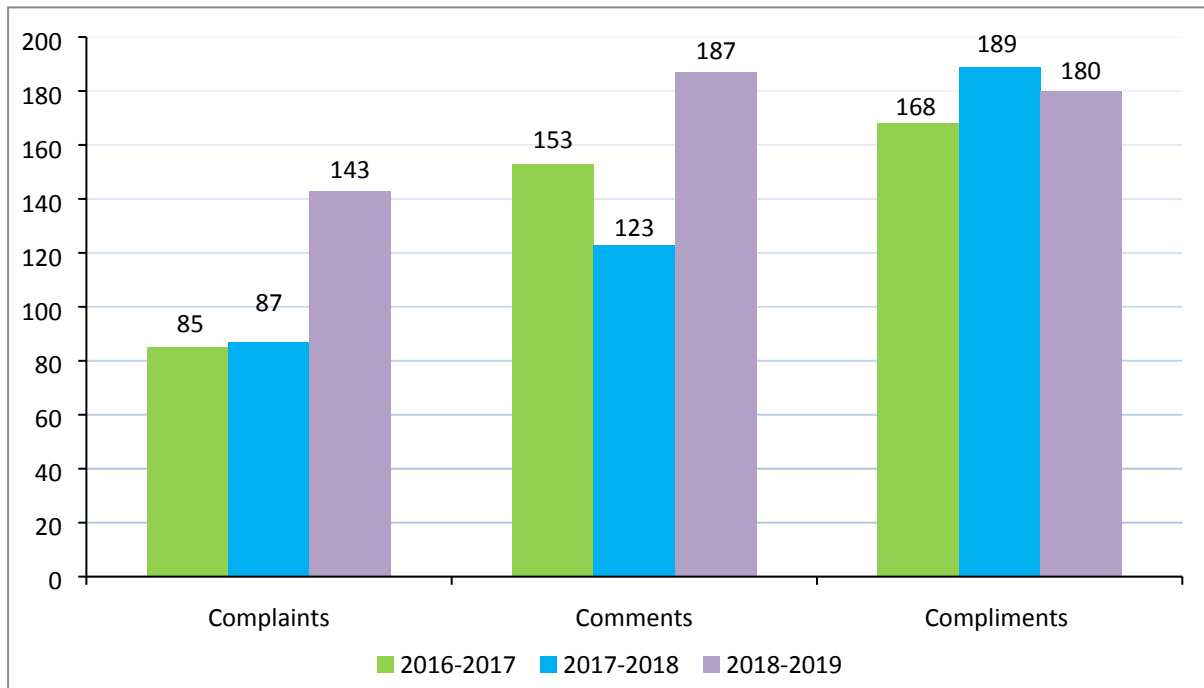




Whole Authority Customer Feedback

April 2018 – March 2019



Complaints

- 143 Complaints received

Stage 1 - Informal Resolution

- 132 Complaints started

Stage 2 – Formal Investigation

- 14 Formal complaints
 - 5 escalated
 - 9 new

Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

Of the above formal complaints received, 1 complainant went directly to the PSOW. He referred it back to us for subsequent investigation.

2 complainants progressed their complaint to the PSOW after formal investigation. The PSOW did not investigate their complaints.

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

Waste & Street Services

- Missed bin and food waste collections; irregularity of collections.
- Accessibility of disposing waste at Usk refuse centre.
- Hedges / verges not being cut.
- Staff conduct; communication with the department.

Highways

- Poor communication and responses from department.
- Issues with pothole repairs.
- Issues with street lighting.
- Staff conduct.
- Issues regarding removal of A boards.
- Issues concerning street naming and numbering.
- Inadequate fencing issues

Passenger Transport

- Buses not operating, late / not arrived.
- Issues with bus route.
- Lack of communication; issues with school transport.

Development Management

- Enforcement issues;
- Concerns regarding objection to planning amendments;
- Communication issues;
- Unhappy with the way planning applications administered;
- Issues with planning consent / notice given.

