

# Report

## Governance & Audit Committee

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### Part 1

Date: September 2023

**Subject** Annual Report on Compliments, Comments and Complaints Management 2023

**Purpose** To provide the Governance and Audit Committee with an overview of all Corporate and Social Services compliments, comments and complaints received during 2022/2023 and to make any recommendations for improvement to the report.

**Author** Complaint Resolution Manager

**Ward** All

**Summary** As part of the requirements of the Governance and Audit Committee it is responsible to make reports and recommendations in relation to the authority's ability to handle complaints effectively. This report provides an overview of how the council managed compliments, comments and complaints and performance in 2022/23.

This report provides an overview for the year 2022/2023, broken down by service areas and complaint types. The report highlights key trends and themes drawn from the data for consideration.

The report reflects on lessons learned for the council to improve and actions to deliver these improvements. For 2022/23 there has been significant engagement with managers as a result of the newly updated Customer Feedback Policy, Compliments, Comments and Complaints. Employee complaint handling workshops and bespoke service area training sessions have been delivered throughout 2022/23.

**Proposal** Governance and Audit Committee is asked to consider the contents of the report regarding the process and performance of the Council's compliments, comments and complaints annual report 2022/23 and make any recommendations for improvement to the annual report.

**Action by** Complaint Resolution Manager

**Timetable** Immediate

This report was prepared after consultation with:

- Head of Law and Standards – Monitoring Officer
- Head of Finance – Chief Financial Officer
- Head of People, Policy and Transformation
- Strategic Director for Social Services

**Signed**

## Background

In May 2021, the Governance and Audit Committee agreed new terms of reference to align with the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. One of the new requirements of the Committee is to: *Make reports and recommendations in relation to the authority's ability to handle complaints effectively.*

This is the third report to the Committee and provides an overview of how the Council manages Compliments, Comments and Complaints and the annual report on the Council's performance in 2022/23. All annual statistics and corporate actions for improvement are passed onto the Chief Internal Auditor and are then fed into the Annual Governance Statement and Annual Corporate Self-Assessment Report.

The policies and procedures in place for Compliments, Comments and Complaints comply with the legislative requirements of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 and associated standards, specifically ensuring that the Council promote the 'Active Offer'. Social Services statutory requirements remain in operation alongside the Corporate Policy to ensure they are aligning with; Social Services Complaints Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014 and the Representations Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014, ("the Regulations").

In March 2023, the [Council's Cabinet](#) approved the [Newport City Council Customer Feedback Policy, Compliments, Comments and Complaints](#) which is aligned based to the guidance issued by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales and were passed by Cabinet.

In April 2023, the My Council Services system was updated to reflect the Newport City Council restructure. 2023/24 Complaints Annual Report will reflect this essential update.

The Compliments Comments and Complaints Annual Report 2022/23 reflects positively on compliance with the new policy in recording complaints more effectively. The report (attached) outlines the progress made, alongside actions for improvement. These include further development of customer contact and reporting, continued rollout of training and awareness and alignment with policies. We recognise the important feedback that compliments, comments and complaints provide for the Authority and will continue to develop our reporting arrangements.

## Financial Summary (Capital and Revenue)

There are no direct financial implications associated with this report.

## Risks

<b>Risk Title / Description</b>	<b>Risk Impact score of Risk if it occurs* (H/M/L)</b>	<b>Risk Probability of risk occurring (H/M/L)</b>	<b>Risk Mitigation Action(s)</b> What is the Council doing or what has it done to avoid the risk or reduce its effect?	<b>Risk Owner</b> Officer(s) responsible for dealing with the risk?
Failure to comply with the requirements of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) in dealing with complaints	H	L	The Council has. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>All policies have been reviewed in line with Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2019</li><li>Policy revised in March 2023</li><li>Team received training from PSOW</li></ul>	Complaints Resolution Manager  Digital Services Manager

Failure to meet the public's expectation for dealing with complaints	H	L	<p>The Council has.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consulted with the public to find out what is important to them relating to complaints and complaint handling</li> <li>• Consulted with officers to find out what support is needed to help them respond to complaints effectively</li> </ul>	<p>Complaints Resolution Manager</p> <p>Digital Services Manager</p>
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\* Taking account of proposed mitigation measures

### Links to Council Policies and Priorities

Newport City Council is committed to dealing effectively with any compliments, comments or complaints about its services.

