



**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**CABINET**

**24<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2019**

**CUSTOMER FEEDBACK SCHEME – COMMENTS, COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS ANNUAL REPORT 2018/19**

**REPORT OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES IN DISCUSSION WITH CLLR WEBBER.**

**AUTHOR:** Jayne Thomas – Service Improvement, Customer Feedback and Engagement Manager

**1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 The purpose of the report is to:

- (i) provide Cabinet with the inaugural Annual Report relating to the operation and effectiveness of the Council's corporate Customer Feedback Scheme ('CFS') between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019; and
- (ii) seek Cabinet's recommendations and any suggested areas for improvement in respect of the contents and publication of future CFS Annual Reports, together with CFS reporting mechanisms more generally.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 2.1 Considers the inaugural Annual Report relating to the operation and effectiveness of the Council's Customer Feedback Scheme (Comments, Compliments and Complaints) ('CFS') between April 1<sup>st</sup> 2018 and March 31<sup>st</sup> 2019, annexed at Appendix 1 to the report;
- 2.2 Notes the work being undertaken by the Customer Feedback and Engagement Team and recent improvements made to the management and operation of the CFS scheme; and
- 2.3 Provides any recommendations and suggested areas for improvement in respect of the contents and publication of future CFS Annual Reports,

together with CFS reporting mechanisms more generally, noting the feedback from the Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2019 in relation to this matter.

### **3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 Whilst there is currently no statutory requirement for the Local Authority to produce an annual report it is important that Cabinet is properly appraised of the nature of feedback received by the Council's customers, how that feedback has been used and, where appropriate, utilised to ensure service improvement across the Council.
- 3.2 Officers consider there needs to be a more consistent and programmed method of reporting customer feedback which can lead to informed recommendations for improvement and from which evidence of good practice/customer service can be shared more widely across service areas.

### **4. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 4.1 Legislative changes to the powers of the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) came into force on the 1<sup>st</sup> May 2019 (Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2019) giving that office greater investigative powers and, through the development of the 'Complaint's Standards Authority', a role in monitoring standards, trends and patterns across public service delivery in Wales.
- 4.2 As part of this legislation the Council is now required to report monthly on complaints activity to the PSOW.
- 4.3 The CFS records all Comments, Compliments and Complaints received by both residents of RCT and those people visiting RCT who access Council facilities. The scheme does not cover complaints where there are other statutory arrangements in place such as complaints about Social Care or School complaints.
- 4.4 The complaints process is a two stage process and is in line with the PSOW's Model Complaints Policy that was adopted by all Local Authorities in 2011.

**Stage One: Local Resolution** – The emphasis at this stage of the process is early resolution of the complaint either by providing an explanation, putting things right or agreeing a way forward which may include identifying where improvements to services are necessary. The timescale for local resolution is 10 working days.

**Stage Two: Formal Consideration** – If the complainant remains dissatisfied after completion of stage one, they may request that the complaint proceeds to stage two of the process. This involves a formal investigation of the complaint with a report being produced by a Senior Council Officer. The timescale for dealing with this stage is 20 working days.

- 4.5 If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of the stage two investigation, they may progress their complaint to the PSOW.

4.6 On 1<sup>st</sup> January 2019 operational responsibility for managing and co-ordinating the CFS transferred to the Customer Feedback and Engagement Team, who already had responsibility for the existing management arrangements in respect of the Social Services statutory complaints process. This team is led by the Service Improvement, Customer Feedback and Engagement Manager. This now means that the CFS and statutory Social Services complaints processes for the Council are now managed centrally by one team leading to better use of available expertise and experience as well as ensuring greater resilience in the operation of the CFS itself. Further it will:

- Enable more timely use of information captured via the operation of the CFS through improved reporting mechanisms which will support performance management arrangements and improvement within services;
- Introduce training, support and challenge across all services; and
- Strengthen complaint gatekeeping arrangements to improve the allocation and management of complaints (i.e. the early identification of only those that require action), the introduction of reporting management information to all Services and where agreed, to Members.

## **5. CFS IMPROVEMENTS**

5.1 Since January 2019 improvements have been made to the existing CRM system to enable more accurate recording of customer feedback and provide improved qualitative data which will be available in 2019/20. Currently the ability to provide robust and accurate data is limited and the Council is currently in the process of procuring a new I.T. system for capturing both Customer Contacts and Customer Feedback.

