

Meeting of:	Cabinet
Date of Meeting:	Thursday, 05 June 2025
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	No Relevant Scrutiny Committee
Report Title:	Corporate Concerns and Complaints Policy Review
Purpose of Report:	To present for approval by Cabinet the revised Corporate Concerns and Complaints Policy.
Report Owner:	Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Corporate Performance and Resources
Responsible Officer:	Chief Executive
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	There are no matters in this report which relate to an individual ward
Policy Framework:	This is a matter for Executive decision by Cabinet
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This report requests Cabinet to approve the amendments made to the Corporate Concerns and Complaints Policy following the recent light touch review and to refer to Governance and Audit Committee for consideration. • Amendments made to the Policy following the review are limited and seek to improve clarity of information and to ensure that contact details are up to date. There have been no changes to the processes and procedures for managing complaints. • The Council adopted the Welsh Government's Model Corporate Concerns and Complaints Policy in July 2013. Complainants who remain unsatisfied after Stages 1 and 2 of the Policy can refer their complaint to the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) and as this process remains unchanged, the Council's adoption of the same remains the case. • Although the guidance has not changed and the process for dealing with complaints remain unaltered, regular review of the Policy is required for the following reasons: • Continuous Improvement: Updating the Policy can help reflect lessons learned and enhance effectiveness. 	

- **Relevance and Clarity:** As the Council develops roles, procedures and contact points may change. Regular reviews keep the Policy accurate, clear and relevant to current operations.
- **Citizen Trust and Transparency.** A well-maintained Policy demonstrates to our residents that we value feedback and take complaints seriously, building trust and improving relationships.
- The purpose of the Policy is to ensure that complainants' experiences are consistent and that a fair response is given to raising concerns and complaints with all Council services.
- In April 2022 the Council implemented the Unacceptable Actions by Citizens and Social Media Policies.
- As a result of the most recent "light touch" review of the Policy:
- Additional information has been added in relation to handling of Welsh Language Complaints.
- To ensure that citizens have easy access to effective and timely resolution to their complaint, signposting information has been added for accessing complaint types not included in the Corporate Concerns and Complaints Policy, such as Social Services.
- Based on feedback from the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, the 'What Constitutes a Complaint' section and what is not included has been updated and clarified.
- An appendix has been added detailing alternative ways complaints processes can be accessed.

Recommendations

1. That, subject to Recommendation (2), Cabinet approves the revised Corporate Concerns and Complaints Policy.
2. That the report and revised Policy are referred to Governance and Audit Committee for consideration, with any views referred back to Cabinet. Should there be no comments from the Committee, this report and Policy would be considered as agreed.

Reasons for Recommendations

1. To enable an updated Corporate Concerns and Complaints Policy to be approved.
2. The Local Government and & Elections (Wales) act (2021) requires Governance and Audit Committee to review and assess the Authority's ability to handle complaints effectively and to make reports and recommendations in relation to the Authority's ability to handle complaints effectively. In order that Cabinet can be apprised of the report and the comments made by Governance and Audit Committee.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Council adopted the Welsh Government's Model Concerns and Complaints Policy in 2013 and continues to operate a two-stage process for handling complaints from residents. Should the complainant remain unsatisfied at the end of this process they are advised to contact the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW).
- 1.2 The purpose of the Policy is to ensure that residents have a positive, fair and consistent experience of addressing concerns and complaints with Council services.
- 1.3 The Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act (2021) requires Governance and Audit Committees to review and assess the Authority's ability to handle complaints effectively. A complaints and compliments report has been produced for consideration by that Committee (and its predecessor) annually since 2014/15.
- 1.4 In May 2021 the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales confirmed that the Council's Policy complied with the Model Policy. No changes to the process of managing complaints since that review are therefore necessary.
- 1.5 A light touch review of the Policy has been undertaken. That review has ensured that the information contained within the Policy remain relevant and that there is clarity for residents on how best to raise a concern and ensure that it is handled effectively.
- 1.6 The review has been undertaken in conjunction with the Council's Monitoring Officer, the Information Manager and Data Protection Officer and the Equalities and Welsh Language Officer.

