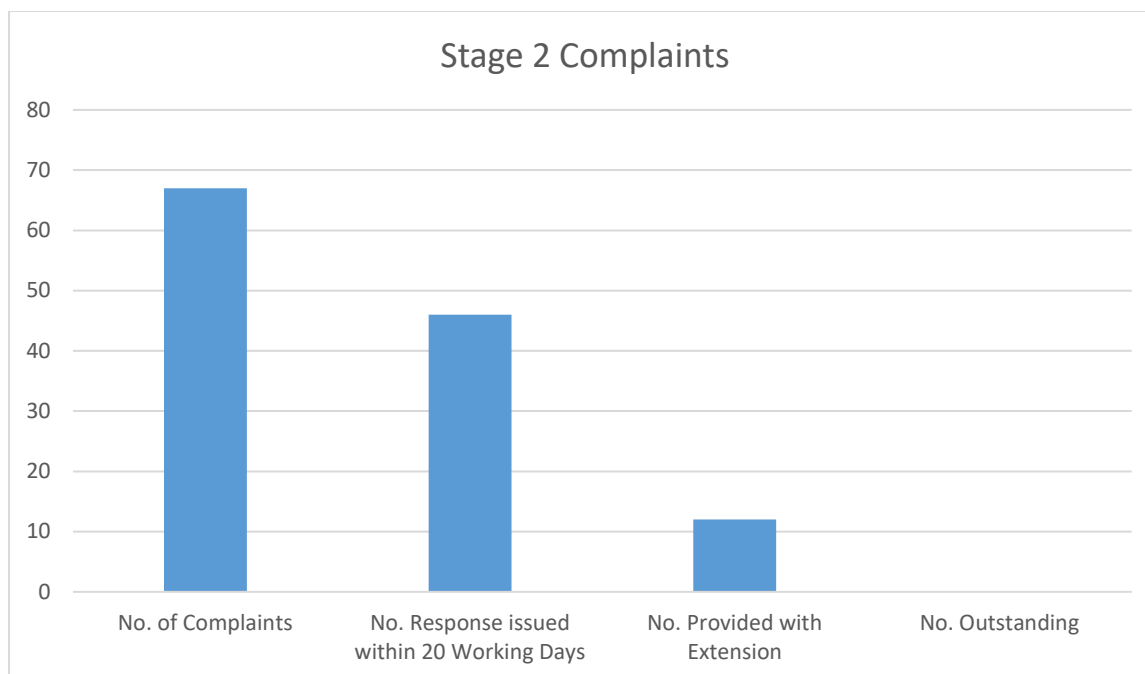
- 3.7 For the period from 1 April 2023 to 1 April 2024, the number of formal complaints received by each Directorate was as follows:



3.8 For the period 1 April 2023 to 1 April 2024 one complaint was received from the Welsh Language Commissioner about a service provided by the Authority; the complaint related to the Council Tax section on the My Account website only being available in English and not in Welsh. This has since been amended.

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 In order that the Committee can be provided with a Lessons Learned Section the Corporate Complaints team request departments to provide them with a note of any system or process changes the service has made as a result of a complaint.

At the time of reporting the Team have received 3 feedback notes: 1 in relation to the ongoing delay in Social Services Subject Access Requests which has resulted in the development of an action plan to tackle the backlog. The second is from the Education team, as a complaint was upheld due to the incorrect distance being recorded when assessing the 2 mile rule for School Transport for a household. The team advised that they will now be performing further checks during this process. The last note was from the Taxation team following a Council Tax complaint that had been ongoing for some time and further letters had been sent to the complainant whilst their complaint was being investigated. As a result, staff were reminded to update Taxation records as soon as they are notified of any such errors.