Cyd-bwyllgor Corfforedig
De-orllewin Cymru
South West Wales
Corporate Joint Committee

South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee (SWWCJC)

Comments, Compliments & Complaints Policy (Version 002)

Cyngor Abertawe Swansea Council
Cyngor Sir Gâr Carmarthenshire County Council
Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot Neath Port Talbot Council
Parc Cenedlaethol Arfordir Penfro Pembrokeshire Coast National Park
Bannau Brycheiniog

Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn Cymraeg
This document is also available in Welsh

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1. Introduction

The South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee considers all comments, compliments and complaints received as an invaluable source of information about the services we provide.

Our aims are:

- to make it easy to complain when a service has not been good enough
- to settle complaints to the satisfaction of the public wherever reasonably possible and to fully explain the reasons for the situation where it isn't
- to learn from comments, compliments and complaints to help identify improvements and provide better practice in service delivery; and
- to use comments, compliments and complaints information to monitor the effectiveness of the Corporate Joint Committee's policies.

2. Comments and Compliments

Comments and compliments are welcomed and appreciated as they provide an indication of how we are performing. Additionally, suggestions and ideas you provide are important in terms of improving customer care, service quality and staff morale.

Comments may be suggestions as to how services could be improved, and these should be considered by the service concerned. They may be views or representations, perhaps adverse, about the Corporate Joint Committee's policy and provision.

Compliments are particularly appreciated as they provide confirmation that the Corporate Joint Committee and its employees provide services which meet or exceed expectations.

If you would like to provide any comments or compliments, please use Section E of the Comments, Compliments and Complaints form or email us at info@southwestcjc.gov.wales .

3. Complaints

South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee is committed to dealing effectively with any concerns or complaints about our services. In this policy the term "complaint" refers to a concern or a complaint.

We aim to clarify any issues you may be unsure about. If possible, we will put right any mistakes we may have made. We will provide any service you are entitled to which we have failed to deliver.
If we did something wrong, we will apologise and, where possible, try to put things right for you. We aim to learn from our mistakes and use the information we gain from complaints to improve our services.

3.1 Defining a Complaint

If you are approaching us to request a service for the first time (e.g. reporting a faulty street light, or requesting an appointment) this policy does not apply.

You should first give the relevant service a chance to respond to your request for service.

3.2 When to use this policy

If you receive a service or make a request for a service and then are not happy with our response, you will be able to make your complaint known as described below.

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 complaint, we will explain to you how you can appeal.

This policy does not apply to data access issues.

3.3 How to complain

You can make a complaint in any of the following ways:

- Website: https://southwestcjc.gov.wales
- Email: **info@southwestcjc.gov.wales**
- Write us a letter and post to:

  FAO Monitoring Officer
  South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee
  Care of
  Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council
  Civic Centre
  Port Talbot
  SA13 1PJ

- Ask for a copy of our Complaints Form from the person you are already dealing with. Tell them that you want us to deal with your complaint formally.

You can make a complaint in whatever format (large print, Braille, on tape or disc) or language you wish.

We welcome complaints in Welsh and will deal with Welsh and English complaints to the same standards and timescales.

Copies of the Comments Compliments and Complaints Policy and forms are available in English and Welsh and can also be made available in other languages. Formats such as audio, Braille or large print also be provided if required.

3.4 Stage 1 Complaint: Informal resolution

We believe it's best to deal with things straight away.

If you have a concern, please raise it with the person you're dealing with. They will try to resolve it for you there and then. If there are any lessons to learn from addressing your concern, the person you're dealing with will draw them to the attention of the relevant complaints officer.

If the person you're dealing with can't help, they will explain why and you can then ask for a formal investigation.

In most cases, an officer will provide a response to your complaint within 10 working days. Where this is not possible before the response deadline, you will be informed in writing of the reason for the delay, together with the date you can expect to receive a full response.

If you are dissatisfied with the service / service area response, you can then ask for a formal investigation.

