

Complaint Policy

Reason for the Report

1. To provide an opportunity for pre-decision scrutiny by considering the Council's draft revised Complaint Policy Guidance Notes and offer its observations to the Cabinet prior to the policy's consideration at the 21st February 2013 Cabinet meeting. This item also offers to Committee the opportunity to consider the Annual Complaints Report for 2011-12, which was presented to the Cabinet at its 18th October meeting.

Background

2. A complaint to the Council is defined as 'an expression of dissatisfaction or concern' which can be 'written, spoken or made by any other communication method'. This can be made by a member of the public, or by someone on their behalf (for instance an Elected Member).
3. To date the Council has had a Complaints Policy and Procedure that requires all service areas to report on a monthly basis the numbers of complaints about service received and processed. Using this information, an Annual Complaints Report is produced each year, giving the key outcomes of the operation of the Complaints Policy and Procedure and a service area breakdown of complaints received.
4. The Council has undertaken a review of the current Complaints Policy and Procedure and is recommending improvements in order to ensure that the Council's policy fully reflects guidance from the Welsh Government (WG) Model Policy and Guidance Paper for Handling Complaints as well as guidance received

from the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales. These will be considered by the Cabinet at its meeting on 21st February 2013.

Issues

5. Attached at **Appendix 1** is the Council's revised Complaint Policy Guidance Notes ('the Policy Guidance Notes'). Following the WG Model for Handling Complaints, which recommends 'investigate once, investigate well', the Policy emphasises:
 - the need to resolve complaints at local service area level at the earliest opportunity avoiding the need for lengthy investigation where possible;
 - Clearer guidance for officers in terms of complaints records keeping;
 - information regarding the Council's relationship with Public Service Ombudsman for Wales; and
 - sets out how the Complaints Policy will be publicised.
6. Attached at **Appendix 2** is the Annual Complaints Report 2011-12, which was presented to Cabinet as its 18th October meeting. The report shows that 4474 complaints were received by the Council in the 2011-12 financial year, a figure more than double that of the 2010-11 financial year, when 2080 complaints were received. The report indicates that many of these complaints were regarding Waste Management services, following changes to household collections.
7. Isabelle Bignall, Head of Customer Services and John Agnew, Corporate Customer Services Manager, will be in attendance to answer any questions Members may have.

Legal Implications

8. 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 the Cabinet/Council will set out any legal implications arising from those recommendations. All decision taken by or on behalf of the Council must (a) be within the legal powers of the Council; (b) comply with any procedural requirements 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 taken having regard to the Council's fiduciary duty to its taxpayers; and (he) be reasonable and proper in all the circumstances.

Financial Implications

9. 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 consider the Cardiff Council Complaint Policy Guidance Notes and whether it wishes to report any comments, concerns or observations to inform Cabinet consideration of the policy at its meeting on 21st February 2013.

MIKE DAVIES

Head of Scrutiny, Performance & Improvement

22 November 2012

Cardiff Council

Complaint Policy Guidance Notes

This policy comes into effect on

The Corporate Customer Services Team

The Corporate Complaints Policy

The Corporate Complaints team is responsible for the operation of the Council's Corporate Complaints Policy¹ and the policy is based on guidance from the Welsh Assembly Government and the Ombudsman.

The Corporate Complaints team will ensure that the policy is workable and that it is adhered to and will support staff by:

- offering training in complaint handling and customer service
- running plain language workshops
- holding quarterly complaint workshops
- offering advice about responses to complaints and difficult complainants
- advising departments about how to respond to recommendations in complaint reports and Ombudsman reports.

Publicising the policy

They will ensure that the complaints process is accessible by:

- putting the policy on CIS
- producing a bilingual complaints information leaflet and making it available in all Council buildings
- uploading information to the website
- providing information in other languages and formats if required

¹ The Monitoring Officer has delegated authority to make any consequential amendments to this procedure.

Other information that will help you to use the Complaints Policy more effectively:

- Policy for dealing with Unacceptable Behaviour from Complainants
- Data Protection Policy
- FOI Policy
- Equalities Policy
- Ombudsman's website
- WAG Model Complaints and Concerns Policy

Who does what?

The Corporate Complaints Manager

The Corporate Complaints Manager is the main point of contact for enquiries from service area Complaint Managers and the sole point of contact at the Council for the Ombudsman's office and managed complainants.²

The Service Area Complaint Managers (SACMs)

Each service area has a Complaints Manager and this person has responsibility for co-ordinating responses to complaints and for ensuring that complaints information (on websites and documents) is up to date and easily accessible. They are asked to ensure that complaints are acknowledged within **5 working days** and that customers are provided with full responses to their complaints within **20 working days**.

Complaints Managers are also responsible for advising complainants about what to do if they are not satisfied with the Council's response to their complaints. We have created a complaints information sheet for this purpose and we ask officers to send this with all acknowledgements or responses.

² These were formerly referred to as persistent and vexatious complainants.

SACMs should ensure that information about the Complaint Policy is prominently displayed at all points of service delivery and that all employees in the Service Area are aware of the policy and how to get an up to date complaint form from the Council's Intranet. Where possible they should keep templates for acknowledgment letters and complaint investigations.

If you want to know more about the work carried out by the Complaints Manager for your area, please contact the Corporate Complaints team for more information. Alternatively, you can contact the Complaints Manager directly.

Here are the mailbox contact details for complaints managers for each service area:

Directorate	Service Area	Sub-Category	Service Area Mailbox Address
Communities	Housing & Neighbourhood Renewal	H&NR	Communities.-HANRComplaints@cardiff.gov.uk
		Community Maintenance Services	Communities.-HANRComplaints@cardiff.gov.uk
	Community Facilities		Communities.-Comm.FacilitiesComplaints@cardiff.gov.uk
	Partnership & Equalities		CSStrategy&Partnerships@cardiff.gov.uk
	Regulatory & Supporting Services		RegulatoryComplaintsEnquiries@cardiff.gov.uk
Corporate	Finance		CorporateServices.Complaints@cardiff.gov.uk
	Legal & Democratic Services		Corporate-Legal&DemocraticServComplaints@cardiff.gov.uk
	Scrutiny Performance & Improvement		Corporate-Scrutiny.Perf&ImprovementComplaints@cardiff.gov.uk
People	Adult Services		as-adultservicescomplaints@cardiff.gov.uk
	Children Services		cscomplaints@cardiff.gov.uk
	Education		EducationComplaints@cardiff.gov.uk
Place	City Development	Planning	CityDevelopment.Complaints&Enquiries@cardiff.gov.uk
		Economy & Major Projects	CityDevelopment.Complaints&Enquiries@cardiff.gov.uk