Community Hubs

- Unhappy with withdrawal of online Oxford Dictionary;
- Staff conduct;
- Access arrangements to the Hub;
- Service provided by mobile library;
- State of toilet at the Hub;
- Alleged incorrect information provided.

Others

- Issues concerning the Cider festival
- General lack of response from various sections of the Council either by phone or email
- Staff conduct
- Issues regarding Blue badges
- Issues with Council tax demands for payment

- Issues with home improvement process
- School meals
- Caldicot fireworks event
- Issues regarding grave in graveyard

Stage 2 Formal Investigations concerned matters relating to:

- The handling of planning applications and associated matters for the development of a new dwelling noise and disturbance during construction, and response to initial contact with the department raising concerns.

An element of the complaint was upheld.

- Correct process was not followed in relation to planning decision for new housing development in Raglan

6 elements of the complaint were not upheld and 2 were.

- A complaint was made regarding electoral registration, however the complainant did not progress the matter.
- A complaint was made regarding issues concerning a planning application concerning the siting of huts, however the complainant did not progress the matter.

- Alleged unprofessionalism of staff.

Complaint not upheld.

- Issues between a new contractor taking over premises and existing service.

Complaint not upheld.

- Issues concerning right of way and turning bay.

Complaint not upheld.

- Issues concerning free home to school transport

Complaint not upheld.

- Alleged poor service and request for financial recompense.

Complaint partially upheld.

- Complaint about the blue badge scheme

Complaint withdrawn.

- Issues concerning not being able to sell programmes / tickets at the Borough theatre

Complaint not upheld.

- Issues concerning financial assistance for home adaptations.

Complaint partially upheld.

- Issues concerning equal opportunities at leisure centre facilities

Complaint not upheld.

- Enforcement issues regarding an extension to building

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

Note: Social Services complaints are dealt with separately under the Social Services complaints procedure. **51** complaints were received, **90** comments and **150** 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	143	5	23	1		1	1	67	3	1	11		1		29	
Customer Relations																
Estates and Sustainability								3							2	
People Services															1	
Registrars																
Revenues, Systems & Exchequer			3												1	
Total Resources	10		3					3							4	
Highways			13					9	1						2	
Property Services – Maintenance																
Passenger Transport Unit		1	3					6			2				5	
Transport								1							1	
Waste and Street Services			2					27	1						8	
Operations not allocated								1							1	
Total Operations	84	1	18					44	2		2				17	
Attractions – Caldicot Castle																
Community Hubs, Contact Centre and Community Learning		3						3		1	1		1		2	
Countryside																
Development Management and Planning Policy								8			6					
Housing and Communities			1					1	1						1	
Leisure						1		1			1				2	
Local Democracy				1			1									

Monmouthshire Business, Youth Enterprise & RDP		1						1							
Tourism								1						3	
Enterprise not allocated								1			1				
Total Enterprise	44	4	1	1	1	1	16	1	1	9	1	1	8		
Environmental Health – Public Health								1							
Registrars								1							
Total Social Care and Health	2						2								
Additional Learning Needs and Special Learning Needs Service								1							
Pupil Referral and Inclusion Service								1							
Total CYP	2						2								
Total External	1		1												

Comments

- 187 Comments

Total	187
Resources	13
Digital and Technical Services	7
Estates and Sustainability	3
Revenues, Systems & Exchequer	3
Operations	124
Highways	18
Passenger Transport Unit	10
Transport	4
Waste and Street Services	92
Enterprise	20
Building Control	9
Communication	2
Community Hubs, Contact Centre & Community Learning	4
Green Infrastructure & Countryside	1
Housing and Communities	1
Leisure	2
Local Democracy	1
Social Care and Health	15
Environmental Health – Public Health	3
Registrars	12
External	12
Not allocated to any SIP	2
General – covers all of MCC	1

A selection of comments received concerned:

Registrars section: they send out a questionnaire after customers have received a service from them, therefore we do receive a substantial amount of comments and compliments about that service. A selection of them are below:

- The payment system that only postal orders are acceptable for a telephone request is outdated and the fact that if in person a card is used the cost is doubled to £20.
- Too many signs in no particular direction.
- I had to ring back twice to pay over the phone due to cut off times being different on different days which I found very weird.
- The building itself was clean, but a little non descript and clinical.
- The registrar was 25 minutes late for our 3pm wedding. They did not apologise to our waiting guests at the start of the ceremony, which I think was poor conduct.
- £20 for a single birth certificate is way too much money. Other Countries are offering certificates for free after sufficient identification checks.

