

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**MONITORING REPORT – COMPLAINTS, FREEDOM OF INFORMATION AND DATA PROTECTION****1. Background**

The Information Team, based in Chief Executive's Directorate is responsible for processing all formal complaints in line with the Authority's Corporate Complaints Procedure, logging and responding to requests made under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and Data Subject Access requests made under the Data Protection Act 2018. The Team also process requests for information from bodies such as the Police, HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) and the National Health Service (NHS).

Complaints

The Corporate Complaints Policy was approved by the Cabinet at its meeting 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 (PSOW).

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 PSOW.
- 2.2 The PSOW now sets criteria for complaint types to be logged. For the period from 1 January to 31 December 2024, the number of informal complaints received against each category was as follows:

Informal Complaints	Number
Adult Social Services	0
Benefits Administration	4
Children's Social Services	2

Complaints Handling	2
Community Facilities (including Recreation & Leisure)	19
Education	27
Environment & Environmental Health	5
Finance & Council Tax	23
Housing	32
Planning & Building Control	16
Roads & Transport	44
Various/Other	35
Waste & Refuse	96
TOTAL	305

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 January to 31 December 2024. The breakdown for the period is as follows:

	Jan – Dec 2024
No. of Complaints Received	51
No. acknowledged in 5 working days	32
No. acknowledged outside 5 working days	19

3.3 The table below sets out the number of formal complaints the Council has received in 2024 and the previous two years:

Year	Number of Complaints Received
Jan – Dec 2023	65

Jan – Dec 2024	51
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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.

3.5 For the period from 1 January to 31 December 2024, the number of formal complaints received against each of the Public Services Ombudsman criteria was as follows:

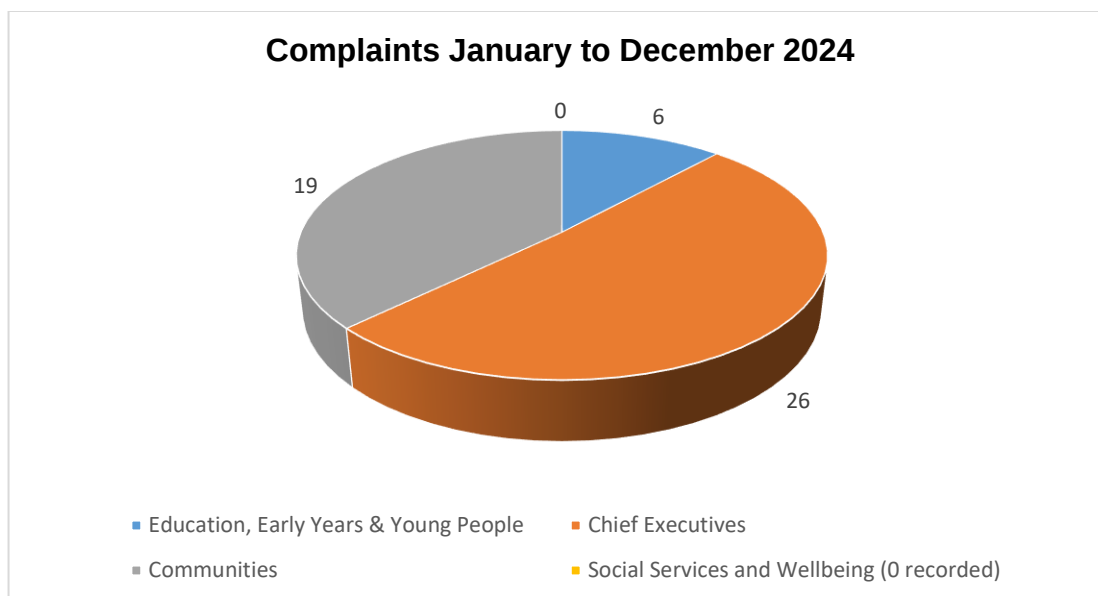
Formal	Number
Adult Social Services	0
Benefits Administration	1
Children's Social Services	0
Community Facilities (including Recreation & Leisure)	3
Complaints Handling	2
Education	6
Environment & Environmental Health	0
Finance & Council Tax	6
Housing	10
Planning & Building Control	7
Roads & Transport	5
Various/Other	9
Waste & Refuse	2

