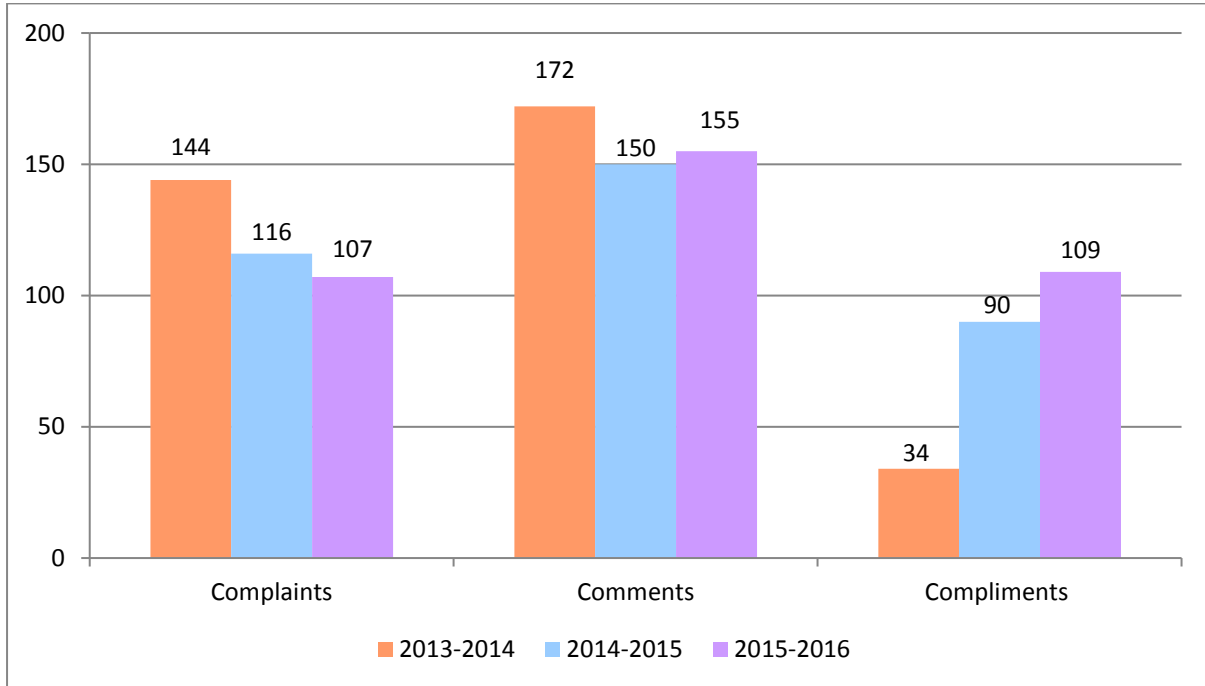




Whole Authority Customer Feedback and FOIA Statistics

April 2015 – March 2016



Complaints

- 107 Complaints received

Stage 1 - Informal Resolution

- 103 Complaints started

Stage 2 – Formal Investigation

- 7 Complaints received
- 6 Complaints started
 - 1 complaint proceeded straight to stage 2 (from 2014-2015)
 - 2 escalated to stage 2
 - 3 proceeded straight to Stage 2

Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

Of the above 6 formal complaints started, 1 complainant went directly to the PSOW. He referred them to us for subsequent investigation

1 complainant progressed their complaint to the PSOW after formal investigation. The PSOW did not investigate their complaint.

Complaints: Examples of most common aspects of services complained about:

- **Waste & Recycling**

Rubbish left on driveway; missed bin collections; bins only being partially emptied; non collection of yellow bags; only received one grey bag collection in 3 months; assisted waste - not collected again. Promises to look into matters but nothing done; no return calls; not given adequate notice/not informed of changes to the waste collection service; waste not collected although purchased a permit; brown bags not received; fourth time complaining that refuse has not been collected; food waste left on pavement; staff behaviour.

Highways

Traffic calming proposal at Shirenewton; lack of response to emails/communication issues; loss of earnings due to wrong signage; traffic safety issues at Wonastow Road Industrial Estate; alleged danger to the public at Wye Bridge, Monmouth; issues about a new Welsh name being assigned to Llanelly Hill; issues about a solar cable route; state of lanes.

- **Development Control**

Alleged handling of serious breach of planning conditions; lack of response to consultation letters; issues about interpretation of permitted development rights to erect a lean-to side extension.

