



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2020/21

**CUSTOMER FEEDBACK SCHEME – COMMENTS, COMPLIMENTS AND
COMPLAINTS
ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20**

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 18th January 2021

**JOINT REPORT OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR COMMUNITY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES
AND THE SERVICE DIRECTOR DEMOCRATIC SERVICES & COMMUNICATIONS.**

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of the report is to:

- (i) Provide the Overview & Scrutiny Committee with the inaugural Annual Report relating to the operation and effectiveness of the Council's corporate Customer Feedback Scheme ('CFS') between April 1st 2019 and March 31st 2020 prior to consideration by Cabinet; and
- (ii) Seek the Committee'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, for Cabinet's future consideration.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:-

- 2.1 Consider and scrutinise 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 2019 and March 31st 2020, annexed at Appendix 1 to the report;
- 2.2 Provide 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; and
- 2.3 Agree that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee receives a follow up report on the reporting mechanisms subsequently agreed by Cabinet in relation to the operation of the CFS scheme, including an update on any suggested changes

taken forward, in addition to receiving the CFS Annual Report as part of its work programme.

3. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 Whilst currently there is no statutory requirement for the Local Authority to produce an annual report it is important that Members are 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.
- 3.3 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 'Complaint's Standards Authority' a role in monitoring standards, trends and patterns across public service delivery in Wales.
- 3.4 As part of this legislation the Council is now required to report quarterly on complaints activity to the PSOW.
- 3.5 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.
- 3.6 The complaints process is a two stage process and is in line with the Public Services Ombudsman'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.

- 3.7 If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of the stage two investigation, they may progress their complaint to the PSOW.
- 3.8 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.

4. CFS IMPROVEMENTS

- 4.1 A number of improvements have been made to the CFS since January 2019 which has meant more accurate recording of customer feedback, the ability to produce better qualitative data, the introduction of quarterly CFS coordinators meetings and the introduction of a benchmarking exercise which rates RCT services against standards set by the PSOW.
- 4.2 Improvements have also been made to the customer facing web and social media information about the CFS to allow customers to better engage with the Council and for customer feedback to be better captured.
- 4.3 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.

5. SCRUTINY INVOLVEMENT

- 5.1 This report highlights the importance of consistent reporting and recommends that an annual report is continued to be produced providing a summary of all activity for the year.
- 5.2 Members are now asked to consider and scrutinise the inaugural Annual Report relating to the operation and effectiveness of the CFS between April 1st 2019 and March 31st 2020, annexed at Appendix 1 to the report.
- 5.3 Members are also asked to consider the appropriate level of reporting and make recommendations to Cabinet, prior to its consideration of the inaugural Annual Report, 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.

- 5.4 It is proposed that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee receive future reports in respect of the CFS in order that feedback can be provided to the Cabinet thus ensuring that the proposals for improvement are being promoted by Scrutiny. It is recommended that the work programme reflect this additional item going forward.

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Equality and diversity implications will be considered as part of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee's feedback and comments and any subsequent implementation arrangements.

7. FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Financial and resource implications will be considered as part of any feedback and subsequent implementation arrangements.

8. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT

- 8.1 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

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

as amended by

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS:

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 18th JANUARY 2021

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS & INTERIM HEAD OF
DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

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