		Transport Strat. & Projects	CityDevelopment.Complaints&Enquiries@cardiff.gov.uk
	City Management	Harbour Authority	CityManagement.complaints@cardiff.gov.uk
	City Management	Culture, Tourism & Events	CityManagement.complaints@cardiff.gov.uk
		Parks & Sport	CityManagement.complaints@cardiff.gov.uk
		Network Management	CityManagement.complaints@cardiff.gov.uk
	City Services	Waste Management & Street Cleansing	CityServices.Complaints@cardiff.gov.uk
		Highways Maintenance	CityServices.Complaints@cardiff.gov.uk
Shared	Central Transport Services		SharedServices.complaints@cardiff.gov.uk
	Communication & Media		SharedServices.complaints@cardiff.gov.uk
	Customer Services		c2ccomplaints@cardiff.gov.uk
	HR People Services		SharedServices.complaints@cardiff.gov.uk
	Internal Services		InternalServices.- Complaints&Compliments@cardiff.gov.uk

What is a complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction or concern and this can be written, spoken or made by any other communication method. It can be made by one or more members of the public³ or through a Local Councillor, Assembly Member (AM), Member of Parliament (MP) or any other representative.

³ A *member of the public* is defined as anyone in receipt of a service by the public service provider in question or, indeed, denied a service to which they are entitled – this can be an individual or a group of people.

For example, a representative may deal with the complaint:

1. if the person affected has died
2. if the person affected is a child and is unable to make the complaint or wants to use an advocate (the Council accepts direct complaints from children)
3. if the complaint involves someone who lacks the capacity to make a complaint – using the definition of ‘capacity’ in the Mental Capacity Act 2005(1)
4. if the person affected has asked someone to make the complaint on their behalf

In the case of (2), (3) and (4), officers must be satisfied, as far as the circumstances of the person affected allow for it, that the representative is acting with the authority of that person. If possible they should obtain the signature of the person who is being represented.

A complaint will usually relate to the organisation’s action, inaction or standard of service and it will involve an issue that requires a response. If the complaint does not involve Cardiff Council services it is good practice to inform the customer about this and, if possible, provide alternative contact details.

A complaint is not:

- an initial request for a service⁴, such as reporting a faulty street light
- an appeal against a properly made decision by a public body
- a means to seek change to legislation or a properly made policy decision⁵

⁴ An example of a *request for service* is when a customer calls to say that their bins have not been emptied - the objective is to have the bins emptied and not to have a lengthy investigation into the issues.

- a means for lobbying groups/organisations to seek to promote a cause

Exceptions to the Complaints Policy

Normally, the Council will not be able to consider a complaint about a problem that occurred more than six months ago, especially if the complainant was aware of the issue at the time. The Council may be able to look at concerns which are raised after this time, but complainants would have to give strong reasons to explain why they did not bring the complaint earlier and the Council would need to have sufficient information about the issue to allow officers to consider it properly. In any event, regardless of the circumstances, we will not consider any concerns about matters that took place more than twelve months ago.

Complaints Managers should look at whether there are good reasons for accepting the complaint and, in making this decision; they should be supported by the relevant Council officers from the service area. The Corporate Complaints Manager will also be able to offer advice in these cases.

In addition, the following matters lie outside the Complaints Policy:

- 1) The Education Act 2002 requires the governing bodies of all maintained schools in Wales to establish procedures for dealing with complaints from parents, pupils, staff and members of the public. This includes complaints about the school and any community facilities or services that

⁵ A *properly made* decision is one where the relevant laws, policies and procedures have been correctly followed in arriving at a decision e.g. setting the council rent whether about the public service provider itself, a person acting on its behalf, or a public service provider partnership.

the school provides. Hence any complaints of this nature should be referred to the Governors of the school in question.

- 2) Children or young people wishing to complain about Social Services issues must follow the statutory complaints procedure.
- 3) Adult Services has its own statutory procedure.
- 4) Decisions that have their own appeal process, (such as Planning Decisions). Customers should be advised about the relevant appeals process.
- 5) Allegations of financial impropriety will be notified to the Internal Audit section.
- 6) Complaints alleging criminal activity will be referred to the Police, where appropriate.
- 7) Complaints against Councillors will be referred to the Chief Officer, City and County Solicitor and thereafter to the Ombudsman.
- 8) Complaints against approved Council policies, about the merits of performing a duty imposed by legislation and against working practices or procedures established by service areas.
- 9) Complaints from members of staff that relate to employment issues. There are other internal mechanisms for these type of concerns, for example, whistle-blowing, bullying, or grievance procedures (held on CIS).
- 10) Complaints about the Freedom of Information process and Data Protection issues are the responsibility of the Improvement and Information Management team.

Complaint Investigation

The Model Complaints and Concerns policy from the Welsh Assembly Government states the following:

'Investigate once, investigate well' is the principle for this stage of the process. Emphasis should be placed on one investigation to deal thoroughly with the concerns raised, rather than multiple investigations at different levels in the organisation, which can result in protracted and sometimes open ended investigations...the complaints process is intended to be flexible to respond appropriately to the complaint. 'Investigating well' also means conducting an investigation in a manner that is proportionate to the nature and degree of seriousness of the complaint. Proportionate means that for those complaints not so serious in their nature, the investigation may not need to be so detailed.

With this in mind, officers should aim to resolve complaints at the earliest opportunity to avoid the need for a lengthy, formal investigation. Examples of the type of concern that can be resolved at the local resolution stage are:

- an appointment was made for a boiler to be fixed and the tenant has complained about the fact that no-one turned up on the appointed day
- a customer complained that their bin had not been emptied by the refuse collection service when it should have been

However, if the issue cannot be resolved in this way or if customers want to have their complaints formally investigated, officers should set up a formal investigation of the complaint. As long as a complaint fits the relevant criteria to be entered into the Council's formal Complaint Policy, officers should:

1. confirm that the complaint involves a Council service (or lack of service) and that it is not intended for another organisation

2. identify what the complaint is about and the number of service areas involved – each service area involved in a complaint should log the complaint in the normal way and the service area with the biggest proportion of the complaint should take the lead in co-ordinating and replying to the complaint⁶
3. establish whether it is within the Council’s powers to resolve the issue and consider what the complainant has asked for (the complaint form asks customers what they are seeking from the process)
4. consider whether the complaint will have to be dealt with by someone outside the department or service area – for example, if it involves allegations against senior members of staff from the service area, it would not be appropriate for them to investigate the complaint and the matter should be referred to the Corporate Complaints Manager
5. log the complaint using the appropriate departmental system – all departments involved in multi-service complaints should log the complaint
6. consider whether the customer has any special requirements and make arrangements to assist if necessary

Complaints Managers should keep a comprehensive list of advice and advocacy organisations that are relevant to their services and which might assist customers with special requirements. Complaints Managers or other officers who are dealing with a complaint should offer this information to complainants who require or request support. For example:

⁶ The Corporate Complaints Officer can help if there is disagreement about responsibilities.