2. Key Issues for Consideration

- 2.1** Appendix A presents the updated Corporate Concerns and Complaints Policy.
- 2.2** As a result of the review described above, a number of updates have been made to the Policy as described in the following paragraphs.
- 2.3** Historical reporting shows that a high number of issues are incorrectly raised via the Corporate Complaints process. In 2024/25 26% of the 1,283 complaints raised were not appropriate to be dealt with through the Policy. Issues either fell outside of the remit of the Policy or did not conform to the definition of a complaint. This has resulted in delays in concerns being addressed and requests for services being delivered.
- 2.4** To reduce the risk of this occurring in the future additional content has been added under the “When to use this Policy” section to clarify which issues and services have a separate complaints process. An appendix has also been added to the Policy which includes details of how citizens can pursue issues and complaints in relation to Social Services, Schools, Data Protection and Freedom of Information requests and Councillors.
- 2.5** To reduce the risk of requests for service being reported through the complaints process, the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales’ definition of a complaint has been added to the “What is a complaint?” section of the Policy. In addition, the section clearly defines what constitutes a request for service rather than a complaint.
- 2.6** The “What is a Complaint?” section provides now provides specific examples of issues that would not be considered under the Policy, such as an appeal against a “properly made” decision.
- 2.7** Information has been added to the Policy to clarify the Council’s responsibilities under The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 and the role of the Welsh Language Officer in the investigation and resolution of complaints about the how the Council uses the Welsh language or about Welsh language services.
- 2.8** To ensure that our complaints process continues to be easy to access all contact information for colleagues, services and relevant external organisations have been checked and updated during the review.
- 2.9** To ensure that the complaints process is available to everyone in our communities, details of the RNIB Relay service has been added to the “How can I make a complaint?” section.
- 2.10** The substantive complaints processes and procedures remain unaltered following the review of the Policy and the Council continues to apply the Welsh Government’s Model Concerns and Complaints Guidance.
- 2.11** Amendments made to the Policy relate to improving clarity of information in order to reduce the number of issues raised inappropriately through the Policy and reduce the risk of delay in addressing issues and concerns.

- 2.12** It is recommended that Cabinet approve the revised Policy and refer this report to Governance and Audit Committee for their consideration consistent with that Committee's duties relating to complaints.

3. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?

- 3.1** Listening to and understanding complaints is a key source of the "voice of the customer", what they need from us and involving them in decisions about how we deliver services.
- 3.2** Learning from complaints is an important way in which the Council can develop services that meet the changing needs of residents and are sustainable. Similarly, services can be improved to prevent complaints occurring in the future and improve access to and delivery of services.
- 3.3** Vale 2030 includes commitments to improving customer service and engagement with our communities. Learning from and effectively handling complaints is a key element of this work.

4. Climate Change and Nature Implications

- 4.1** There are no matters in this report relating to climate change and nature.

5. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

- 5.1** There are no direct financial implications associated with this report.
- 5.2** The Public Service Ombudsman for Wales has powers to require the Council to compensate complainants financially should it be found guilty of maladministration. Effective investigation and management of complaints will minimise the risk of this happening.

Employment

- 5.3** There are no matters in this report relating to employment matters.

Legal (Including Equalities)

- 5.4** Under part 6 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, section 115, Governance and Audit Committee are given statutory functions, with effect from 1st April 2021, 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".
- 5.5** There is no statutory requirement to adopt the Model Concerns and Complaints Policy and Guidance for Public Service providers in Wales. However, the Welsh

Government and Public Services Ombudsman for Wales have commended its adoption.

- 5.6** The Council's complaints process is promoted online and via leaflets at reception points. Complaints can be registered on the website, by post, by email, in person, by telephone and using the RNIB Relay service. This ensures that all residents are aware of and have access to the complaints process irrespective of age, gender, belief or disability.

6. Background Papers

None.



Vale of Glamorgan Council

Corporate Concerns and Complaints Policy

May 2025

**This document is available in Welsh / Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn
Gymraeg**

This document is also available in large print and other formats upon request

Introduction

This Policy applies to members of the public receiving or seeking a service from the Vale of Glamorgan Council.

The Vale of Glamorgan Council is committed to dealing effectively with any concerns or complaints you may have about the services we provide. We aim to clarify any issues about which you are not sure. If possible, we'll put right any mistakes we may have made. We will provide any service you're entitled to which we have failed to deliver and if we got something wrong, we will apologise where appropriate. We also aim to learn from our mistakes and use the information we gain to improve our services.

Complaints about the Welsh Language

The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 established a legal framework to impose duties on certain organisations to comply with standards in relation to the Welsh language by way of sub-legislation (Welsh Language Regulation Standards).

The Welsh Language Commissioner issued a legal Compliance Notice to all Councils which specifies how we must provide and improve services for Welsh speakers. You can read our Compliance notice at <https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/Documents/Our%20Council/Equal%20Opportunities/Welsh%20Language/Vale-of-Glamorgan-Council-Compliance-Notice.pdf>

Information relating to the Vale of Glamorgan Council's implementation of the standards and annual reports can be viewed on our website at https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/our_council/equalities/welsh-language-standards.aspx

Complaints about how we use the Welsh language or about Welsh language services will be passed to the Welsh Language Officer. We will follow the same approach identified throughout this policy. In addition, the investigating officers will consult with any relevant legislation, the standards, Code of Practice and Commissioner's guidance before making a determination. Complaints or concerns regarding use of the Welsh language will follow the same timeframes and procedure highlighted in this policy.