3.6 The following information sets out the breakdown of Stage 1 (informal) and Stage 2 formal complaints received regarding each County Borough Council Ward shown, which has been requested by elected Members:

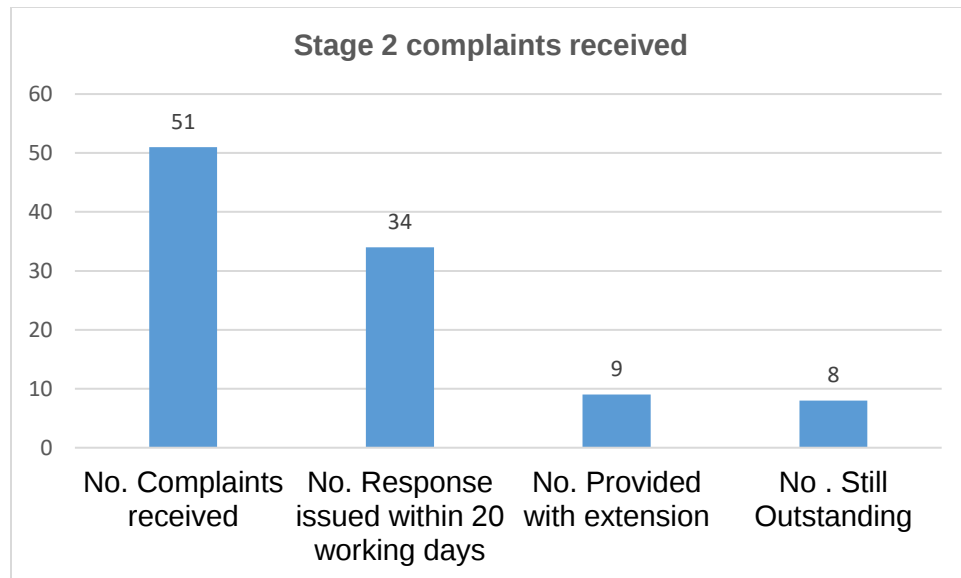
Ward	No. of Stage 1 complaints	No. of Stage 2 complaints
Aberkenfig	4	0
Blackmill	6	0
Brackla East & Coychurch Lower	10	3
Brackla East Central	2	0
Brackla West	4	1
Brackla West Central	3	1

Bridgend Central	11	1
Bryntirion, Laleston & Merthyr Mawr	11	1
Caerau	4	1
Cefn-Glas	2	0
Coity Higher	11	0
Cornelly	16	2
Garw Valley	13	1
Llangynwyd	3	0
Maesteg East	13	0
Maesteg West	7	2
Nant-y-moel	7	0
Newton	4	0
Nottage	5	1
Ogmore Vale	5	1
Oldcastle	5	0
Pen-y-fai	5	0
Pencoed & Penprysg	14	3
Porthcawl East Central	15	0
Porthcawl West Central	4	0
Pyle, Kenfig Hill & Cefn Cribbwr	11	0
Rest Bay	6	1
St Bride's Minor & Yynsawdre	18	2
Unknown/By Email	86	30
TOTAL	305	51

3.7 For the period from 1 January to 31 December 2024, the number of Stage 2 (formal) complaints received by each Directorate is outlined in the chart below:



- 3.8 For the period 1 January to 31 December 2024 one complaint was received from the Welsh Language commissioner in relation to English only road markings. The Council has resolved the issue, however a decision is still awaited from 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.