- Advocacy services
 - Language support services
 - Welfare advice agencies
 - Age Concern
 - The Children's Commissioner for Wales
 - Meic Helpline
7. get information about the customer's preferred form of contact and use this unless the customer asks for it to be changed
 8. acknowledge the complaint within **5 working days** and provide the customer with an information sheet about the Complaints Policy and, if necessary, additional advice in relation to special requirements
 9. investigate all of the issues and identify possible remedies⁷
 10. respond in full within **20 working days**, covering all of the issues raised
 11. if the Council is at fault, apologise and explain how the problem occurred and what the service area is going to do to stop it happening again
 12. keep the complainant informed about possible delays, apologise for delays, provide reasons for delays and give new deadlines
 13. provide information about what customers can do if they are unhappy with the Council's response - details of how to contact the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

⁷ The aim of the remedy is to put the complainant back in the position they would have been in if nothing had gone wrong. Where this is not possible, as will often be the case, the remedy should fairly reflect the harm the complainant has suffered. Appropriate redress can take many forms and this includes an explanation and apology, remedial action, financial compensation, or a combination of these.

Dealing with Unacceptable Behaviour from Complainants

The Council has a separate policy for dealing with unacceptable behaviour from customers. Please refer to the Guidance on CIS.

Complaints Record Keeping

Complaints are confidential and all correspondence should be stored securely at all times, with access to files limited to those involved in dealing with the complaint. Those dealing with complaints should be aware of the rules about storing copies and about retention times – if you are disposing of paper copies, please use confidential waste bags or ensure that the documents are shredded.

Officers should be aware that complainants can ask to see copies of files and that the Ombudsman can also request copies of files. It is important to ensure that files are kept in good order and that all correspondence is professional and meets the standards set out in, for example, the *Cardiff Council E-mail Best Practice Guidance* that is available on CIS. The Corporate Complaints Manager can also offer information about the Council's Plain Language Policy and templates for letters.

Service Areas are expected to keep records of the complaints they receive and Complaints Managers are expected to submit monthly complaints reports to the Corporate Complaints teams using an online form. This form records a limited amount of information and it is good practice for service areas to keep detailed records about the type of complaints received and to review complaints (monthly or quarterly) with a view to learning from mistakes and improving processes.

Complaint Investigations – treatment of staff

Whilst it is not uncommon for people to look for someone to blame when things go wrong, staff should be assured that this is not the aim of a complaint investigation. It should be made clear that where interviews are used, they are part of an effort to establish the facts of the case and do not form part of a disciplinary procedure. However, a separate disciplinary process could take place if appropriate and this would be covered by a different policy.

Any member of staff who is asked to attend an interview should be advised about the purpose of the interview, what to expect and what preparation to do. They should be informed that they can bring someone along for support, such as a colleague, although the role of the supporting person should be clarified in advance and the need for confidentiality should be emphasised. They should also be advised about what will happen after the interview.

It is important to keep staff informed about investigations and their outcomes and to make sure they have information about the support or counselling services that are available.

Public Services Ombudsman for Wales – relationship with Cardiff Council

The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales is appointed by the Queen to look into complaints about public services in Wales. He is independent and unbiased and investigates complaints by members of the public who feel they have suffered injustice as a result of maladministration. The Ombudsman can investigate complaints of maladministration about most Council matters including Social Services, Housing issues, Planning, Education, Waste Management and Council Tax, to name a few. The Ombudsman prefers complaints to be dealt with through the Council's Complaint Policy and he expects complainants to have given the Council the opportunity to resolve the complaint. However, he can be approached at any stage in the complaints process.

The Ombudsman also has the power to investigate allegations that members (Councillors) of local authorities in Wales have failed to comply with the Authority's Code of Conduct.

The Ombudsman's contact details are:

- e-mail: ask@ombudsman-wales.org.uk
- phone: 0845 601 0987
- address: Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, 1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae, Pencoed, CF35 5LJ.

What happens when the Ombudsman asks the Council for information about a complaint?

The Ombudsman's officers will contact the Corporate Complaints Manager if they require information from the Council and each service area has an obligation to respond promptly to requests for information from the Corporate Complaints Manager. The Ombudsman monitors the Council's ability to respond promptly and to provide all of the information requested – his assessment appears in the Annual Summary of Performance.

When the Ombudsman sets a deadline, he does not expect officers to use all of the time available and it is not good practice to leave responses to the last few days or to ask for extensions without offering good reasons.

When the Ombudsman issues a report, draft or final, he sends it to the Chief Executive and he passes it to the Corporate Complaints Manager who shares the information with the relevant departments, co-ordinates responses and provides the Ombudsman with information about compliance with recommendations.

Customer Care Guidance

The way we treat our customers matters because they judge us on a single experience. If that experience is poor, it affects the way they see us.

To our customers you are the Council. Employees will deal with all complaints in a civil and polite manner because the Council recognises that many complaints will relate to issues of genuine concern and difficulty.

However, we expect complainants to also conduct themselves with courtesy to employees trying to assist them.

Complaints from representatives

The Council sometimes receives complaints or requests for services from individuals purporting to represent anonymous members of the public. This can cause confusion and uncertainty resulting in scarce resources being used in responding to such communications when direct contact with the concerned member of the public would be more productive.

Such matters should be dealt with as follows: -

Elected Representatives

Complaints/requests from the public received via Councillors (or MP or AM) should be dealt with in the normal way and in consultation with Members as necessary. (Correspondence from Members is outside the Complaint Policy and the complainant should be provided with details of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales).

Official Representatives

Complaints/requests received from named individuals via other recognised representatives, including Solicitors, family members and charities/voluntary organisations such as Shelter, etc, will receive a response in accordance with the usual practice provided the Council is reasonably satisfied that they are genuine (i.e. in accordance with Complaint Policy if the issue is a complaint).

Other Representatives

Complaints or requests received from other individuals will be treated carefully. Often, requests refer to several complaints received but do not identify the customer(s). A response will be sent which indicates that the customer(s) will be contacted direct if names and addresses are supplied, or alternatively the writer should refer them to the relevant service area or local Member (giving contact points). It is appropriate at this point to refer the writer to the Council's Complaint Form, suggesting that the individuals they claim to represent may wish to complete it and send it in. Any letters of complaint or complaint forms received from those individuals will be dealt with in accordance with the Complaint Policy.

