

ANNUAL COMPLAINTS REPORT 2022/23

Reason for the Report

1. To consider the Council's Annual Complaints Report, which is to be presented to the Cabinet on 19 October 2023, covering complaints and compliments received between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023.

Structure of the Papers

2. Attached to this cover report for members preparations are:
Appendix A: Cabinet Report titled Cardiff Council Annual Complaints & Compliments Report 2022/ 23.
Appendix 1 to Appendix A: Cardiff Council Annual Complaints & Compliments Report 2022/23

Background

3. Complaints and compliments provide valuable information about how the Council is performing and what customers think about service delivery. The Cabinet receives a report annually, detailing complaints received across all directorates.
4. The Council defines a complaint as an expression of concern or dissatisfaction made by one or more members of the public regarding Cardiff Council's actions, or lack of action, or the standard of service it provided following an initial request for service.
5. Complaints, comments and compliments can be made face-to-face at a customer facing venue, by telephone, email, letter or by using the online form found on the Council's website.

6. Once received the complaint is forwarded to the relevant service area. Every Council Service Area has a lead officer for complaints. Corporate Complaints Workshops are run quarterly to look at common issues relating to complaints handling, including complaints data, timescales and learning from complaints.
7. Over the year service area complaints managers record information on the number of complaints received, how quickly they are acknowledged, and a response provided.

Issues

8. Members will note from the report attached at **Appendix 1** that a total of 3,071 corporate complaints were recorded during 2022/23. The Cabinet report indicates that this is a 15.5% decrease from the previous year.
9. The total of 3,071 complaints breaks down by service area as below.

Service Area	Number of complaints 2021/22	Number of complaints 2022/23
Waste Collections	2,089	1,267
Housing & Communities	655	934
Traffic & Transportation	184	241
Finance	152	174
Customer & Digital Services	179	142
Education	37	89
Environmental Enforcement	57	58
Highways Maintenance	56	54
Economic Development	48	33
Parks & Harbour Authority	85	30
Planning (including Building Control)	48	28
Bereavement & Registration (including Cardiff Dogs Home)	27	11
Governance & Legal Services	12	8
HR	4	2
Total	3,633	3,071

10. Whilst this is an improvement on complaints figures for 2021/22, for 3 years prior to 2021/22 complaints had been circa 2,500 – 2,860 (*page 4 Appendix 1*).

11. The Council records compliments alongside complaints to share good practice and learning across service areas. In 2022/23 a total of 1,265 compliments were recorded. This is a 14.9% decrease from the previous year.
12. The complaints report also sets out the number of Public Services Ombudsman for Wales complaints for 2022/23. Complaints that progress to the Ombudsman will have been thoroughly investigated by the service area. If a complainant remains dissatisfied, it is for the Ombudsman to assess whether there is any evidence of service failure or maladministration not identified by the Council.
13. During 2022/23, fewer complainants escalated their complaint to the Ombudsman compared to the previous year - as the Ombudsman closed 143 cases involving Cardiff Council compared to 159 cases in 2021/22. Of the 143 cases, just 23 were identified as requiring further action by the Council as an Early Resolution Settlement (*an apology / change of process / time and trouble payment,*) which enable cases to be closed without the need for full investigation. More analysis of ombudsman cases can be found on pages 7-8 of Appendix 1. Importantly, zero cases proceeded to formal investigation during 2022/23. This, together with zero reports issued against Cardiff Council, is a strong indication that the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales ethos that the aim of every formal investigation should be to "*investigate once, investigate well*". is fully embedded in Cardiff's complaints processes.

Way Forward

14. To support the pre-decision scrutiny of this report in attendance at committee will be Councillor Chris Weaver, Cabinet Member Finance Modernisation & Performance, Isabelle Bignall, Chief Digital Officer, Lowri Morris, Contact Centre Manager and Rory Williams Complaints & Correspondence Manager. Members will have an opportunity for questions to the expert panel.

Legal Implications

12. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters, there are no direct legal implications.

However, legal implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet/Council will set out any legal implications arising from those recommendations. All decisions taken by or on behalf of the Council must (a) be within the legal powers of the Council; (b) comply with any procedural requirement imposed by law; (c) be within the powers of the body or person exercising powers on behalf of the Council; (d) be undertaken in accordance with the procedural requirements imposed by the Council e.g. Scrutiny Procedure Rules; (e) be fully and properly informed; (f) be properly motivated; (g) be taken having regard to the Council's fiduciary duty to its taxpayers; and (h) be reasonable and proper in all the circumstances.

Financial Implications

13. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters, there are no direct financial implications at this stage in relation to any of the work programme. However, financial implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet/Council will set out any financial implications arising from those recommendations.

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee is recommended to

- i. Note the Annual Complaints Report 2022/23
- ii. Consider whether it wishes to offer comments, observations, or recommendations for Cabinet consideration.
- iii. Consider whether there are issues that would benefit from further/ongoing scrutiny as part of the committee's work programming.

DAVINA FIORE

Director of Governance and Legal Services

12 October 2023