Below are further comments received about the Council:

Contact Centre

- Length of time it's taken to get through to the Council on the phone.
- Not happy that there's only one contact number into the Council.
- Your queueing system should advise which number in the queue each person is, so that they can take an informed decision whether to hold on or not. Some helplines do this and this should reduce the length of the queue. Some warning is given to people joining the queue after a set time that their call may not be answered. To promise to answer all calls (especially those received close to closing time) is evidently not achievable.

Waste and Street Services

- So many comments about missed waste collections; stoppage of green waste over winter period; green waste not collected and that it is a payment service.
- Dog fouling issues
- Pet waste. What do we do with this now between December and March?
- Strongly object to paying £18 for the collection of grass cuttings after forking out over £2000 in Council Tax which itself has risen again.
- Recycling questionnaire. Email received from Mon CC today (31 Aug) mentioning it. First I've seen. Deadline was yesterday (30 Aug). Also, August when everyone is focused on holidays is not a great time to consult!
- Reported rubbish in the car park behind the OAP bungalows where person lives. Gentleman said that he tries to keep the area tidy and clears up the rubbish. Bags of rubbish that need collecting and he was told over a month ago that it would be but nothing has happened.
- It is extremely frustrating to visit the Mitchel Troy Recycling Centre and be repeatedly turned away because they are changing skips on site.

Highways

- Unwanted poorly marked speed humps in Newtown Road Penperlleni.
- A-board on Monnow Street sticks out too far for wheelchair to pass by and is too dark in colour to be easily seen due to visual impairment.
- Annoyed by the recent instruction to stop businesses in Church Street, Monmouth, putting signs, tables, etc outside their businesses. There is no need for this action to be taken, there is plenty of space and it is not a road but a traffic free area. You are trying to kill off a vibrant successful area, and will cause undue harm.
- Highways street lighting is completely blocked at night making path/road in complete darkness whilst walking up or down between Church and main road due to the overgrown tree in Llanellen.

- Speed of cars coming from Llanfoist to Abergavenny bridge – road outside Waitrose. Narrowly avoided getting hit by a car two days ago and again yesterday. Kerbs are getting damaged more and more.
- Street lighting issues since end of May 2018 and still not fixed at Miskin Court and Heronston Way Undy.
- The continuous use of Glascoed Lane via New Inn of HGV's contracted to BAE Systems, Glascoed. There is an almost daily routine of extremely large goods vehicles that are following Sat Nav from Newport M4 and being directed through New Inn.
- Not enough parking spaces in St Andrew's Crescent to supply parking for the amount of houses and flats in the area, people are struggling to park resulting in blocking other cars in or making it extremely hard to manoeuvre safely.

Building Control:

- The initial cost implication of the application for a project like this we felt was too high.
- Some timeliness factors around site visit that held up builders progressing with works that adversely effects the completion date.

Passenger Transport

- Issues with school transport allocation process.
- Issues with reduction of service of the Chepstow to Monmouth 69 service during the road works

Communication / Digital services

- Issues with links to website.
- Online processes and street light reporting, make online process suitable for use on mobile so it can be completed rather than laptop/PC.
- Why am I not able to access my Council Tax account online, to review payments made and manage payments to come. In the modern world we live in where everything from PAYE, NI, Utilities accounts being managed and accessed online why are the councils so far behind the times?
- Your street lighting form has adverts deliberately plastered across the "Submit" button to make it difficult for people to use it. This is unacceptable and no doubt illegal.

Estates

- Market - Abergavenny. Trader has set up large stall outside public display area in shop window and when the stalls are there the display space is obstructed.