- **Revenue & Benefits / Council Tax**

Lack of response to correspondence; time taken for refund of pre application numerous requests to amend details for council tax demands; lack of response to queries; issues related to alleged outstanding council tax

- **Passenger Transport**

Issues about providing inaccurate information; taxi not arrived at school to collect child; communication regarding transport for child; conduct of taxi driver; difficulties with transport; issues about concerns not being taken seriously; issues about service received from department; issues regarding Grass Routes service; bus driving issues

Facilities Management

Noise of work being undertaken in the grounds of Thornwell Primary school, no adherence to assurance given that no work on Saturdays and starting time at 8am Monday to Friday - JCB started at 6.50am on a Saturday morning. Staff behaviour and incident which occurred at public toilet; appalling school Christmas dinners; standard of school meals / issues with school meals and service.

- **Estates**

That consideration wasn't given to neighbours during the development at Ty Mawr Gilwern. Lack of communication regarding the development. Damage

caused to fence due to horses. Allocation of stalls for the flea market. Market trader feels she is being singled out at Market. Staff conduct; issues about the way the allotments are running.

- **Leisure**

Misrepresentation of advertisement that swimming was free for under 16's with a Reach card. Opening times of the bar café. Issues with vending machine. No response to comments left in comments box. Left voicemail messages over three weeks with no returned calls; Given wrong email address, tried another but no response received.

- **Others**

Communication and road closure for the Velothon; feels Trading Standards have not dealt with matter appropriately; complainant feels they are being victimised by the licensing committee; Privacy issues when dealing with matters at the front of The Hub/Library. Malfunctioning of the planning portal.

Stage 2 Formal Investigations

1. Inadequate road signage for concealed entrance and blind bend. Visibility of oncoming traffic on blind bend is further impaired by signage and tree overgrowth

Issues about planning permission to create a rear vehicle access from an unadopted lane.

Alleged failure to give adequate explanation or communication of amendments to proposed development which resulted in properties overlooking complainant's rear garden and to the side of their house.

One element of the complaint was upheld and two were not upheld.

2. Issues about appropriate support and flexibility provided to ensure the successful completion of an external training placement.

The complaint was not upheld.

3. Issues about security measures regarding the gates at Mill Lane Depot. An explanation of the planning approval granted to the depot and why it appears to differ from those applied to residential properties.

The complaints were not upheld.

4. Issues about a lean-to side extension recently built at a neighbour's property was done so without planning permission since the structure is not categorised as permitted development.

The complaint was not upheld.

5. Allegation that the market trader was singled out unfairly.

The complaint was not upheld.

6. That the Council had displayed a lax attitude towards the complainant and his business; that repeated phone calls and messages were ignored ; that the signage was wrong

One element was upheld, one partially upheld and one not upheld.

Note: Social Services complaints are dealt with separately under the Social Services complaints procedure. **43** complaints were received, **82** comments and **139** compliments were made about the service.

Distribution YTD

	Total	Access to Service	Communication Issue	Data Protection	Decision Delay	Discrimination	Member Conduct	Quality of Service	Quality of Works	Reduction in Service	Result of Process	Service Delayed	Service not provided	Service Removed	Staff Conduct	Timescales
Overall Total	107															
Revenue and benefits, systems, council tax	5		2					3								
Total Finance	5															
Local Democracy	2							1							1	
Partnerships, Policy and Performance and Communication & Engagement	1		1													
Public protection	4					1		2							1	
Total Chief Executive	7															
Environment and Contact	37		4					29	1		1				2	
Highways	12							12								
Property Services	9		2					5							2	
Passenger Transport	10							8							2	
Total Operations	68															
Development Management	5							3			2					
Digital Projects	1							1								
People Services	1		1													
Estates / sustainability	6					1		2		1					2	
Housing	3							1							2	
Hubs	2							2								

Leisure	4	1					2					1			
Total Enterprise	22														
Total CYP	0														
External	1						1								
Not allocated to a SIP	4	4													

Comments

- 155 Comments

Total	155
Chief Executive	101
Environment & Contact	37
Health & Safety	1
Highways	28
Legal Services	1
Local Democracy	2
Operations not allocated	1
Partnerships, Policy and Performance and Communication & Engagement	6
Passenger Transport	5
Property Services	6
Public Protection	6
Registrars	2
Revenue and benefits, systems, council tax	5
Transport	1
Enterprise	41
Countryside	1
Development Management	1
Enterprise	3
Estates & Sustainability	4
Hub	26
Leisure	2
Museums	1
Tourism/Events	3
External	10
Not allocated to any SIP	1
General – covers all of MCC	2

A selection of comments received concerned:

