

**STATEMENT TO BE MADE BY
THE CHAIR OF THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE
ON TUESDAY 18TH MARCH 2025**

The Chair of the Public Accounts Committee regarding the Handling and Learning from Customer Feedback and Complaints (P.A.C.1/2025) Report.

Three years ago, almost exactly, in March 2022 the PAC published the “Performance Management” report which partly focused on how our Government processed feedback and complaints.

I remember it very well; I was also chair of the PAC then. It gives me great pleasure to be able to follow up on work I did at the previous term.

The Public Accounts Committee published a report last Friday into how the Government handles customer feedback and complaints.

We found that significant improvements have been made in terms of monitoring, analysing and evaluating feedback from Islanders who come into contact with Government departments and have also acknowledged the steps which have been taken to update the systems and processes for dealing with complaints.

The Committee has made a total of 28 key findings and ten recommendations.

In 2022 it was noted that two major Departments (Health and schools within CYPES) had implemented their own mechanisms to capture ‘customer’ experience and deal with complaints.

This follow up review found that all departments are now saving feedback back information centrally and this initial set of data will be examined and reported on at the end of quarter one 2025.

The PAC found that there have been considerable steps taken by the Government of Jersey to implement the Customer Feedback Policy, and there is an annual increase in public engagement for compliments, comments and praise. We examined all methods members of the public use to submit feedback and complaints, including face to face, telephone, email and other avenues.

The PAC does, however, have its own feedback to give and there are matters that require addressing by our Government to further enhance the steps already taken.

There has been a change in the terminology used for complaints found to be ‘unable to be resolved’, with the new terminology being ‘outcome not achievable’. The PAC was unable to find evidence that this changed category descriptor had a clear definition in the policy and the definition for ‘not upheld’ complaints was also missing. Recorded data shows a 42% increase in complaints that are classified as ‘not upheld’ between 2023 and 2024.

The PAC would welcome an update to the policy to include comprehensive and accurate definitions of these two categories as described.

Our review found that there has been an overall increase in complaints received by the Infrastructure and Environment Department in relation to Planning (74% increase) and Regulation (100% increase). As an example, in 2024, 70% of the total feedback received for planning related to complaints, which is a significant increase on the 39% in 2023.

We have recommended a review is undertaken to establish why there has been such a large increase in complaints in these areas and for Government to act accordingly.

Examination of the Government's post-complaint survey found that approx. 50% of the customers who completed the survey are not satisfied with how their complaints were handled.

The review also found that not all 'lessons learned' are reported by our Government on the website.

We have recommended improvements in this area and better reporting of lessons learned and a description of the changes made as a result of complaints and that these are all posted on the Government website.

The team within Employment, Social Security and Housing (formerly Customer and Local Services) are coordinating/leading the work in this area and are to be commended for the work done to date.

I believe there is a will and now a structure within Government to learn from complaints and feedback and we would encourage the public to submit their feedback, views and complaints as this will lead to better data and a basis for changes to services. I also welcome an acknowledgement from the Government that it has to continue work to build public trust in its systems in order to encourage more people to come forward with feedback.

It's equally important to know where we are excelling in customer service and to celebrate these success stories.

In its 2022 Performance Management report the PAC was concerned that Ministers are able to disregard the findings of the States of Jersey Complaints Board or fail or refuse to implement its findings. The PAC also found in its current review that a central record of complaints board findings and recommendations is not kept.

We recommend that the findings and recommendations are recorded centrally and the extent to which they have been implemented also recorded centrally.

It is clear that more work is required to build up public trust in the complaints processes, and whilst this report has mainly examined internal, government led processes for complaints resolution, it would be worth considering the merits of independent and external complaints resolution.

The proper handling of complaints is crucial in establishing public trust in Government departments. Islanders must feel that they will be listened to and that their concerns will be adequately addressed, and the Government should view complaints received as learning opportunities to improve services.

As part of this review, we met with the Public Services Ombudsperson from Northern Ireland and noted that all public services fall under this remit, rather than individual bodies for individual services that we have in Jersey.

Consideration should be given to whether this would represent a better service and greater value for money for taxpayers having one public body dealing with all complaints.

I welcome a survey launched by the Government on the 10th of March seeking views on a public ombudsman and I would encourage the public to engage with this survey and make their views known.

I would like to thank members of the public for their engagement with the review process and also Officers and Committee members for their work in producing this report.

Thank you for listening and I would welcome your questions.