The Council will also have regard to confidentiality when dealing with these issues.

Appendix 1

Corporate Complaints Policy

Cardiff Council **Comments, Complaints & Compliments**

We are committed to dealing effectively with any complaints you have about our services and if you make a complaint it will not affect your right to Council services. If we have made a mistake we will apologise and try to put things right. If we have failed to provide a service that you are entitled to and you let us know about this, we will provide it.

We review complaints regularly and produce an annual report that contains information about the number and type of complaints we have received. Wherever possible, we use this information to improve the way we do things. We also welcome comments and compliments about the services we have provided.

How to Complain

We want it to be simple and convenient for you to complain, make a comment or pay us a compliment. You can contact us by:

- filling in an online complaint form at www.cardiff.gov.uk
- calling our contact centre, Connect to Cardiff (C2C), on 029 2087 2087
- visiting our Help Centre at Cardiff Central Library
- visiting our Citizen Hubs
- using our Minicom service if you are deaf or hard of hearing (029 2087 2085)
- filling in a Complaint, Compliment & Comment Form and sending it to County Hall, Atlantic Wharf, Cardiff CF10 4UW
- e-mailing us at C2C@cardiff.gov.uk

We aim to make forms available at all Council buildings and appropriate locations in the community. If you need information in another format or language, please contact us.

What can you expect from us when you make a complaint?

If we receive a complaint from you, we will do all that we can to help you and we will try to find a solution to any problems you have brought to our attention. We will ensure that your complaint is sent to the relevant department/s for a response and ask them to:

- acknowledge your complaint within 5 working days of the date that they receive it
- aim to resolve the complaint within 20 working days - if your complaint is more complex they may need more time.
- let you know within the 20 working day period if they think it may take longer to investigate your complaint and tell you how long they expect it to take
- provide you with regular updates

We will respect your right to confidentiality and privacy and we will treat you fairly and in accordance with our commitment to equality.

If you are asking us for a service for the first time –such as reporting a faulty street light or a pothole - you should give us a chance to put things right. If you are not happy with our response and you let us know, we will then treat it as a complaint.

The person who is investigating your concerns will firstly aim to establish the facts. In some instances we may ask to meet you to discuss your concerns. Occasionally, we might suggest mediation or another method to try to resolve disputes.

The extent of the investigation will depend on the seriousness and complexity of the issues you have raised and in more complicated cases we may have to draw up an investigation plan. We will set out our understanding of your concerns and ask you to confirm that we have got it right. We will also ask you

to tell us what outcome you are hoping for. In some cases we may ask an officer from another service area to investigate your complaint or we may appoint an independent investigator from outside the Council – this would mainly apply to very serious situations or cases where there is a statutory procedure for dealing with the complaint, such as that used by Social Services.

We will look at relevant evidence and this could include files, notes of conversations, letters, e-mails or whatever may be relevant to your particular complaint. If you do not want the person investigating the complaint to see the files that we hold in relation to your complaint, it is important for you to let us know about this. If necessary, we will also talk to the staff or others involved and look at our policies and any legal entitlement and guidance.

Outcome

If we formally investigate your complaint, we will let you know what we have found and we will use your preferred form of communication, such as letter or e-mail, when we contact you. If necessary, we will produce a longer report. We will explain how and why we came to our conclusions.

If we find that we have done something wrong, we will tell you this, explain what happened and apologise. If we find there is a fault in our systems or the way we do things, we will tell you what it is and how we plan to change things to stop it happening again.

Putting Things Right

If there is a simple solution to your problem, we may ask you if you are happy to accept this. For example, where you asked for a service and we see straight away that you should have had it; we will offer to provide the service rather than investigate and produce a report.

If we did not do something well, we will aim to put it right. If you have lost out as a result of a mistake on our part we will try to put you back in the position you would have been in if we had got it right. If you had to pay for a service, when you should have had one from us, or if you were entitled to funding you did not receive, we will usually aim to make good what you have lost.

What we expect from you

We believe that all complainants have the right to be heard, understood and respected. However, our employees have the same rights and we will not tolerate unacceptable behaviour such as aggressive or abusive behaviour or unreasonable demands. We have separate guidelines to help us manage unacceptable behaviour.

The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

You can contact the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales about your complaint at any time. However, the Ombudsman expects you to bring your concerns to our attention first and to give us a chance to put things right. The Ombudsman is independent of all government bodies and can look into your complaint if you believe that you, or the person on whose behalf you are complaining:

- have been treated unfairly or received a bad service through some failure on the part of the body providing it
- have been disadvantaged personally by a service failure or have been treated unfairly

You can contact the Ombudsman by:

- e-mailing: ask@ombudsman-wales.org.uk
- phoning: 0845 601 0987
- visiting the website: www.ombudsman-wales.org.uk
- writing to: Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, 1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae, Pencoed, CF35 5LJ

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Are there any time limits that I should be aware of?

Normally, we will only be able to look at your complaint if you tell us about it within six months of the date that you first became aware of the problem. However, we may still consider your complaint if you provide strong reasons for taking longer than six months to tell us about the problem. In any event, regardless of the circumstances, we will not consider any concerns about matters that took place more than twelve months ago.

2. What if my complaint involves more than one organisation or department?

If your complaint involves more than one department, we will ask each department to prepare a response and, where possible, we will incorporate these into one letter of response.

If your complaint involves more than one organisation, we will work with these organisations to address your complaint and to decide who will take the lead in dealing with and responding to your concerns. For example, we sometimes work with South Wales Police, housing associations, the NHS and bailiffs.

Where possible, we will try to put you in touch with other organisations that might be able to help.

3. Are there any complaints that are not covered by this policy?

This policy does not apply if the complaint relates to a **Freedom of Information** or **Data Protection** request because there is a separate process for making complaints about this service. You can register these complaints by:

- e-mailing: FOI@cardiff.gov.uk
- phoning: 029 2087 3317
- visiting the Council website at www.cardiff.gov.uk
- writing to Improvement & Information, Cardiff Council, County Hall, Atlantic Wharf, Cardiff, CF10 4UW

There are some other complaints that will be dealt with outside our complaints policy, such as: complaints involving a statutory right of appeal; complaints that are covered by a separate grievance process; complaints involving objections to planning permission and complaints about a decision not to give a child a place at a particular school.

However, if you have concerns about these processes we can offer advice about how to make your concerns known. We can also give you more information about other organisations that might be able to help you with your complaint. For example, the Welsh Language Board can look into complaints about services in Welsh.