Compliments

- 180 Compliments

Total	180
Resources	2
Customer Relations	1
Digital and Technical Services	1
Operations	28
Highways	18
Passenger Transport Unit	1
Transport	1
Waste and Street Services	8
Enterprise	126
Building Control	82
Communication	1
Community Hubs, Contact Centre & Community Learning	9
Development Management and Planning Policy	6
Housing and Communities	2
Leisure	9
Youth Service	17
Social Care and Health	22
Registrars	20
Safeguarding	2
External	1
General – covers all of MCC	1

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:

Building Control send out a questionnaire after providing a service and therefore a large number of compliments are received about their advice given and efficient service.

Registrars: many compliments about staff being helpful and courteous at ceremonies.

- Thank you for making the planning and day of our wedding so memorable and happy
- The staff were extremely helpful and provided excellent parking details and how to find the premises. Very helpful and certificate was issued within 10 mins of my arrival in reception.
- Fantastic service and lovely people.

- Your service via telephone was prompt, clear, very helpful. Next day delivery which was needed. Very impressed with your service. Thank you once again.

Highways

- Blocked Highway drains - great service and it's good to know that reports are acted upon.
- Pleased that MCC have now completed the surfacing in Welsh Street next to the Arch lights (and a bit in High St)
- The street light is now working in sync with the rest of the estate lighting, well done.
- To the team, road grader driver and pothole filling gang, thank you for doing such a clean and excellent job of grading and filling gullies in Nannies Lane, Penyclawd. It had been so bumpy and rutted.
- My thanks to you and your MCC Highways Cleaning Staff for clearing the autumnal debris away from the Chepstow Community Hospital A466 pedestrian crossing as requested and required.
- Fantastic job of keeping the roads clear of ice and snow your gritting crews have done.

Waste & Street Services

- First class job cutting the island area in St Marys Place, Llanfair Kilgeddin.
- A big thank you for cutting the overgrown grass verges. Thank you the service was brilliant.
- Thanks to the teams involved in tidying up the lanes and hedges. It looks much better and was very promptly attended too. Well done.
- Compliments to the council on a class leading recycling service and to add I am a firm believer in recycling my household waste.

Community Hubs

- Thank you all so much for your kind help, patience and understanding and at all times previously. Everyone is amazing and your assistance with such care to our community, myself and beyond is stellar, above and beyond I'd say.
- Big thank you to the library service which our parents have greatly valued over the last 40 years. Particularly in the later years as they became more infirm the library has been a lifeline.
- Called into one stop shop yesterday to report pot hole, the young gentleman who dealt with my complaint was brilliant.

Youth Service / Leisure

- Thank you for everything you have done and do for the awards.
- Just want to say a massive thank you for helping me achieve my Duke of Edinburgh awards. Yesterday made the hard work so worthwhile.
- Pupils who wouldn't normally take part in anything sports fully engaged. The organisation was great (in regards to the band system) and the event ran really smoothly.
- Our sincerest thanks for allowing the ladies from our Wellbeing group to join the Easyline group yesterday. It was already a busy class yet you still found the time to make our ladies feel totally at home and has inspired at least 4 of them to join the GP exercise referral scheme.
- Swift action by leisure centre staff saved a man's life after he collapsed following cardiac arrest while playing five-a-side football.
- Thank you for a great party on Saturday. We were very impressed with the sports coaching and keeping the children entertained the entire time and held their attention brilliantly. They thoroughly enjoyed it. We also had many compliments about the food.
- Really enjoyed summer camp, a big thank you to you and your crew.

Development Management & Planning Policy

- Thank you and the Monmouthshire planning team for your support throughout the application process. Very reassuring to see a professional and well managed planning team in action, especially when on occasions there are complex subjective responses to be resolved.
- Thank you for your professional help with our planning application to remove part of condition 3. I know that it is sometimes a thankless task with the planning team being stuck between a rock and a hard place.

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 to the report's findings.