Interim improvements include:

- Information captured on Welsh Language, Equality and Data Protection in line with legislative requirements.
  - The collection of qualitative data evidencing learning and service improvements from feedback.
  - New categories for recording complaints and detailing the outcome of resolution in line with requirements of the PSOW Complaints Standards Authority.
- 5.2 Other notable improvements include quarterly CFS coordinators meetings and the introduction of a benchmarking exercise to rate RCT services against standards set by the PSOW. With the support of the PSOW this exercise is intended to enable the Council to learn from other Local Authorities complaints and to proactively assess the quality of 'like for like' services, identifying where we can improve and/or share good practice. This is currently being piloted across service areas and information will be available as part of reporting for 2019/20.
- 5.3 Work is also underway to improve customer facing web and social media information about the Customer Feedback Scheme which will provide both a means for customers to engage with the Council and provide further opportunity

for the Council to evidence how customer feedback has improved or developed services through the reintroduction of 'you said, we did'.

- 5.4 Ultimately, improvements to the CFS will enable the Council to improve engagement, understand where services need to be developed and improved and to better understand the needs of its residents and those who live and work in the County Borough.

## **6. SCRUTINY INVOLVEMENT**

- 6.1 On the 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2019 the Overview and Scrutiny Committee met to consider the inaugural Annual Report and consider the appropriate levels of future reporting. They were also asked to make recommendations to Cabinet, on how complaints activity is monitored in the future and whether any further improvements could be made to the process, noting the recent improvements made to date.

- 6.2 The Committee recommended the following:

- That a progress report regarding the Council's corporate Customer Feedback Scheme is presented to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on a bi-annual basis (to include the CFS Annual Report); and
- That the next report to Scrutiny incorporates a detailed explanation of the two-stage Complaints process, with the inclusion of case studies.

## **7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 There are no equality and/or diversity implications from this report.

## **8. CONSULTATION**

- 8.1 No consultation has been undertaken in relation to this report as it provides information on the operation of the Customer Feedback Scheme and direct feedback from service users in relation to how well services are delivered through the monitoring of compliments comments and complaints.

## **9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 There are no financial implications aligned to this report and the work of the Customer Feedback and Engagement Team is managed within the existing allocated budget.

## **10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED**

- 10.1 The Customer Feedback Scheme is not a requirement of specific legislation however the administration of the work of the Complaints Feedback and Engagement Team is underpinned by the standards and expectations set by the PSOW and is subject to scrutiny under the new powers afforded to the PSOW under the Public Services Ombudsman Act (Wales) 2019.

## **11. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT**

11.1 The function of the Customer Feedback and Engagement Team and the collation of service user feedback through both complaints and compliments provides a quality assurance mechanism by which the Council can measure its performance against the corporate priorities to:

- Deliver essential services well;
- Engage with customers and use feedback to redesign and/or improve our services.
- Ensure local people get good outcomes from their services

## **12. CONCLUSION**

12.1 All customer feedback provides valuable information from which services can improve and develop. This data also enables services and the Council as a whole to better understand the needs of its residents and to assist in both the planning and delivery of essential services.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**  
**as amended by**

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**

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**SERVICES**

**CUSTOMER FEEDBACK SCHEME – COMMENTS, COMPLIMENTS AND  
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LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS:

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 3<sup>rd</sup> SEPTEMBER 2019

AUTHOR: Jayne Thomas – Service Improvement, Customer Feedback and  
Engagement Manager

### 1. Customer Feedback Scheme 2018/19 – Overview

The following provides a general overview and brief analysis of the feedback received for 2018/19.

The data was provided by Service Feedback Co-ordinators using the CRM system reporting tool, which identifies levels of feedback received, together with examples of service change directly made as a result of customer comments, compliments or complaints.

It is evident that not all feedback is currently captured on the CRM reporting tool and that whilst this report provides a picture of feedback activity there are improvements required to ensure that accurate data is captured going forward. Training for all system users is planned for 2019/20 to ensure that customer feedback is consistently logged and that any service development and improvements resulting from this can be captured and reported on.