4. Do you start from the date that I contacted you when you are counting the number of working days?

We count the number of working days from the date that we receive your complaint and we do not include weekends or bank holidays.

5. Do you always send letters when you are acknowledging complaints?

No, we sometimes contact complainants by telephone to acknowledge their complaints. We try to base the method of communication on individual preferences and, for example, if you have asked to be contacted by e-mail we will respond by e-mail.

6. Can I complain on behalf of another person?

Yes, but you must normally have their permission (signed permission) and you must explain why you are representing them and why they are unable to make the complaint.

7. I am under 18 – can I use the policy?

You can use this policy if you are under the age of 18 and if you need help to use it, you can speak to someone on the Meic Helpline (phone 080880 23456, www.meiccymru.org) or contact the Children's Commissioner for Wales using the details below.

01792 765600 (South Wales)

01492 523333 (North Wales)

post@childcomwales.org.uk

www.childcom.org.uk

South Wales Office:

Oystermouth House

Phoenix Way

Llansamlet

Swansea

SA7 9FS

North Wales Office:

Penrhos Manor

Oak Drive

Colwyn Bay Conwy

LL29 7YW

CABINET MEETING: 18 OCTOBER 2012

ANNUAL COMPLAINTS REPORT 2011-2012

REPORT OF CORPORATE CHIEF OFFICER(SHARED SERVICES)

AGENDA ITEM: 5

PORTFOLIO: CORPORATE AFFAIRS

Reason for this Report

1. To report to the Cabinet on the operation of the corporate complaints procedure between 1 April 2011 and 31 March 2012. This report highlights the key outcomes. The statistics for corporate complaints are set out by service area.

Background

2. Complaints provide valuable information about how we are performing and what our customers think about our services. Most people who complain tell us what we have done wrong and how we can do better; we use this information to improve our services, strengthen our relationships with customers and make better use of our resources.
3. We have worked hard to make it easier for customers to contact us with their comments and complaints and, although this has led to a rise in the number of complaints that we have received, we welcome this feedback because it helps us to develop a more effective complaints system and improve our services.
4. The Corporate Complaints team collects information about complaints every month and produces quarterly and annual reports. We use this information to ensure that the complaints policy is working, the Council is complying with accepted standards and staff training brings improvements in complaints management. Meanwhile, the Ombudsman collects detailed information about complaints against the Council and includes this in his annual report.¹ We have a great deal of information at our disposal.

¹ http://www.ombudsman-wales.org.uk/en/~/-/media/Files/AnnualReports_en/Annual%20Report%20201112%20E.ashx

5. This annual report is based on the information we have gathered about complaints made by Cardiff Council customers between 1st April 2011 and 31st March 2012.²

Issues

6. It is difficult to make reliable comparisons with the complaints figures for previous years because there were changes to our organisation structure in 2011. Nevertheless, it is clear that there has been a significant increase in the number of complaints during the past year.
7. There were **4474** complaints in 2011/2012 and this means that complaints have more than doubled in the past year.³
8. It is important to highlight the fact that almost two thirds of these complaints were about Waste Management services and, specifically, changes to household collections that were brought in to increase recycling. Waste Management received 2838 complaints in 2011/2012 compared to 294 complaints the previous year. The increase was actually lower than anticipated.
9. We are disappointed that there has been an increase in the number of complaints but we are pleased with the way we have handled the complaints we received and we are committed to making further improvements in our processes. For example, we will soon be changing the way we manage complaints correspondence and this should lead to better monitoring and management of complaints, faster intervention by complaints managers and earlier resolution of problems. This will lead to a better service for our customers.
10. In the meantime, an outline of our complaints policy will help to explain how we manage complaints and how we measure our performance at the moment.

The Complaints Policy & Procedure

11. As a result of changes that were introduced in 2011, there are now two stages in the complaints process, instead of three, and there will be further changes as we consider the advice given in the Welsh Government Model Policy and Guidance Paper for Handling Complaints. The two stages in the current system are:

Stage 1. Initial complaint investigation

12. This stage can involve more than one attempt at resolving the problem and it ends when either the complaint is resolved or the department informs the complainant that it can not do anything further to help; at this stage a customer who remains dissatisfied can ask for an independent

² The Executive reported on complaints in July 2011 and this covered the period from 1st April 2010 to 31st March 2011.

³ There were 2080 complaints in 2010/2011.

review. Most complaints are settled after the initial complaint investigation and only 22 complainants asked for an independent review in 2011-2012.

13. Complaints Managers aim to acknowledge complaints within 10 working days and they aim to provide a full response within 20 working days. Many service areas surpass these expectations and send full responses within 10 working days.
14. Each month, Complaints Managers record information about the number of complaints they have received and how quickly they acknowledged these complaints and provided full responses to complainants.⁴ This information is submitted to the Corporate Complaints team every month.

Stage 2. Independent review

15. If complainants are still unhappy with the Council's response at the end of the first stage of the complaints process, they can ask for an independent review.⁵ This would be carried out within 20 working days and by an Operational Manager from a different service area from the one involved in the complaint.
16. Chief Officers are asked to nominate Operational Managers to carry out independent reviews according to a rota and the Corporate Complaints Manager is responsible for arranging the reviews.
17. Complainants receive a report at the end of the independent review process and this explains whether the complaint has been upheld and provides reasons for the decision. Many reports contain recommendations for improvements even when complaints are not upheld.⁶
18. This is the final stage in the Council's complaints process and complainants who have been through this process and remain dissatisfied are advised to contact the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. It is worth noting that the Ombudsman encourages complainants to use the Council's complaints process and does not, generally, accept cases from complainants who have not exhausted this process.

Independent Reviews in 2011/2012

19. There were **22** requests for independent reviews between April 2011 and March 2012.⁷ As the table below shows, most of the complaints were not upheld at the independent review stage.

⁴ Multi-service complaints are recorded by all of the departments involved in the complaint.

⁵ Under our current policy, we accept all requests for independent reviews as long as they are made within one month of the date on the Council's final letter of response. We did not turn down any requests in 2011/2012.

⁶ The Corporate Complaints team monitors the action of departments in relation to these recommendations and, where the case has been referred to the Ombudsman, can ask for evidence of compliance or reasons for non-compliance.

⁷ There were 8 requests for independent reviews in 2010/2011.

Independent Review Outcomes	2011/12
complaints upheld	1
complaints partly upheld	4
complaints not upheld	16
investigations deferred	1

20. Some of these decisions were subsequently referred to the Ombudsman by the complainants and the Ombudsman upheld the Council's decisions in all cases.

