



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

24th 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 1st April 2018 and 31st 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 1st 2018 and March 31st 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 3rd 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 apprised 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 1st May 2019 (Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2019) giving that office greater investigative powers and, through the development of the 'Complaints 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 1st 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 3rd 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

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY AND CHILDREN'S
SERVICES

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

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS:

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 3rd SEPTEMBER 2019

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