

# Report

## Cabinet

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### Part 1

Date: 11 December 2024

**Subject** Annual Report on Compliments, Comments and Complaints Management 2024

**Purpose** To provide Cabinet with an overview of all Corporate and Social Services compliments, comments and complaints received during 2023/2024.

**Author** Complaint Resolution Manager

**Ward** All

**Summary** This report provides an overview of how the Council manages compliments, comments and complaints and the Council's performance in 2023/24. Complaints about schools are reported separately as they are subject to a distinct statutory framework, however, complaints about Education services such as administrative processes are included.

The report provides an overview for the year, broken down by service areas and complaint types. The report highlights key trends and themes drawn from the data for consideration, reflects on lessons learned and actions to deliver improvements.

Effective management and resolution of complaints, as well as learning from them, helps ensure that Council services meet the needs of residents and communities. A key principle is of continuous improvement, reviewing complaints processes and systems to improve the way the Council serves the people of Newport. The report details activities that contribute to this.

**Proposal** Cabinet is asked to endorse the Annual Report on Compliments, Comments and Complaints Management 2023/2024 and proposed actions.

**Action by** Complaint Resolution Manager

**Timetable** Immediate

This report was prepared after consultation with:

- Governance & Audit Committee
- Heads of Service
- 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 fourth annual 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 2023/24. All annual statistics and corporate actions for improvement are included in 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").

The Compliments Comments and Complaints Annual Report 2023/24 (attached) outlines the progress made, alongside actions for improvement. These include development of the My Council Service (MCS) system providing a bespoke Complaints Dashboard and complaint specific training for staff. It also includes a complaint handling awareness session held with Governance and Audit Committee delivered by Complaints Standards Authority from The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW). Revision of contract documentation with colleagues from the All-Wales Complaints Officers Group (AWCOG) and a review of the Unacceptable Actions by Customer (UAC) Policy. We recognise the important feedback that compliments, comments and complaints provide for the Authority and will continue to further develop our reporting arrangements into 2024/25.

## Report

This report provides an overview of how the Council managed compliments, comments and complaints and performance in 2023/24.

This report provides an overview for the year 2023/2024, 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 2023/24, additional engagement and training has been provided to Council employees to raise awareness of the importance of effective complaint handling. A complaint handling awareness session was held with Governance and Audit Committee delivered by Complaints Standards Authority from the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW).

Complaints policies have also been updated and the Unacceptable Actions by Customers policy will be finalised and implemented shortly.

Newport City Council is committed to ensuring that customers have a positive experience in transactions and interactions. However, sometimes things go wrong. When this happens, we encourage people to speak up so that we can put things right. Effective management and resolution of complaints, as well as learning from them, helps ensure that Council services meet the needs of residents and communities. A key principle is of continuous improvement that includes reviewing the Council's complaints processes and systems to improve the way the Council serves the people of Newport. This report details activities that contribute to this. Analysis of the main areas for complaints is included in the report, providing further insight.

Improvements have been made in 2023/2024 to the way in which data is utilised and shared with departments across the Council. The development of a bespoke Complaints dashboard within the MI Hub system has enabled greater visibility and analysis of the complaints data.

Feedback from complaints is also used to inform service improvements including the implementation of the Customer Contact project. Data from complaints will be used to prioritise activity and also analyse the success of improvements made. A further example can be linked to the reduction of comments received into the complaints department in 2023/24. This reduction can be attributed to clearer categorisation of feedback and streamlined processes by directing service requests to the appropriate teams, improving the customer journey.

### Financial Summary (Capital and Revenue)

There are no direct financial implications associated with this report.

### Risks

Risk Title / Description	Risk Impact score of Risk if it occurs* (H/M/L)	Risk Probability of risk occurring (H/M/L)	Risk Mitigation Action(s) What is the Council doing or what has it done to avoid the risk or reduce its effect?	Risk Owner 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>Best Practise shared with colleagues from the All-Wales Complaints Officer Group (AWCOG)</li> </ul>	Complaint Resolution Manager  Digital Services Manager
Failure to meet the public's expectation for dealing with complaints	H	L	The Council has. <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>	Complaint Resolution Manager  Digital Services Manager

\* 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.

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

## **Options Available and considered**

1. To consider and agree the contents of this report.
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**

As set out in the body of the report, in accordance with the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011, it is a function of the Governance and Audit Committee to review and assess the authority's ability to handle complaints effectively and make reports and recommendations in relation to the authority's ability to handle complaints effectively. The report has been reviewed by the Governance and Audit Committee who have provided comments. It is for the Cabinet to consider the comments of the Committee and note the report.

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

This report asks Cabinet to consider the process and performance of the Council's Compliments, Comments and Complaints Annual Report 2023/24 and to make any recommendations for improvement.

The proposal is in line with the Council's Corporate Plan 2022-27 vision of 'an ambitious, fairer, greener Newport for everyone', and supports its four Well-being Objectives, ensuring the principle of being 'a listening council' is achieved. The principles of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and its five ways of working are supported, with the report identifying the actions being put in place to ensure the Council is able to respond to feedback and complaints in the short and long-term, preventing similar complaints from occurring again. This is done through collaboration across all service areas supporting them through improved training and guidance to ensure customer concerns are listened to.

A Fairness and Equalities Impact Assessment was not required for this report. There are no staffing or HR related issues arising directly from this report although staff training and development will continue to take 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**

Governance and Audit Committee considered the contents of the report on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2024, and their draft comments were as below:

- The Committee recommended that a clear definition of a complaint was provided to elected members and residents and for the compliments, comments and complaints process to be streamlined to make it easier for residents to engage with.
- The Committee recommended that further work be done to encourage residents from underrepresented communities to engage with the Council's compliments, comments and complaints process.
- The Committee recommended an update report be brought to Committee to update on the progress made against the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales 2023/24 Annual Letter recommendations.
- The Committee recommended that the figures related to missed collection complaints was shared with the public, to contextualise the volume.

These comments are considered in the report and follow up actions.

## **Background Papers**

PSOW Annual Letter 2023-24



PSOW Annual Letter  
2023-2024.pdf

[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 2022/23](#)