Independent reviews by service area

21. **Corporate Services:** There were 12 independent reviews of complaints against the Finance & Property functions provided by Corporate Services. Most of these related to the collection of Council Tax and the use of bailiffs. Four of these complaints involved external agents such as bailiffs or interpreters.
22. It should be noted that only one of the 12 reviews was upheld, one was partly upheld and one was deferred following a request from the complainant.
23. **Planning:** Four independent reviews involved planning matters and none of these complaints were upheld. All of the complaints were referred to the Ombudsman by the complainants but the Council's decisions were upheld.
24. **Other service areas:** The other six independent reviews involved complaints against six different areas. Three of the complaints were partly upheld and three were not upheld.⁸

Ombudsman Complaints 2011/2012

25. Recommendations in Ombudsman reports and observations about our strengths and weaknesses help us improve our processes and build better training programmes for our staff.
26. The Ombudsman closed 90 cases involving Cardiff Council in 2011/2012 and only 11 of these cases led to a report – some of these cases were carried over from the previous year.⁹ The Ombudsman closed the cases for the following reasons:

⁸ These complaints involved: Education (school contracts); Leisure and Play; Housing, Parks, Network Management and Highways Maintenance.

⁹ The Ombudsman issued 14 reports the previous year.

Number of Cases	Reason for closing the case
32	complainants had not exhausted the Council's complaints process – they were referred back to the Council
12	complaints were outside the Ombudsman's jurisdiction – the Ombudsman decided not to investigate
27	complaints were closed after initial consideration
8	complaints were settled by the 'quick fix' process – this often involves the Council agreeing to take further action
11	complaints led to an Ombudsman's report
Total = 90	

Investigations leading to Reports

27. The Ombudsman issues reports if he finds that a complainant has suffered hardship or injustice through the Council's maladministration or service failure. Under the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2005, the Ombudsman can issue one of two types of reports following an investigation into a complaint by a member of the public: Section 16 and Section 21.

Section 16 Report

28. The first type of report is known as a Section 16 report. This is issued when the Ombudsman believes that the investigation report contains matters of public interest. The Council is then obliged to publicise the report at its own expense. The Ombudsman issued **one** s.16 report in 2011/2012 and this was for a case from 2010/2011.

Section 21 report

29. The Ombudsman can issue a Section 21 report if Cardiff Council has agreed to implement any recommendations he has made and if he is satisfied that the case does not raise matters of public interest. The Ombudsman issued **ten** Section 21 reports during this period: one complaint was not upheld and nine complaints were upheld or partially upheld.

Complaints by service area - 2011/2012

Communities

Housing & Neighbourhood Renewal (HANR)

30. HANR deals directly with the public and covers areas such as benefit claims, housing applications, homelessness and anti-social behaviour. HANR received **289** complaints in **2011/2012** and this represents a reduction of 44% on the figure for the previous year (516).

31. There are 13,700 council properties, 12,000 people on the housing waiting list and 37,000 households in receipt of housing benefit; the

complaints figure shows that a relatively small number of the people served by HANR were dissatisfied with the service they received.

32. Nevertheless, we want to reduce the number of complaints that HANR receives and will work towards this in 2012/2013.

Community Facilities

33. There were **102** complaints for Community Facilities in 2011/2012 and, given that the number of visits to Community Facilities was in excess of 5 million in 2011/12, the number of complaints is relatively small.
34. Complaints are managed at operational and senior management level and the Head of Service, Graham Craven, and his management team review complaints every quarter at the Business Improvement Meeting.
35. An analysis of complaints about Community Facilities in 2011/2012 reveals that:
- 29% of all complaints received were related to a poor quality of service
 - 29% percentage of all complaints arose because customers were dissatisfied with Council policy in relation to community facilities
 - 18% of all complaints received were related to the staff at our community facilities.

Community Maintenance Services

36. Every year, Community Maintenance Services undertake an average of 70,000 responsive repairs to approximately 13,500 council properties.
37. The service area dealt with **254** complaints in 2011/12 and this represents a fall of almost 5% on the figure for last year - there were 267 complaints in 2010/11. Of the complaints received by CMS, 127 were about standards in the repairs service. With one exception, all complainants received a response within the required time.¹⁰
38. A service redesign of Community Maintenance Services is underway and this should lead to mobile and technology solutions that will allow them to offer customers appointments at first point of contact. It will also improve the service offered and should lead to a reduction in the number of complaints that are linked to poor service or delays.

Partnership and Citizen Focus

39. Partnership and Citizen Focus received **1** complaint in 2011/2012. This service area does not provide a direct service to the public, although it is involved in some external events and public consultation exercises. This, along with good service, explains the low number of complaints.

¹⁰ An administrative error led to one complainant receiving a late response.

Regulatory and Supporting Services

40. This service area received **24** complaints in 2011/2012. The Complaints Manager reviewed all of the complaints and concluded that the increase was the result of improvements in reporting and recording of complaints. There was no identifiable trend in the complaints or a clear problem with the way the department was operating.

Corporate

Finance

41. The number of recorded complaints in Corporate Services has dropped by almost 12% from 215 (2010/11) to **190** (2011/12).
42. Most complaints were about the collection of unpaid Council Tax charges and the department has continued to take a robust stance in relation to this issue. The Council is using legal action to pursue debts more frequently and, once Liability Orders are issued by the court, the Council has been prompt in taking action to secure payment from debtors. As part of this process, the Council continues to use external bailiffs to complement the work of the in-house team. This led to several complaints about the Council's recovery action but in most instances these complaints were deemed to be unjustified when they were investigated; complainants were in arrears and objected to being pursued over unpaid bills.

Legal and Democratic Services and Scrutiny, Performance and Improvement

43. There were **3** complaints about Legal and Democratic Services in 2011/2012 and there were no complaints about Scrutiny, Performance and Improvement.

People

44. Adult and Children's Services have their own statutory complaints procedure which we generally refer to as "Listening & Learning". There are three stages – local resolution, formal investigation and independent panel. The first two stages are the responsibility of the service area. The third stage – as the name implies – is a panel wholly independent of the authority which scrutinises the process to make sure that the complaint has been investigated properly.
45. We generally have around 50 complaints a year – the majority of these are resolved at the "local resolution" stage. Service users can also contact the Local Government Ombudsman and he may investigate their concerns.

Adult Services Complaints 2011 - 2012

46. Adult Services did not receive any Corporate Complaints in 2011/2012. The statutory complaints received by the department are as shown in the table below.