The Corporate Joint Committee has the discretion to go straight to a Stage 2 Complaint: Formal Investigation and you will be advised at the earliest opportunity.

3.5 Stage 2 Complaint: Formal Investigation

A Stage 2 investigation can be undertaken if you have not received a response at Stage 1, are not happy with the response received or think your complaint has not been considered properly.

At Stage 2 it would be helpful if you could provide some information on the issues with which you remain unhappy, the reasons why you think these issues were not properly addressed at Stage 1 as well as any details of the outcome you are hoping for.

You will receive an acknowledgment of your Stage 2 complaint within 5 working days.

The Chief Operating Officer, S151 Officer or Monitoring Officer for the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee will undertake the investigation which will include a review of all relevant correspondence and often incorporate discussions with yourself and relevant officers to enable a fuller response to be provided.

Usually, a response to your complaint will be provided within 20 working days. Where this is not possible you will be informed in writing of the reason for the delay before the response deadline, together with the date you can expect to receive a full response.

When you receive the outcome, you will also receive an equalities monitoring form which we ask you to complete and return to us to help us to make sure that no-one is discriminated against when accessing our services and to ensure everyone is treated fairly and equally.

3.6 Welsh Language Complaints

Complaints relating to the Welsh language or to compliance with the Welsh language service delivery and policy standards, as applied to the Corporate Joint Committee, will be dealt with in the same way as any other complaints received and will be responded to in accordance with the Welsh language standards.

Staff are aware of the requirements of the standards with training sessions provided as part of the induction process and periodic awareness raising campaigns.

Complaints relating to the receipt of an unsatisfactory service, where it is considered the Corporate Joint Committee has treated the Welsh language less favourably than the English language or where there is a claim of interference with your freedom to use Welsh can also be directed to the Welsh Language Commissioner:

Welsh Language Commissioner
Market Chambers
5–7 St Mary Street
Cardiff
CF10 1AT
Phone: 0345 6033 221

E-mail: post@welshlanguagecommissioner.wales

Complaints received via the Welsh Language Commissioner will be dealt in accordance with the Commissioner's own complaints process.

3.7 Dealing with your complaint (Stage 2)

We will respond to you in the same way as you communicated with us (e.g. if you complained by email in Welsh, we would respond to you by email in Welsh) unless you inform us that you have particular requirements.

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 need documents in large type.

We will deal with your complaint in an open and honest way and we will make sure that your dealings with us in the future do not suffer just because you have made a complaint.

Normally, we will only be able to look at your complaint if you tell us about it within 6 months. This is because it's better to look into a complaint while the issues are still fresh in everyone's mind.

In exceptional circumstances, we may look at complaints which are brought to our attention later than this. However, you will have to let us know 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 enable us to consider it properly.

If you are making a complaint on behalf of somebody else, we will need their agreement for you to act on their behalf. This can be done by completing the Representative Authorisation Form included in this policy.

3.8 Investigation of Complaints

In certain cases we may appoint an independent investigator.

The person who is investigating your complaint will firstly aim to establish the facts. The extent of the investigation will depend on the complexity of the issues you have raised. In some instances, we may ask to meet with you to discuss your complaint. Occasionally, we might suggest mediation or another method to try to resolve disputes. We'll look at relevant evidence which could include files, notes of conversations, letters, emails or whatever may be relevant to your particular complaint. If necessary, we'll talk to the staff or others involved and look at our policies, any legal entitlement and guidance.

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 is important that you tell us. Where it is necessary to disclose your identity to another person in order to investigate the complaint then it is important that you tell us if you do not want this to

happen. Depending on the nature of your complaint it may be necessary to obtain your permission to access your personal records. If permission is not provided then we will explain that this will have an effect on the ability to conduct a thorough investigation.

We will set out our understanding of your complaint and ask you to confirm that we are right. It would be helpful if you could tell us what outcome you're hoping for.

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 rather than investigate.

We will aim to resolve complaints 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.