- Organisation and closure of road for Velothon
- Website:
 - ❖ Links not working on the website
 - ❖ Couldn't find way to app/uploads on the MCC website.
 - ❖ Cannot access alerts and the local planning application, plus maps is not working.
 - ❖ The "report it" form on the website is very difficult to complete and send successfully.
 - ❖ Difficulties making payments on line
- Issues around postal votes for the Election
- Sunrise Celebration Festival due to be held at Chepstow Racecourse was cancelled - concerns over noise levels
- Dog fouling and further bins needed

- Concerns over safety at the funfair operating in the Fairfield car park Abergavenny
- Increase in Council tax
- Awful state of public toilets around Monmouthshire
- Disappointment with choice of menus at primary schools
- Waste & Recycling:
 - ❖ Bags/food bins not collected; concerns with nappy collection; poor quality of waste bags; rubbish bags abandoned outside businesses in Chepstow
- No street lighting from midnight to 5am; broken street lights
- Traffic disruption and congestion at Tutshill.
- Speed limit/speeding/parking on double yellow lines/limited on road parking - Grosvenor Road, Abergavenny. Believes traffic calming/accident prevention measures should be provided.
- Wye Bridge repairs starting when all the schoolchildren have returned to school
- Overgrown hedges
- Transport:
 - ❖ Reckless driving; school bus failed to turn up; bus shelters – dirty/broken windows, missing timetables. Alleged dangerous driving of taxi
- Issues concerning cemeteries – burials and plots
- Community Hubs:
 - ❖ Issues with untagged books; lack of privacy at front desk; dislike of music playing;
- Leisure Centres:
 - ❖ Issues with payments; swimming lessons – different instructors;
- Poor CCTV
- Noise caused by works carried out on site

Compliments

- 109 Compliments

Total	109
Chief Executive	58
Building Control	13
Customer Relations	2
Emergency Planning	2
Environment and Contact	7
Highways	9
Internal Audit	1
Passenger Transport	1
Property Services	1
Public Protection	6
Registrars	11
Revenue and benefits, systems, council tax	1

Transport	3
Operations not allocated	1
Enterprise	21
Development Management	2
Enterprise	1
Estates & Sustainability	1
Housing	5
Hub	9
Museums	1
Whole Place	2
Children & Young People	3
Access Unit	1
Additional Learning Needs and Special Learning Needs service	2
Not allocated to any SIP	27

A selection of compliments received:

A range of compliments about the whole of the Council was received – staff thanked for their professionalism, their quick responses, their efficiency and helpful service.

Some examples:

- Thank you for forwarding my concerns of both A472 at Usk a pot hole and the signs at Aberbaiden roundabout, as usual within a very short period these matters were resolved.
- Big thank you to the Highways department for repairing our road on the approach to Llandegveth Village. It has made a huge difference.
- Thank you so much for organising the repair of the pot holes today. Your speedy response to this problem is greatly appreciated. Thanks for emergency repairs to potholes
- Large number of compliments where people wanted to record their thanks to all those who organised, managed and supported the Velothon Wales event. It was a credit to the communities, South Wales and Wales as a whole.
- Registrars: many compliments about staff being helpful and courteous at ceremonies. Everything was professional.
- Council tax staff were very helpful when dealing with gentleman's arrears. They saved him a lot of stress and anguish and put his mind at ease at a difficult time.
- Building Control received numerous compliments on completion certificates for prompt, professional responses.
- Finance staff complimented for Governance and Financial training for Community Councils
- Compliments about Waste/Refuse service – prompt response in helping to get it sorted.
- Community Hubs: - compliments about helpful, welcoming and accommodating staff
- A number of thanks to grounds maintenance staff who cut hedgerows

- Thanks to staff who gave up their time to give a presentation on MCC's economic policy.

Response Timescales

Our policy for responding to complaints at stage 1 is **10 working days** and for stage 2 formal investigation is **20 working days** plus a further 10 working days for Heads of Service to respond.

Whole Authority Timescales	2014/2015		2015/16	
	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 1	Stage 2
Up to 10 working days	68	1	78	0
11 – 25 working days	23	7	18	1
25+ working days	9	17	7	5
Total	100	25	103	6

Requests for service

These are recorded and acted upon.

Total	18
Chief Executive	10
Environment and Contact	5
Highways	1
Public protection	3
Transport	1
Enterprise	5
Development Management	3
Housing	1
Leisure	1
External	2
Not allocated to any SIP	1

Analysis of Complaints / Comments

Year	Stage 1 complaints	Stage 2 complaints	Comments	Compliments
2015-16	103	6	155	109
2014-15	100	25	150	90
2013-14	134	16	172	34
2012-13	106	18	83	50
2011-12	82	25	45	37

Service improvements

Complaints are generally resolved on an individual basis. Most formal investigation reports make recommendations for improvements to processes. These are followed up to ensure the recommendations are addressed.