Adult Services - Statutory Complaints by Stage	2011 - 2012	2010 - 2011
Stage 1 complaints	57	44
Stage 2 complaints	4	2
Stage 3 complaints	2 (from previous years)	1 (from previous year)
Ombudsman	3 (from previous years)	0

Children's Services

47. Children's Services did not receive any corporate complaints in 2011/2012. The table below shows the complaints that they received under the statutory complaints process.

Children's Services Statutory Complaints by Stage	2011/2012	2010/2011
Stage 1 complaints	117	139
Stage 1 complaints from children and young people	18	
Stage 2 formal complaints	4	2
Stage 3 review panel	1	3
Complaints to PSOW enquiry (not investigated)	1	
Complaints from Children's Commissioner	0	

Education

48. The Education Service received **23** complaints in 2011/2012. The complaints were mainly about school reorganisation, school admissions and Statements of Special Educational Needs (SEN). It is important to note that complaints that are sent to schools are not included in these figures; schools are responsible for dealing with complaints about their services.
49. Even though there has been an increase in the number of complaints (there were 10 complaints last year), it is still a relatively low number given the size of the service area and the diversity of its activities.

50. Having reviewed all of the complaints, the Complaints Manager for Education felt that the increase was a reflection of the fact that there has been an improvement in the way complaints are recorded and monitored in the department. However, the service area will continue to monitor complaints and look for ways of reducing the number of complaints.

Place

City Development

51. City Development is a new service area and is made up of: Strategic Planning and Environment; Infrastructure; Economic Development and Projects Design & Development. The City Development Service Area has 3 key Functions - Planning, Strategic Transport and Economy - and it manages the Council's Planning Service, Transport Policy & Development services, Projects Design & Development, Enterprise, and Major Projects.
52. City Development received **52** complaints in 2011/12. The table below shows the number of complaints received by each team in the service - key issues related to the planning process and decisions, traffic calming schemes and traffic congestion caused by events.

City Development Sub-Section	Complaints 2011/2012
Planning Development & Building Control	17
Strategic Planning	0
Projects, Design & Development	12
Economic Development	0
Transport	7
Major Projects	3
Culture, Tourism and Events – Partnership Working	10
Network Management – Partnership Working	1
Multi Service Area	2
TOTAL	52

53. The Service Area sent 47 responses within the required timescale, with 35 being sent within ten working days and a further 12 being sent within 20 working days. Five responses were not sent within the required timescale and this was mainly due to delays in complaints being sent to City Development by other service areas.
54. City Development became fully operational in June 2011 and all complaints about the service area are now recorded centrally. However, this was not always the case and, unfortunately, it is impossible to compare the complaints figures from 2011/2012 with the figures for the previous year; each department had a different process of recording their complaints and not all of this information is available.

City Management

Harbour Authority

55. The Harbour Authority had **21** complaints and responded to all but one of these within the required time. This is an improvement on the previous year when the Harbour Authority had 33 complaints.
56. The majority of these complaints were resolved satisfactorily at a very early stage. There was no particular theme to the complaints, but none of them were about a poor quality of service.

Culture, Tourism and Events

57. Culture, Tourism & Events includes the New Theatre, St David's Hall, Mansion House, tourism and city events. There were **277** complaints for this service area in 2011/2012, compared to 205 complaints in 2010/2011.
58. It is disappointing that there has been an increase in the number of complaints but the majority of complaints for this service area relate to customer preference rather than service failure. For example, the service area receives complaints about shows not being to the customer's personal taste, the quality of plays and the audience.
59. It is also important to note that, as a result of improvements to the Council's online services, customers now have a quick, convenient and cost free way to complain or comment on our services. Whilst this has led to better quality feedback, it has also led to a rise in the number of recorded complaints because we log all comments about dissatisfaction as complaints.

Parks and Sport

60. The Parks and Sports service has undergone major restructuring in the past year; fortunately this has not led to a large increase in complaints. There were **130** in **2011/2012** compared to 117 in the previous year.
61. There has been a significant improvement in their ability to acknowledge complaints within 10 working days but there is a need to improve the response rate so that all complainants receive a full response within 20 working days.
62. The service area monitors complaints statistics monthly at Operational Improvement Meetings and Business Improvement Meetings and this allows managers to identify trends and, if necessary, take corrective action.
63. Parks and Sports have also produced a Frequently Asked Questions document and, as customers can be helped at first point of contact, this should help to reduce the number of complaints.

Network Management

64. Network Management received **157** complaints for 2011/12. A comparison with the previous year is not possible because the Council did not take responsibility for Civil Parking Enforcement until 5th July 2010.
65. The complaints received by Network Management were as follows:

Parking Enforcement	34
Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs)	27
Behaviour of Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs)	26
Resident Parking Scheme	16
Bute Tunnel closures	14
On-street Parking	12
Pay and Display Ticket Machines	7
Taxi Parking	4
Road Closures	4
Traffic Signals	3
Bus Stops	2
Bus Shelters	1
Car Parks	1
Pay and Display Refunds	1
Concessionary Fares	1
Bus Timetables	1
School Crossing Patrol	1
Disabled Parking	2
TOTAL	157

66. Four of the complaints in the Parking Enforcement category relate to Civil Parking Enforcement. Parking is a very contentious and emotive subject and the Council receives a relatively high number of complaints from members of the public who believe that an injustice has been carried out. Some of the complaints relate to a lack of enforcement activity in areas where parking problems occur frequently; the Council is using the limited number of Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs) available to patrol these areas regularly.
67. A significant proportion of parking complaints arise as part of the experience of issuing a PCN at specific locations rather than appeals; these are dealt with in accordance with a formal appeals process.
68. Given the number of PCNs issued each year - on average 60,000 per annum- the number of complaints is significantly low. Furthermore, complaints about the behaviour of CEOs are all fully investigated and as CEOs are highly trained in dealing with members of the public, very few complaints are upheld.
69. With the introduction of a new Resident Parking Policy, it was inevitable that there would be a large number of requests for new schemes. Many

of these requests were refused because those making them did not qualify for the scheme - this generated complaints.

70. We received a higher than normal number of complaints about the Bute Tunnel Closure: this was partly due to the industrial action in December 2011 and partly because the tunnel had to be closed whilst internal lighting was replaced between January and March 2012.

City Services

Waste Management and Street Cleansing

71. There were **2838** complaints about Waste Management in 2011/2012.¹¹

Reasons for the increase in the level of complaints in 2011/2012

72. The Welsh Assembly Government set challenging statutory recycling targets and in order to meet these, the Council undertook a detailed review of waste services and developed the Municipal Waste Strategy for 2011-16. The Council could not afford to stand still and without changes would be facing increased annual costs of £10m for fines and increasing landfill disposal charges. The changes were designed to reduce the amount of waste going to landfill, increase recycling and ensure that the Council achieves its national targets.