### 2. Key findings

- The 10 working day response timescale for complaints was met 73% of the time. This is a 6% improvement on the timescales reported in 2017/18 (67%)
- Online feedback is the most popular means of communication with 61% of customer feedback received via the Council's website. This represents a 6% increase on web feedback in 2017/18.
- Face to face feedback only accounts for 1% of the total feedback received. Whilst this remains low as in previous years it is recognised that comments and compliments made to individual officers across services are difficult to capture and may not be an accurate reflection of the level of activity in this area.
- Only 34 (3.5%) of the complaints received progressed to Stage 2 of the complaints procedure.
- The highest number of complaints and compliments were received for highways and Streetcare.
- There were no Ombudsman investigations with all complaints referred to the ombudsman being resolved or closed. (see section 6)
- There is little data available for the Education Department with only 1 complaint being reported with 11 complaints being referred to and dealt with under the Schools complaints policies. This is a priority area for the Customer Feedback Team going forward in ensuring all available data is captured and is currently being addressed.

### 3. Total Feedback received and comparison with 2017/18

<b>Feedback</b>	<b>2017/18</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>2018/19</b>	<b>%</b>
Complaints	741	65%	730	66%
Comments	124	11%	144	13%
Compliments	267	24%	239	21%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1132</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1113</b>	<b>100%</b>

### 4. Total feedback by service areas

<b>FEEDBACK 2018/19</b>	<b>Complaints by Stage</b>		<b>Comments</b>	<b>Compliments</b>	<b>Total</b>
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>			
Arts and Theatres	3	0	1	18	<b>22</b>
Benefits	20	0	0	1	<b>21</b>
Council Tax	50	6	3	1	<b>60</b>
Customer Care	32	2	7	45	<b>86</b>
Corporate Estates	8	0	1	0	<b>9</b>
Cross Service Cases (Multiple services)	53	2	8	14	<b>77</b>
Education	1	0	0	0	<b>1</b>
Highways and Street care	407	11	83	126	<b>627</b>
Legal (including elections)	2	1	1	0	<b>4</b>
Leisure	14	1	11	4	<b>30</b>
Parks and Countrysides'	36	1	14	9	<b>60</b>
Prosperity and Development	27	7	7	14	<b>55</b>
Public Health and Protection	43	3	8	7	<b>62</b>
<b>Totals</b>	<b>696</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>1,113</b>

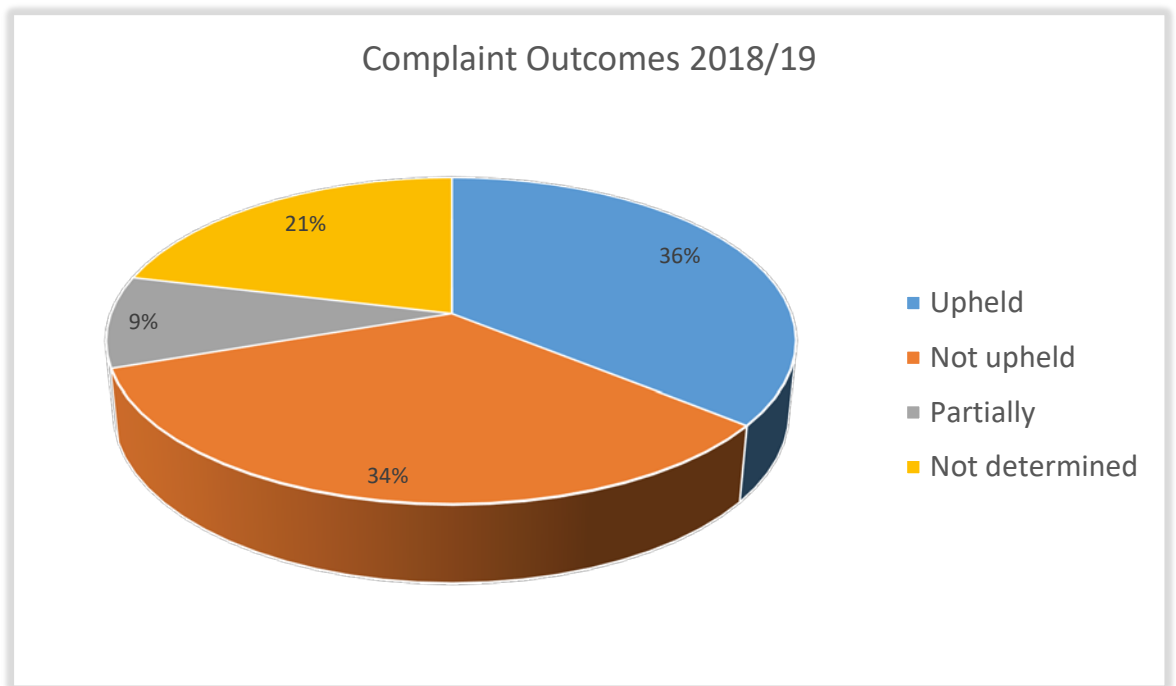
*"I would just like to thank you and all members of your team from the bottom of my heart, you have made my dreams come true, I feel I can now spend the rest of my life in peace. I am so happy and look forward to moving in to my new flat"... customer of home finder team*