When to use this policy

When you express your concerns or complain to us, we will usually respond in the way we explain below. However, sometimes you may have a statutory right of appeal e.g. against a refusal to grant you planning permission or the decision not to give your child a place in a particular school so, rather than investigate your concern, we will explain to you how you can appeal. Sometimes, you might be concerned about matters that are not decided by us e.g. policy set by the Welsh Government and we will then advise you about how to make your concerns known.

Complaints about Social Services; Councillors, Schools, Data Protection and reports of fraud or corruption are not dealt with via this Policy. Please see Appendix A for alternative contact details.

See Appendix A Other ways to raise concerns.

What is a complaint?

A complaint is:

- an expression of dissatisfaction or concern
- either written or spoken or made by any other communication method
- made by one or more members of the public
- about a public service provider's action or lack of action
- or about the standard of service provided
- which requires a response

whether about the public service provider itself, a person acting on its behalf, or a public service provider partnership.

A complaint is not:

- an initial request for a service, such as reporting a faulty streetlight
- an appeal against a "properly made" decision by a public body
- a means to seek change to legislation or a "properly made" policy decision
- a means for lobbying groups/organisations to seek to promote a cause.

Have you asked us yet?

If you are approaching us for a service for the first time, (e.g. reporting a faulty streetlight, requesting an appointment etc) then this policy doesn't apply. You should first give us a chance to respond to your request. If you make a request for a service and then are not happy with our response, you will be able to make your concern known as we describe below.


Is there anything which is excluded from being dealt with as a Corporate Concern or Complaint?

Sometimes your concern or complaint will not be dealt with via the Corporate Concerns and Complaints Policy, examples include:

- an initial request for a service, such as reporting a faulty streetlight or requesting an appointment
- an appeal against a 'properly made' decision made by the Council
- a means to seek change to legislation or 'properly made' policy decision

- decisions in respect of which there is a separate right of appeal or review, e.g. planning appeals, council tax reviews and via Magistrates court or decisions made relating to requests for information such as access to health records, subject access requests, freedom of information or environmental information regulations.
- Complaints about breaches of data protection legislation or confidentiality and/or about the handling of requests for information such as subject access request freedom of information or environment information regulations are considered under separate processes.
- an insurance claim against the Council (however a complaint could be made about the process the Council followed in administering the claim)
- comments about the standards of a particular service when the standard provided is at, or above, the published standard
- a means for lobbying groups/organisations to promote a cause
- allegations of financial impropriety, fraud and/or corruption
- items which are a police matter
- complaints about things which are not the responsibility of the Council

How can I make a complaint

Online	You can use the form on our website: https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/our_council/Complaints-and-Compliments.aspx
email	complaints@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk
Phone	Call our contact centre on 01446 700111
	<p>If you are deaf, have hearing loss or are speech impaired, Relay UK can connect you to a relay assistant to make a phone call for free. The relay assistant can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • type what the caller is saying so you can read their responses, if you can't hear • read your written responses to the caller, if you can't speak. <p>To find out more about the service visit: https://rnid.org.uk/information-and-support/technology-and-products/relay-uk/</p>
In Person	<p>We aim to have concern and complaint forms available at all of our reception areas and libraries.</p> <p>Our reception staff can also log your complaint directly.</p>

In Writing	Customer Complaints Officer, Customer Relations, Civic Offices, Holton Road, Barry, CF63 4RU
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Copies of this policy and the complaint form are also available in Welsh and upon request in other languages as well as audio, large print and Braille.

Stage 1 - Informal resolution

If possible, we believe it's best to deal with things straight away rather than try to sort them out later. If you have a concern, raise it with the person you're dealing with. He or she will try to resolve it for you there and then. If there are any lessons to learn from addressing your concern then the member of staff will draw them to our attention. If the member of staff can't help, they will explain why and you can then ask for an investigation to be undertaken.

Dealing with your concern

- We will formally acknowledge your concern within 5 working days and let you know how we intend to deal with it.
- We aim to complete Stage 1 investigations within 10 working days. If we think it will take longer than this to complete a thorough investigation we will let you know.
- We will ask you to tell us how you would like us to communicate with you and establish whether you have any particular requirements – for example, if you have a disability.
- We will deal with your concern in an open and honest way.
- We will make sure that your dealings with us in the future do not suffer just because you have expressed a concern or made a complaint.