Here are some examples where recommendations have been made for changes to practices / processes / procedures, as a result of people making complaints.

Communications Issues

- Apologies given where appropriate

Highways / Projects

- The developer is requested to fit adequate road signage that would meet best practice guidelines, including road markings to indicate SLOW DOWN, signage to show blind bend and concealed entrance.
- The speed limit sign at the entrance to Crawshay Bailey Close is resited to the junction adjoining Ty Mawr Lane.
- The landowner asked to co-operate in maintaining overgrown trees to aid visibility
- The sign next to Oak Tree Lane is re-sited to aid visibility
- The standard procedure of providing frontagers to works with letters giving details of the works including traffic management arrangements and contact numbers should frontagers have any queries should in all cases be adhered to.

Grounds Maintenance

Mill Lane Depot - When the gates are open they should be secured in the anchor points. The area around the anchor points should be clear of obstructions.

Staff accessing the depot should be instructed to ensure the anchor points are used for the gate bolts when the gates are in the open or closed positions.

Markets

A mechanism for dispute resolution be developed and incorporated within the market regulations to deal with future complaints.

Training placement

Due to the placement proving a challenge in terms of work/life balance, it is recommended that all parties involved continue to offer appropriate support and flexibility as required to ensure the successful completion of the placement.

Commentary

We strive to have customer services at the heart of everything we do. There are times however when we will not always get things right and we fall short of the standard of service we want to deliver.

When customers are unhappy with an aspect of service we have provided, they want to be heard, they want the issue dealt with quickly and for the solution to be effective. In handling complaints from customers we aim to be customer and outcome focused,

to make it easier for people to let us know they are unhappy and for us to inform them what we are doing to resolve their issues

The number of complaints dealt with under the Whole Authority complaints procedure have gone down slightly this year. However, stage 2 complaints have decreased significantly; we dealt with 6 formal complaints whereas the previous year we dealt with 25 formal complaints. Out of the 6 complaints received, 4 of them wanted to proceed directly to stage 2 and a formal investigation undertaken without trying to find an informal resolution to their problems.

On a positive note, compliments rose, generally because people were grateful that we dealt with matters quickly.

We still receive a fair number of enquiries about issues across the Authority and earlier intervention and staff engaging directly with customers solves problems straight away, reducing the level of complaints received.

Enquiries are contacts made by potential complainants asking about the service provided. Where appropriate we try to resolve the problem at an enquiry stage without taking the matter forward as a formal complaint.

Customer feedback also allows us to continue to inform and improve the way we handle complaints.

Annette Evans, Customer Relations Manager

July 2016

Freedom of Information and Environmental Information Regulations

Activity Report 1st April 2015 to 31st March 2016

	2015-16	2014-15	
Requests received:	1061	1002	Increase over 2014-15 = 6%
Requests closed:	1057	1023	
Requests closed on time:	98%	95%	

Requests under Fol and EIR are not segregated, and figures include both.

Main focus of request	Received	% Closed in 20 Working Days
Chief Executive	678	99%
Enterprise	204	97%
Social Care & Health	100	97%
Children & Young People	79	92%
Total MCC	1061	98%

Note: Distribution by Department is not precise due to the cross-functional nature of many requests. Department headings were those in use for most of the year.

Most common sources (stated or interpreted)

Commercial	39%
Press – Other than local paper	17%
Campaigner	15%
Local Resident	11%
Political researchers	10%
Press - Local	2%
All others	6%

Most common subjects (broad categorisation)

Social Care	112
CT/NNDR	102
Procurement/Contracts	98
HR & Staffing	85
Educational matters	75
Highways	72
Public Health	52
Processes & Services	52
Intestate deaths & PH funerals	48
Housing	47
Assets & equipment	46
IT & Software	37
Planning	36
Financial information	32
Trading Standards/Animal Health	27
Licensing	22
Structures/Contacts	20
Waste & Recycling	18
Parking	17
Members & Electoral matters	16
Compensation	11

Target for percentage closed in 20 Working Days

A target of 90% has been retained.

Trends over time

The number of requests received has grown every year since FoI came into force on 1st January 2005, and the trend continues. This is common to the public sector in general and is not Monmouthshire specific. Up to the end of 2015-16, the Council has received 6206 requests.

The number of requests received by Monmouthshire in each financial year is as follows:

2004-05 (3 months only)	31	
2005-06	135	
2006-07	118	(believed that some records are missing)
2007-08	172	
2008-09	305	
2009-10	421	
2010-11	609	
2011-12	662	
2012-13	780	
2013-14	918	
2014-15	1002	
2015-16	1061	