## 5. Outcome of complaints

➤ Complaints outcomes for 2018/19 are logged under the following 4 categories:

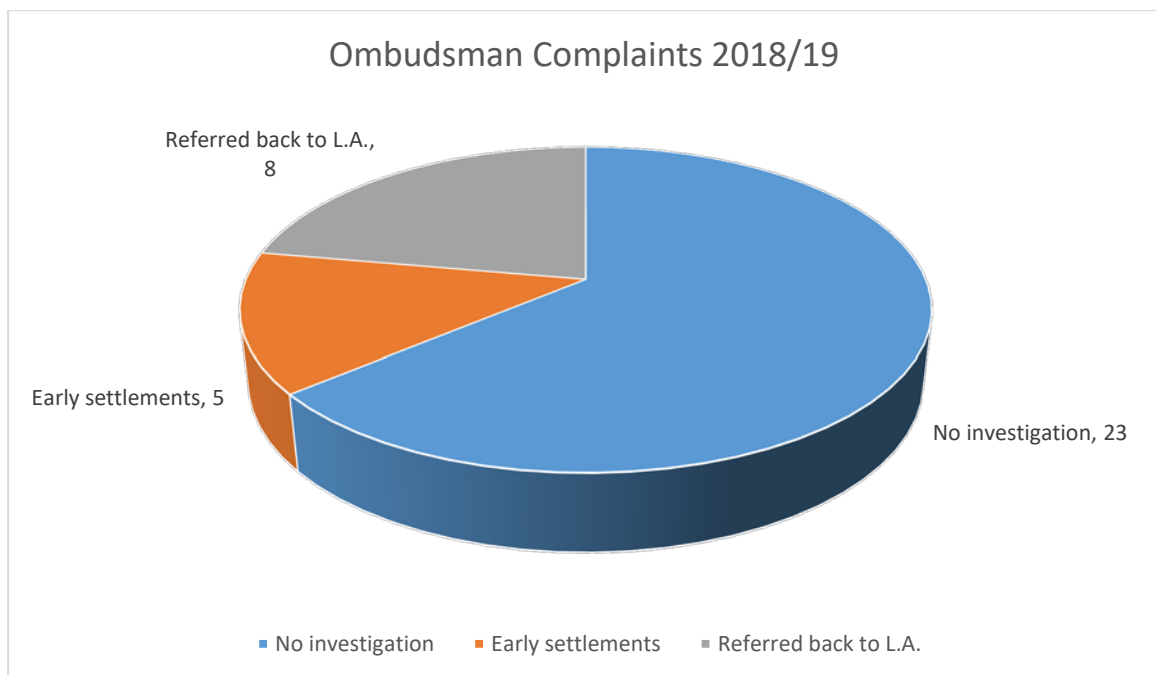
- **Upheld** - The Council considers that it has failed to provide a service or that the service delivered falls below the expected standard and/or is not in line with policy and procedure.
- **Not upheld** - The Council is satisfied that it has provided the service in line with relevant legislation, policy and guidance and meets an expected standard.
- **Partially upheld** - An element but not all of the complaint meets the 'upheld' criteria.
- **Not determined** - Outcome is not determined or case is not closed properly.



Improvements have been made to the CRM to improve the quality of the categorisation of complaints in line with the requirements of the Public Services Ombudsman Wales. Further work is required to ensure all service areas are capturing feedback and that CRM users are all trained and confident to use the system ensuring complaints are both logged and closed properly.

## 6. Ombudsman complaints.

- 36 Complaints were referred to the Office of Public Services Ombudsman, all of which were resolved successfully by the relevant service areas.
- The figures below also include 14 complaints that refer to Adult and Children's Services, the details of which are included in the Social Services Complaints Annual Report 2018/19.
- Further information and a breakdown of Ombudsman complaints can be accessed through the Ombudsman's Annual Letter for RCT issued on the 7<sup>th</sup> August 2019.