3.9 What if there is more than one body involved

If your complaint involves more than one body (e.g. a local authority and the Corporate Joint Committee) we will work with them to decide who should take the lead in dealing with your complaint and you will then be given the name of that person.

If the complaint is about a body working on our behalf (e.g. a company contracted by the Corporate Joint Committee), you may wish to raise the matter informally with them first. However, if you want to complain formally, we will look into this ourselves and respond to you.

3.10 Outcome of your complaint

If we formally investigate your complaint, we will let you know what we find using the communication method agreed. If necessary, we will produce a longer report. We'll explain how and why we came to our conclusions.

If we find that the service department got it wrong, we'll tell you what went wrong and why it happened.

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 for it.

3.11 Putting Things Right

If we didn't provide you with a service you should have had, we'll aim to provide it as soon as practicable if that is 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 will usually aim to put you back in the position you would have been in if we had got it right.

3.12 Learning lessons

We take your complaints seriously and try to learn from any mistakes we've made.

The Corporate Joint Committee consider a summary of all complaints twice a year and a detailed annual complaints report.

We share summary (anonymised) information on complaints received and outcomes with the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales as part of our commitment to accountability and learning.

Where there is a need for significant change, the service / service area will develop an action plan setting out what they will do, who will do it and when we plan to do it.

3.13 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 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 when we find that someone's actions are unacceptable.

4. If you need further help

Our staff will aim to help you make your concerns known. If you need extra assistance, we will try to put you in touch with someone who can help.

If you have a disability which may make it difficult for you to communicate with us please let us know what would help us overcome any barriers you may face (e.g. large font, more time to respond, different coloured paper)

This complaints policy can be used by everyone but if you are under the age of 18 and need help you can contact the Meic helpline

- Phone 0808 802 3456
- Website www.meiccymru.org

or the Children's Commissioner for Wales:

- Phone 01792 765600
- Email post@childcomwales.org.uk
- Website www.childcomwales.org.uk

4.1 The Public Service Ombudsman for Wales

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 public bodies and can look into your complaint if you believe that you, 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 service provider.
- Have been disadvantaged personally by a service failure or have been treated unfairly.

The Ombudsman normally 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
- Email: ask@ombudsman.wales
- Website: www.ombudsman.wales
- Post: Public Services Ombudsman for Wales
  1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae,
  Pencoed CF35 5LJ

There are also other organisations that consider complaints. We can advise you about such organisations.

5. Comments Compliment and Complaints Form

Please Note:

If you are filling this form in on behalf of someone else, please also complete Section B. The person you are complaining on behalf of should complete the Representative Authorisation form (Section C) to confirm that you have the authority to act their behalf.

Section A: Your details

Name of the section/service/person the complaint is about:

Title: Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms (if other please state)	
Last name:	
Forename(s):	
Please indicate which of the following is your preferred method of communication	
Address and postcode:	
Daytime contact number:	
Mobile contact number:	
Email address:	

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 can help you.

Section B: Making a complaint on behalf of someone else:

Their name in full:	
Their address and postcode:	
What is your relationship to them?	
Why are you making a complaint on their behalf?	

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Section C: Representative Authorisation

I ……..... (please insert full name of complainant)

of…….(please insert full address of complainant)

Confirm that I have authorised:

…….. (please insert the full name of the person who is submitting a complaint on your behalf)

to submit a complaint with the Corporate Joint Committee about

…….

……..

…….

and understand that my representative may receive personal information relating to my complaint as part of the Corporate Joint Committee's response.

Signed…….

Date……..

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Section D: About your complaint

(Please continue your answers to the following questions on a separate sheet(s) if necessary).

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

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

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

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

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

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

7. If it is more than six months since you first became aware of the problem, please say why you have not complained before now:

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

Signature:

Date:

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Section E: Comment and Compliment Form

Please provide details of your compliment or comment below

Thank you for providing this information.

When completed, please:

- post to:

  FAO Monitoring Officer
  South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee
  Care of
  Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council
  Civic Centre
  Port Talbot
  SA13 1PJ

- e-mail it back to the officer who sent the information to you.