Whole Authority Timescales	2017/18		2018/19	
	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 1	Stage2
Up to 10 working days	59	0	94	1*
11 – 30 working days	14	6	31	4
30+ working days	3	7	7	9
Total	76	13	132	14

*Received no further contact so complaint was closed

Requests for service

These are recorded and acted upon:

Total	21
Operations	11
Highways	3
Passenger Transport Unit	1
Waste and Street Services	7
Enterprise	6
Community Hubs, Contact Centre & Community Learning	1
Green Infrastructure and Countryside	3
Leisure	1
Policy and Performance	1
Social Care and Health	2
Environmental Health – Public Health	2
External	2

Analysis of Complaints / Comments

Year	Stage 1 complaints	Stage 2 complaints	Comments	Compliments
2018-19	132	14	187	180
2017-18	76	13	123	189
2016-17	79	11	153	168
2015-16	103	6	155	109
2014-15	100	25	150	90

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.

Apologies given where appropriate.

Improve internal and external communication, ensuring that when customers are promised something we see that through.

Officers to be reminded that they are responsible for checking voicemails left on their landline. If they are out of the office, then the voicemail message should provide an alternative contact number for the caller to follow up.

Remind teams of the importance in clarifying to customers when they can expect an officer to respond to any queries.

The data in this year's Joint Housing Land Availability study is checked for accuracy prior to publication.

Mediation is offered to all parties to try and move forward professionally

Complainant be advised to seek legal advice to determine and/or confirm whether she has private rights of access to the turning bay within the curtilage of her property.

Reiterate to crews the importance of updating the MCS system in a timely manner as to why rubbish was not collected e.g. no bags presented, contamination, excess bags etc.

Remind teams of the need to prioritise 'chasers' and highlighting any resource issues to a manager if they are unable to prioritise.

Review information on the Monmouthshire County Council website to ensure that there is clarity for our residents on how they can make requests regarding waste and street services – ie. blue bins need to be arranged by telephone or directly through the hubs.

When the Borough Theatre fully transfers back to MCC all staff should attend MCC induction.

Theatre Manager should ensure all policy and operating procedures are in place following transfer back to MCC and that staff are aware of those policies.

Theatre Manager should ensure that all hirers are aware of procedures eg. selling of raffle tickets etc. when hiring the Theatre

Ensure that clear processes and systems are put in place for the separation of an application of Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG), Housing Improvement Loan (HIL) and ENABLE funding.

Analysis is undertaken to establish the 'gap' between males and females participating in swimming / exercise within Monmouthshire to justify that the ladies only swimming sessions are needed in the future, and continues to support 'positive action' under the Equality Act.

To continue monitoring demand and ensuring that the swim programme adapts to changing needs and priorities.

Give consideration to how anonymous objectors can remain informed of development in relevant cases; if this is not practicable, to give consideration to how it can be made clear to objectors who wish to retain their anonymity that a possible consequence of this is that they may not be kept apprised of developments.

That the existing plans to revise the council's planning web pages are carried out swiftly in order to make the content more easily navigable for all interested parties.

Commentary

The Authority is provided with a wealth of information via complaints and customer comments; it's a missed opportunity if service areas don't act on the intelligence received through repeated enquiries, complaints and comments, to improve their services.

An important part of dealing with and resolving complaints are the lessons learned and the actions that have been agreed and implemented as a part of the resolution. There is a risk to our reputation if residents and the Public Services Ombudsman's office perceive that complaints are not taken seriously and dealt with appropriately.

Service areas should ensure that requested information is provided in a timely manner in order to avoid a complaint being made. We, the Customer Relations team, work closely with the service areas to prevent complaints escalating and becoming repetitious.

The increase in complaints and comments continues to be a challenge as this year complaints increased by 74 % and comments by 52 %. There's been a rise of 56 complaints and 64 comments this year.

Compliments have dipped slightly from 189 in 2017-18 to 180 this year.

We, the Customer Relations team, are receiving an increasing number of calls with enquiries about issues across the Authority which fall outside the definition of a complaint. Dealing with these calls can be resource intensive as they're often from people in the community who need assistance. Earlier intervention and staff engaging directly with customers solves problems straight away, reducing the level of complaints received.

Customer feedback is welcomed as it allows us to continue to inform and improve the way we handle complaints.

Annette Evans, Customer Relations Manager

July 2019