

MEETING	Audit and Governance Committee
DATE	28 November 2024
TITLE	Annual Complaints and Service Improvement Report 2023/24
PURPOSE	Updating the Committee on the content of the Ombudsman’s Annual Letter and the Council’s arrangements for dealing with Complaints
AUTHOR	Ian Jones, Head of Corporate Services Department

1. Decision sought

Accept the report and provide any comments or recommendations regarding the complaints system which results from receiving the Annual Letter of the Ombudsman for Wales for the year 2023/24.

2. Introduction and Context

The purpose of the report is to present the comments of the Ombudsman for Wales on the Council’s arrangements and performance in relation to handling complaints and improving services during 2023/24, highlighting successes, challenges, and developments.

An analysis of quantitative and qualitative data is presented in the letter for information, and which demonstrates the Council’s performance in this context.

The Committee is asked to approve the report and offer any relevant comments or suggestions.

In accordance with Statutory and Non-statutory Guidelines for Principal Councils in Wales – substantive provision in the Local Government Act 2000, Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 and the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 published in June 2023 the Committee are required to ensure that there are effective arrangements for dealing with complaints within the Council.

It should be noted that it is not the role of the Committee to consider whether individual complaints have been dealt with appropriately, but rather to assess the effectiveness of the complaints process. As a result, there is no reference in this report to any individual complaint or departmental performance within the Council.

This report is therefore, presented as a basis for the Committee to conclude on how well those arrangements are.

For the Committee’s information, there has been no change in the procedure or the Concerns and Complaints Policy during 2023/24 therefore, the contents of the Ombudsman’s letter, is based on the Policy adopted by the Council in 2021.

The Committee is invited to consider the information presented and offer any relevant comments or suggestions.

3. Ombudsman's Annual Letter

The Ombudsman's Annual Letter was not received 9th September. The letter is attached for your attention. I would like to highlight some comments and recommendations made by the Ombudsman.

“I would encourage Cyngor Gwynedd, and specifically your Audit and Governance Committee, to use this data to better understand your performance on complaints and consider how well good complaints handling is embedded throughout the Authority.

Further to this letter can I ask that your Council takes the following actions:

- Present my Annual Letter to the Cabinet and to the Governance and Audit Committee at the next available opportunity and notify me when these meeting will take place.
- Consider the data in this letter, alongside your own data, to understand more about your performance on complaints, including any problems or trends and your organisation's compliance with recommendations made by my Office.
- Inform me of the outcome of the Council's considerations and proposed actions on the above matters at the earliest opportunity.”

We will be reporting back to the Ombudsman on when the Letter was presented to the Cabinet and to the Governance and Audit Committee.

We will continue to engage with the Ombudsman and their Complaints Standards work, fully implement the exemplary policy and provide accurate and timely complaints data. Any Training they offer will be offered and promoted by us.

List of Attachments

Attachment 1 Ombudsman's Annual Letter for 2023/24