73. Public consultation showed support for the proposed changes, with 66% of people supporting weekly recycling, weekly food waste and fortnightly residual waste and green waste collections.

74. The changes were as follows:

- fortnightly black bin/bag collection instead of weekly collection (municipal waste)
- weekly green bag collection rather than fortnightly collection
- weekly collection of food waste, with all households receiving a separate food waste caddy – this was previously collected weekly with garden waste
- fortnightly collection of garden waste rather than weekly collection
- the collection of hygiene waste on alternate weeks to the collection of black bag/bin waste - this is an additional service

75. Since 12 September 2011, the total amount of collections received fortnightly per household has increased from five to six.¹² Every household has been provided with a separate food waste caddy, for weekly collection, and there was an additional hygiene collection service for nappies and similar waste items. This means that all the items that attract pests and create odours continue to be collected weekly. As this

¹¹ There were 294 complaints against Waste Management and Street Cleansing in 2010/2011.

¹² Collections have gone from 2 residual, 2 compost and 1 recycling to 2 recycling, 2 food waste, 1 residual and 1 compost collection.

was a new additional service the demand and any potential complexities remained unknown at this stage.

76. These changes were supported by a full education campaign for residents and additional education and enforcement officers supported residents throughout the change in order to ensure that the changes were introduced as smoothly and quickly as possible. Over 153,000 households received a new collection calendar and information on the scheme and there was an extensive marketing campaign over a four month period to promote the scheme and the role of C2C. New technologies such as the "Tidy Text" message reminder service have helped to remind residents of their black bag or bin collection day. This proactive promotion encouraged residents to contact C2C when any issues were experienced.
77. At present, the Council provides waste collection services for approximately 153,000 domestic properties across Cardiff. Over a fortnightly period, 918,000 separate domestic waste collections are made across the city, not including the hygiene service. The amount of complaints for non collections relates to only 0.02% of the total number of potential separate collections made during this period (13,770,000 over 7 months).¹³
78. However, although the percentage is minimal it represents a significant increase in complaints and this is why it has been analysed carefully. Most of the complaints arose because of disruption to collection services whilst the Waste Collection Crews became familiar with their new rounds. The Council predicted and planned for this level of disruption and expected a higher level of correspondence from the launch of the communications activity in August through to November. It was anticipated that there would be a tailing-off effect for the three month period after this.
79. Due to the increased service, the change in C2C reporting methods and the fortnightly residual waste collections, the baseline was expected to increase and it was not expected to return to previous levels. The level of complaints has now fallen and it is envisaged that 'business as usual' (BAU) levels will soon be reached. However, because the number of weekly collections being undertaken has increased with additional service provision and new reporting methods applied, the BAU level will be higher than it was before September 2011.

Highways

80. Highways received **65** complaints in 2011/12 and just over half of these complaints related to potholes, footway and carriageway defects.¹⁴

¹³ The number of complaints received was slightly in excess of 2,000 for the seven month period from September 2011 to March 2012

¹⁴ There were 52 complaints about Highways in 2010/2011.

81. It is anticipated that investment in Highways maintenance will significantly reduce the number of service requests and complaints received in 2012/13. In particular, the *Highways Service Redesign Project* should lead to improvements in reactive maintenance of the carriageway and footways in Cardiff.
82. As part of this project, calls from customers are now dealt with by C2C using a direct link into software for logging and managing defects (Mayrise).¹⁵ Highways use this system to collect the right information about defects and pass it on to safety inspectors more quickly. Inspectors can then determine what repairs are needed and how quickly these should be carried out and they can do this more efficiently than before.

Shared

Central Transport Services

83. The number of complaints received by this area is low and stable, with only **3** complaints in 2011/2012. In view of the types of customer contact related to Transport and Facilities Management this is a positive outcome.
84. Some issues surrounding staff behaviour have been identified in a number of the complaints and further action has been taken, including additional training for staff. There have been significant changes within this service area and these will continue into 2012/13; staff will monitor complaints more closely as the changes are introduced.

Communication and Media

85. This section is responsible for Corporate Communication, including the production and distribution of the Capital Times newspaper. There were no complaints about Communications and Media in 2011/2012.

86. Customer Services

There were **13** complaints about Customer Service in 2011/2012. Connect to Cardiff received a low number of complaints regarding the service. There was a small increase in Quarter 4 due to the Council Tax Annual Billing period where the centre received a condensed volume of calls over a three week period. Action was taken in relation to complaints regarding the Welsh Language Service, ensuring more Customer Service Representatives are Welsh Essential Posts.

HR People Services

87. There were **5** complaints about HR People Services in 2012, which included complaints about the number of vacancies available to external candidates. However, the number of complaints has remained static, with a similar number of complaints recorded in 2010/2011.

¹⁵ This has been in effect since late February 2012.

88. There have also been a small number of complaints about the administration of the Teachers Pension Scheme and this process will be reviewed in the light of the issues that were raised. HR People Services continues to adapt to changes and reviews customer feedback regularly to improve the services provided.

Internal Services

89. Internal Services received **4** complaints 2011/2012. There isn't a directly comparable figure for 2010/2011.

Welsh Language Complaints

90. In accordance with Corporate Standards, we monitor the number of complaints in relation to the operation of the Welsh Language Scheme. In 2011/2012 the Council received **23** complaints about Welsh Language issues. There were 20 complaints in 2010/2011.
91. Some of the complaints came through C2C about the fact that there were not enough Welsh speakers available on the Welsh line. There were other complaints about lack of knowledge of the Welsh C2C number. Both of these issues have been resolved and, as a result, there has been a fall in the number of complaints of this nature. Most of the other complaints arose in relation to signs and letters that were only in English. In terms of compliance with the Welsh Language Scheme, these are areas that are targeted.

Reasons for recommendation

92. To ensure that Cabinet members are fully aware of the complaints received by the Council and consider any action necessary.

Legal Implications

93. There are no direct legal implications arising from this report. Legal implications may arise if any proposals contained in the report are implemented. Any report with recommendations for any decision to implement such proposals will set out any legal implications arising from those recommendations.

Financial Implications

94. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet is recommended to:

- 1) Note the contents of the report

- 2) Approve the establishment of an evidence-based, systematic audit process to ensure that recommendations resulting from independent reviews are acted upon.
- 3) Approve the development of a system to monitor complaints involving the performance of contractors and third parties.
- 4) Authorise officers to bring forward improvements to the Council's complaints policy and procedure to a future Cabinet meeting

Philip Lenz

Corporate Chief Officer

12 October 2012