Normally, we will only be able to look at your concerns if you tell us about them within 12 months. This is because it's better to look into your concerns while the issues are still fresh in everyone's mind.

We may exceptionally be able to look at concerns which are brought to our attention later than this. However, you will have to give a strong reasons why you have not been able to bring it to our attention earlier and we will need to have sufficient information about the issue to allow us to consider it properly. (In any event, regardless of the circumstances, we will not consider any concerns about matters that took place more than three years ago.)

If you're expressing a concern on behalf of somebody else, we'll need their agreement to you acting on their behalf.

In some instances, we may ask to meet you to discuss your concerns. Occasionally, we might suggest mediation to try to resolve disputes.

We'll look at relevant evidence. This could include files, notes of conversations, letters, e-mails or whatever may be relevant to your particular concern. If necessary, we'll talk to the staff or others involved and look at our policies and any legal entitlement and guidance.

What if there is more than one body involved?

If your complaint covers more than one organisation e.g. this Council and South Wales Police we will usually work with them to decide who should take a lead in dealing with your concerns. You will then be given the name of the person responsible for communicating with you while we consider your complaint.

If the complaint is about a body working on our behalf (eg repair contractors), we will look into your complaint ourselves and respond to you. You may wish to raise the matter informally with them first. However, if you want to express your concern or complaint formally, we will look into this ourselves and respond to you.

Stage 2 Investigation - Expressing concerns or complaints formally

If you feel that our Stage 1 response does not resolve your complaint because, for example, we haven't considered all of the information, you can request that a formal Stage 2 investigation to be undertaken.

We will tell you who we have asked to look into your concern or complaint. If your concern is straightforward, we'll usually ask somebody from the specific service to look into it and get back to you. If it is more complex, we may use someone from elsewhere in the authority or in certain cases we may appoint an independent investigator.

We will tell you our understanding of your concerns and ask you to confirm that we've got it right. We'll also ask you to tell us what outcome you're hoping for.

The person looking at your complaint will usually need to see the files we hold relevant to your complaint. If you don't want this to happen, it's important that you tell us.

If there is a simple solution to your problem, we may ask you if you're 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 and close the complaint without an investigation.

We will aim to resolve concerns as quickly as possible and expect to deal with the vast majority within 20 working days. If your complaint is more complex, we will:

- let you know within this time why we think it may take longer to investigate
- tell you how long we expect it to take.
- let you know where we have reached with the investigation, and
- give you regular updates, including telling you whether any developments might change our original estimate.

The person who is investigating your concerns will aim first to establish the facts. The extent of this investigation will depend on how complex and how serious the issues you have raised are.

Outcome

If we formally investigate your complaint, we will let you know what we have found in keeping with your preferred form of communication. If necessary, we will produce a longer report. We'll explain how and why we came to our conclusions.

If we find that we got it wrong, we'll tell you what and why it happened. We'll show how the mistake affected you.

If we find there is a fault in our systems or the way we do things, we'll tell you what it is and how we plan to change things to stop it happening again.

If we got it wrong, we will always apologise.

Putting Things Right

If we didn't provide a service you should have had, we'll aim to provide it now if that's possible. If we didn't do something well, we'll aim to put it right. If you have lost out as a result of a mistake on our part we'll try to put you back in the position you would have been in if we'd got it right.

If you had to pay for a service yourself, 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 to do if you remain dissatisfied

If we do not succeed in resolving your complaint, you may complain to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. The Ombudsman is independent of all government bodies and can look into your complaint if you believe that you personally, 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.

The Ombudsman expects you to bring your concerns to our attention first and to give us a chance to put things right. You can contact the Ombudsman by:

- phone: 0300 790 0203
- e-mail: ask@ombudsman-wales.org.uk
- the website: www.ombudsman-wales.org.uk
- writing to: Public Services Ombudsman for Wales
1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae, Pencoed CF35 5LJ

You can contact the Welsh Language Commissioner about services in Welsh.

- phone: 0845 6033 221
- e-mail: post@welshlanguagecommissioner.org
- writing to: The Welsh Language Commissioner,
Market Chambers, 5-7 St Mary Street, Cardiff CF10
1AT
- website: <https://www.welshlanguagecommissioner.wales/>

Learning lessons

We take your concerns and complaints seriously and try to learn from any mistakes we've made. Our corporate management team considers a summary of all complaints six monthly, as well as details of any serious complaints. Our Cabinet and Scrutiny Committees also consider our response to complaints annually.