**Under the PSOW Act 2019: Shaping the Future the Public Services Ombudsman Wales has been given new powers to undertake own initiate investigations into Public Bodies in Wales. This means they do not have to have received a complaint to investigate an area of concern identified through themes or trends. More information can be found at <https://www.ombudsman.wales/publications/>**

## **7. Examples of service Improvements and actions taken as a result of feedback.**

### **Corporate Estates**

- Review of toilet facilities for the public in all public facing buildings and offices resulting in a change of policy to allow use of toilet facilities at Sardis One4All.

### **Customer Care**

- One4all – Blue Badge application form amended to make it clear as to the level of evidence required to enable an application to be processed.
- Website – procedure introduced for all Welsh Language Forms to be tested by a Welsh Speaker before they are made live on the website.
- Contact Centre - Alert system introduced to identify when call handling times exceed threshold, following complaint re. Length of call.

### **Leisure**

- Improvements to changing facilities at Tonyrefail.
- Improved signage at Bronwydd swimming pool.

*“Being a retired P.E. teacher it is wonderful to see the continuous work being done on the leisure centres in RCT” ... customer*

### **Parks and Countryside**

- New dog waste bins installed with more regular collections.
- Water tanks in cemetery refilled before they become empty

### **Prosperity and Development**

- Improvements made to the system for checking and verifying applicant’s eligibility for a renovation grant.
- Staff reminded of their responsibilities under GDPR following a data breach where information on an Empty Property Grant was sent to the applicant’s relative in error. Additional guidance on the relevant system provided to staff to prevent a reoccurrence.

**Further work has been identified as necessary in order to capture themes and service development as a result of customer feedback. This is a priority area for the Customer Feedback and Engagement Team along with the development of the ‘you said, we did’ website page.**

On Monday I reported fly tipping. Today it was sorted efficiently. They even cleaned the area. Thank you!!

## 8. Compliments and Comments

- Compliments accounted for 52% of the feedback received for Customer Care the majority of which were thanking contact centre and One4all staff for their assistance.
- The highest number of compliments and comments were received for highways and street care with positive feedback relating to the promptness in which services were provided in particular responding to reports of fly tipping and repairs to highways and pavements.
- More compliments than complaints were received for Arts and Theatres with compliments representing 81% of feedback received.

*“What a night! All of the performers were outstanding. It was so pleasing to see acts from our local communities on stage, under the lights and getting the applause that they so richly deserve”.....customer - theatres*

## 9. Examples of comments and compliments

*“Compliment to the advisor who took the call for a delivery of recycling bags, advisor was very polite, helpful and pleasant. Also to the recycling crew who delivered the bags in record time. Excellent service all round and would like to praise RCT for the service provided”...Customer - Crosscutting*

*“Thank so much for all of your help. You have been truly amazing. Please pass on my thanks to your team manager and please let them know that you are a fantastic person who is excellent at your job. Your help has made all of my questions and move very easy and I am extremely grateful for all that you have done. You are an asset to RCT and we need more people like you!!! Thank you again.” Customer – Council Tax*

*“Just wanted to say a big thank you to your wonderful library staff who were so helpful to me today and who went above and beyond. I don't live in Wales anymore but the staff reminded me how warm and welcoming the valleys are”  
Member of public – Library Service*

## **10. Work programme and identified improvements.**

The Customer Feedback and Engagement Team has identified the following improvements to be undertaken as part of the Team's work programme for 2019/20:

- Improved training for all Customer Feedback Scheme Co-Ordinators will be provided in 2019/20 to ensure all feedback is both logged and closed appropriately on the Customer Record Management System.
- A mechanism for frontline staff to capture customer feedback to be developed, encouraging face to face comments and compliments to be formally logged. E.g. Customer satisfaction cards, customer survey.
- Information on the Council's Website will be improved with clearer information for customers on how to engage with the Council and provide feedback on services received.
- The Customer Feedback and Engagement Team will analyse Public Services Ombudsman activity and use this information where appropriate to Benchmark Service areas against Ombudsman expectations and recommendations to other Councils following complaints and;
- along with relevant service areas, through improved analysis of customer feedback, identify where we can learn and make improvements to services or share examples of good practice
- Through the development of 'you said we did' provide feedback to Customers through a variety of Social Media channels and through the Council's Website.
- The Manager of the Customer Feedback and Engagement Team will continue to represent the Council on the National Complaints Groups and will identify where we can develop the Customer Feedback Scheme through good practice noted in other Local Authorities.