4. Complaints made to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

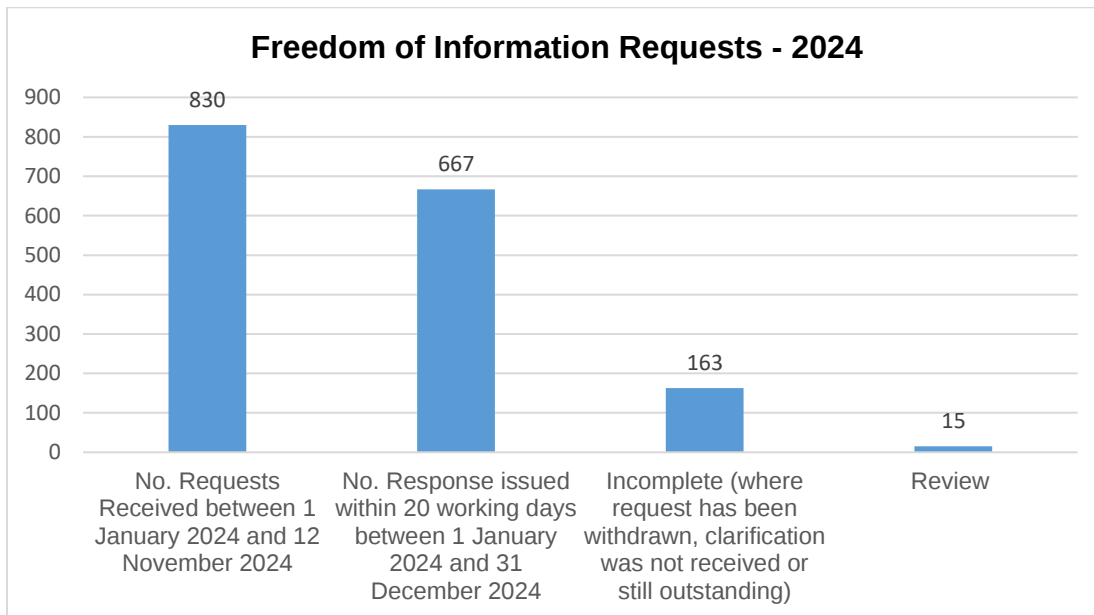
- 4.1 Customers have the right at any stage to refer their complaint to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales for his consideration of maladministration e.g. unfairness or delay. However, the Ombudsman will usually give the Authority a reasonable opportunity to investigate and respond to a complaint, before he investigates.
- 4.2 The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales received 54 complaints about the Authority during the period January to December 2024. Of these 8 were resolved through early resolution, 19 had been submitted before completing the Council's complaints procedure, 10 were out of jurisdiction and the remainder did not proceed to investigation as the Ombudsman found there was no case to answer. A breakdown of the complaints by service area is set out below.

Adult Social Services	6
Childrens Services	11
Complaints Handling	3
Education	7
Finance & Taxation	8
Housing	4
Planning	8
Roads	2
Waste	5