Where there is a need for change, we will set out what we will do; who will do it and when we plan to do it by and this will be included in our response to you.

What if I need help

Our staff will aim to help you make your concerns known to us. If you need extra assistance, we will try to put you in touch with someone who can help. You may wish to contact eg CHC advocacy services, Age Concern, Shelter etc who may be able to assist you.

If you are someone under the age of 18, you can also use this concerns and complaints policy. If you need help to do so, you can speak to someone on the Meic Helpline (phone 080880 23456, www.meiccymru.org) or contact the Children's Commissioner for Wales. Contact details are:

01792 765600 (South Wales)
post@childcomwales.org.uk
www.childcomwales.org.uk

01492 523333 (North Wales)

South Wales Office:

Oystermouth House
Phoenix Way
Swansea
SA7 9FS

North Wales Office:

Penrhos Manor
Oak Drive
Colwyn Bay
Conwy
LL29 7YW

What we expect from you

In times of trouble or distress, some people may act out of character. There may have been upsetting or distressing circumstances leading up to a concern or a complaint. We do not view behaviour as unacceptable just because someone is forceful or determined.

We believe that all complainants have the right to be heard, understood and respected. However, we also consider that our staff have the same rights. We, therefore, expect you to be polite and courteous in your dealings with us. We will not tolerate aggressive or abusive behaviour, unreasonable demands or unreasonable persistence. We have a separate policy to manage situations where we find that someone's actions are unreasonable. Our Unacceptable Actions by Citizens Policy can be found here: https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/our_council/Complaints-and-Compliments.aspx

Appendix A - Other ways to raise concerns

If you are concerned about fraud, financial impropriety and or corruption:

You can contact any of the recipients below with your concerns:

- Chief Executive: 01446 709202
- Head of Finance (Section 151 Officer): 01446 709254
- Monitoring Officer: 01446 709402
- Head of Regional Internal Audit Service: 01446 709572
- Head of Human Resources: 01446 709357

All are located at the following address: Vale of Glamorgan Council Civic Offices Holton Road Barry CF63 4RU

Contact your Chair of Governors (if you work for a school)

If your complaint relates to Social Services:

https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/living/social_care/Social-Services-Complaints.aspx

Complaints Officer
Social Services Directorate
2nd Floor, Dock Offices
Barry, CF63 4RT

01446 704800

socialservicescomplaints@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk

If your complaint relates to the conduct of Councillors:

Complaints about the conduct of Councillors cannot be handled through the complaint system. Please contact the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales or email the Council's Monitoring Officer.

If your complaint relates to an issue in a school

Schools have their own complaints procedures and the relevant Headteacher should be contacted direct in the first instance.

Further information and advice:

governors@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk

01446 709107

If your complaint relates to a concern regarding breach of confidentiality, a data breach or any other right under the Data Protection legislation or a request for information such as access to health records, a Subject Access or Freedom of Information Request:

Information Manager
Vale of Glamorgan Council
Civic Offices
Holton Road
Barry
CF63 4RU

DPO@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk

01446 700111

Concern/Complaint form

A: Your details

Surname	Forename(s):	Title: Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms/if other please state:
Address and postcode:		
Your e-mail address:		
Daytime contact phone number		
Mobile number:		

Please state by which of the above methods you would prefer us to contact you

Your requirements: if our usual way of dealing with complaints makes it difficult for you to use our service, for example if English or Welsh is not your first language or you need to engage with us in a particular way, please tell us so that we can discuss how we might help you.

The person who experienced the problem should normally fill in this form. If you are filling this in on behalf of someone else, please fill in section B. Please note that before taking forward the complaint we will need to satisfy ourselves that you have the authority to act on behalf of the person concerned.

B: Making a complaint on behalf of someone else: Their details

Their name in full:	
Address and postcode:	

What is your relationship to them?	
Why are you making a complaint on their behalf?	

C: About your concern/complaint (Please continue your answers to the following questions on a separate sheet(s) if necessary)

C.1 Name of the department/section/service you are complaining about:

C.2 What do you think they did wrong, or failed to do?

C.3 Describe how you personally have suffered or have been affected.

C.4 What do you think should be done to put things right?

C.5 When did you first become aware of the problem?

C.6 Have you already put your concern to the frontline staff responsible for delivering the service? If so, please give brief details of how and when you did so.

C.7 If it is more than 6 months since you became first aware of the problem, please give the reason why you have not complained before now.

If you have any documents to support your concern/complaint, please attach them with this form.

Signature:

Date:

When you have completed this form, please send it to:

Customer Complaints Officer, Customer Relations, Civic Offices, Holton Road,
Barry, CF63 4RU