[Customer Feedback Policy Compliments, Comments and Complaints](#)

Our Corporate Plan outlines the importance of the views of communities and service users and this policy is one of the ways we support this.

[Corporate Plan](#)

As outlined below there are also links to the Strategic Equalities annual reports.

### Options Available and considered

1. To consider the contents of this report for the Authority, providing any additional commentary and/or recommendations to Cabinet
2. To request further information or reject the contents of this report.

### Preferred Option and Why

1. Option 1 is the preferred option with recommendations raised by the Audit Committee to be considered and reported to Cabinet and Officers in accordance with the Council's Constitution.

### Comments of Chief Financial Officer

There will be no financial impact as a result of this report. Any recommendations for improvements will need to be considered using existing budget provision.

### Comments of Monitoring Officer

There are no specific legal issues arising from the report. The Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 changed the statutory terms of reference of the Governance and Audit Committee to include responsibility for reviewing and assessing the Council's ability to handle complaints effectively and to make reports and recommendations in relation to effective complaints handling. This report provides an overview of the comments, compliments and complaints received by the Council during 2022/23 and how they were dealt with and also includes the Ombudsman's annual performance letter.

The Council's Corporate Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy complies with the guidance issued by the Ombudsman in relation to the handling of complaints, while the statutory social services complaints procedures are in accordance with the Social Services Complaints Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014 and the Representations Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014.

Governance and Audit Committee are asked to consider the effectiveness of the Council's complaints-handling procedures and to make any recommendations to Cabinet for improvement. Any individual actions arising from the complaints are matters for the relevant officers and Cabinet Members.

## **Comments of Head of People Policy and Transformation**

The Council has a responsibility for ensuring that services are provided to a satisfactory standard and to ensure redress, learning and continuous improvement where issues are raised by service users. This report provides an overview of how we have performed in 2022/23 and where we need to improve on how we manage compliments, comments, and complaints. This follows the Cabinet agreeing the Newport City Council Customer Feedback Policy, Compliments, Comments and Complaints in March 2023. This Policy and the Annual Report form part of the Council's work to promote citizen engagement and to work preventatively.

There are no HR implications relating directly to this report although it is noted that staff training and development has taken place to support policy implementation and improve standards.

## **Scrutiny Committees**

Not Applicable, however complaints are also reported through certain service plans to performance Scrutiny Committee.

## **Fairness and Equality Impact Assessment:**

### **• Wellbeing of Future Generation (Wales) Act**

This report enables Members to monitor the current position of the council's performance, this helps to drive improvement over the short and long-term and prevent poor performance.

Performance measures are also reported through the service plans and the improvement plan, which consider the sustainable development principle promoted in the Act and the five ways of working; long-term, prevention, integration, collaboration and involvement.

Any changes to service provision because of feedback received would consider the five ways of working and the sustainable development principle as part of the decision-making process.

- Long term: the actions being put into place will ensure that the Council is able to respond to feedback and complaints now and in the future.
- Prevention: Understanding what is important to residents and why we have received complaints will help the Council to make improvements that prevent similar complaints from occurring again.
- Integration: Reviewing the Council's policies regarding feedback from residents will help to ensure that the principles of the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2019 are embedded in service provision.
- Collaboration: the approach to responding to feedback from complainants requires collaboration across the Council. All service areas receive and deal with complaints and their feedback as part of consultation will inform the development of training, guidance, and support.
- Involvement: Public consultation has provided valuable insight into what is important for customers when they are unhappy with a service provided by the Council. This will be used to inform the development of training, guidance, and support.

### **• Equality Act 2010**

Not applicable as this is an information only report to the Governance and Audit Committee. We work closely with the equalities team as part of the Strategic Equalities Group, and this work is reported in the Strategic Equalities Annual Report.

### **• Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011**

The Welsh Language Measure is considered in this report and is also covered by the Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy.

## **Consultation**

Not Applicable.

## **Background Papers**

[PSOW Annual Letter 2022-23](#)

[PSOW Principles of Good Administration and Record Management](#)

[Newport City Council Customer Feedback Policy Compliments Comments and Complaints](#)

[Annual Report on Compliments Comments and Complaints 2021-22](#)