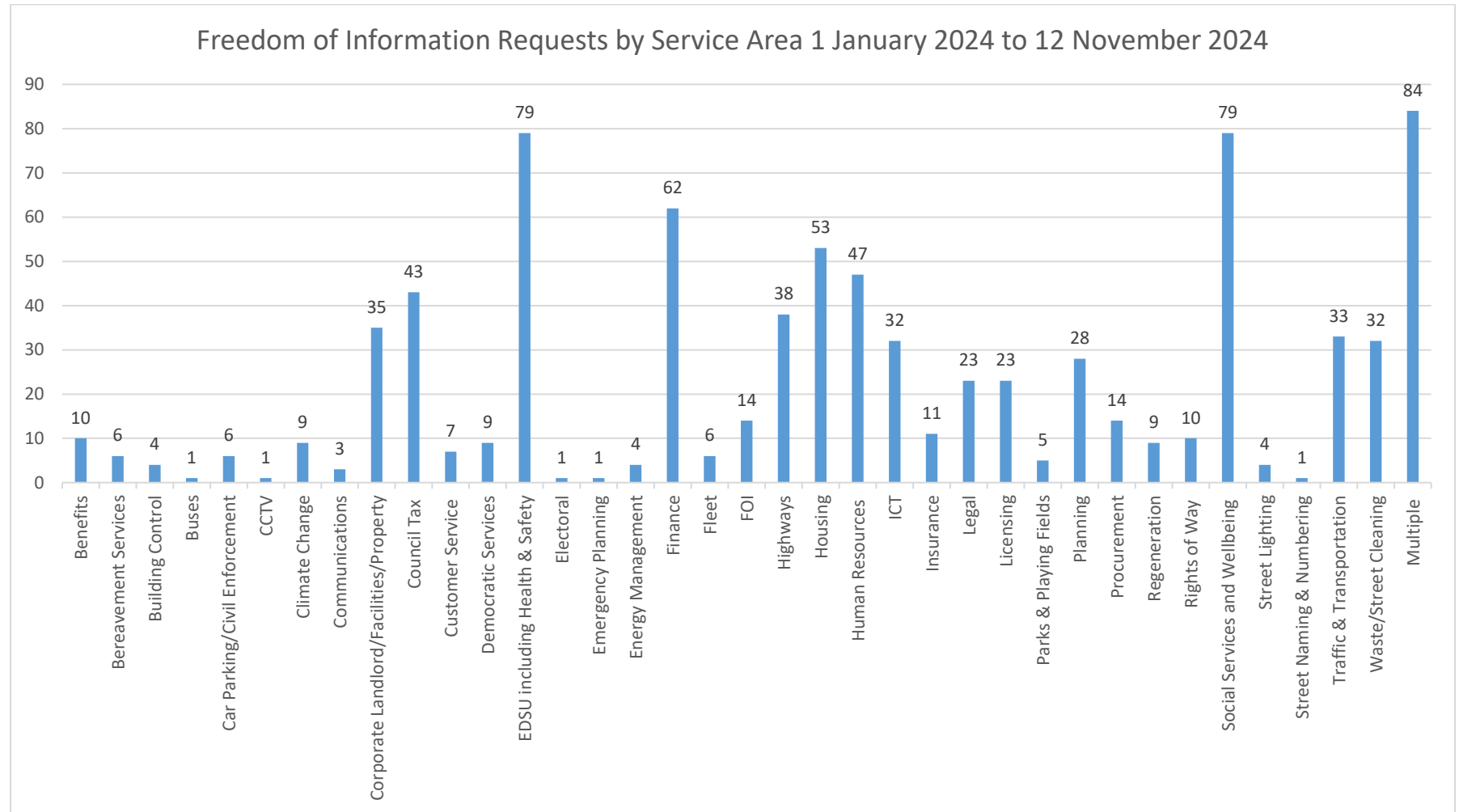
Total	54
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5 Freedom of Information Requests

5.1 During the period 1 January to 12 November 2024 the Information Team have logged and acknowledged a total of 830 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 between 1 December 2024 and 31 December 2024. There were 15 internal reviews requested during January 2024 to December 2024. 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 Information and Data Protection Officer. 6 internal reviews were responded to within 20 working days as recommended in the guidance provided by the Information Commissioner's Office.



6 Service Area Breakdown



7 FOI request comparison

- 7.1 The table below sets out the number of Freedom of Information requests the Council has received in 2024 so far in comparison with the previous two years:

Year	Number of FOIs Received
2023	938
2024	830

8 Data Subject Access Requests

- 8.1 During the period January to 31 December 2024, the Information team processed 154 requests for personal information which include both subject access requests and personal information requests from the NHS.

9 Information Requests from Public Bodies

- 9.1 During the period 1 January to 31 December 2024 the Information Team processed 223 requests for information from public bodies including UK Police Forces, HMRC, other local authorities, the Health & Safety Executive and the Probation Service. The majority of requests were made under Schedule 2, Part 1 (2) of the Data Protection Act 2018 (Crime and Taxation exemption).