

**ANGUS COUNCIL**

**SCRUTINY AND AUDIT COMMITTEE – 25 AUGUST 2020**

**ANNUAL COMPLAINTS REPORT – 1 APRIL 2019 – 31 MARCH 2020**

**REPORT BY JACKIE BUCHANAN, DIRECTOR OF LEGAL & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

**ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this report is to highlight the complaint statistics and satisfaction for 2019/20 and to assure members that learning is being taken on board from considering complaints to Angus Council.

**1. RECOMMENDATIONS**

1.1 It is recommended that the Scrutiny & Audit Committee consider: -

- (i) Key performance indicators on complaints closed between 1 April 2019 and 31 March 2020;
- (ii) Results of the satisfaction survey sent to everyone who made a complaint which was closed during 2019/20 and
- (iii) Complaints received by Service area as detailed in the Report.

**2. ALIGNMENT TO THE ANGUS LOCAL OUTCOMES IMPROVEMENT PLAN/COUNCIL PLAN**

2.1 This report contributes to the following local outcome contained within the Angus Local Outcomes Improvement Plan and Council Plan:

- **We want Angus Council to be efficient and effective and focusing on the need of the customer.**

**3. BACKGROUND**

3.1 Since 1 April 2013, the council has been operating a Complaints Handling Procedure for Local Authorities as required by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman.

During 2019/20 a total of 372 complaints were recorded as closed off during the year.

**4. COMPLAINT ANALYSIS**

4.1 In respect of the 312 Stage 1 complaints received: -

- a decrease in the number of complaints upheld from 76 (30.5%) in 2018/19 to 75 (24%) in 2019/20;
- an increase in the number of complaints not upheld from 99 (39.8%) in 2018/19 to 141 (42.2%) in 2019/20; and
- an increase in the number of partially upheld complaints from 74 (29.7%) to 96 (30.8%) in 2019/20.

4.2 In respect of the 45 Stage 2 complaints: -

- a slight decrease in the number of complaints upheld from 9 (19.1%) in 2018/19 to 8 (17.8%) in 2019/20;
- a decrease in the number of complaints not upheld from 27 (57.4%) to 20 (44.4%) in 2019/20; and
- an increase in the partially upheld complaints from 11 (23.4%) in 2018/19 to 17 (37.8%) in 2019/20.

4.3 In respect of the 15 Stage 2 escalated complaints: -

- a slight decrease in the number of complaints upheld from 3 (14.3%) in 2018/19 to 2 (13.3%) in 2019/20;
- a decrease in the number of complaints not upheld from 12 (57.1%) in 2018/19 to 8 (53.3%) in 2019/20; and
- a decrease in the number of complaints partially upheld from 6 (28.6%) in 2018/19 to 5 (33.3%) in 2019/20.

4.4 SPSO guidance states that Stage 1 complaints should be dealt with within five working days and Stage 2 complaints within 20 working days. In 2019/20: -

- 189 Stage 1 complaints (60.6%) were closed within five working days compared to 140 (56.2%) in 2018/19;
- 21 Stage 2 complaints (51.7%) were closed within the 20 working days compared to 22 (46.8%) in 2018/19; and
- 4 Stage 2 escalated complaints (26.7%) were closed within the 20 working days compared to 1 (16.7%) in 2018/19.

4.5 A full copy of the indicators is attached at [Appendix 1](#).

## 5. COMPLAINTS RECEIVED BY SERVICE AREA

| All Council Complaints  | Stage 1    | Stage 2   | Escalated from 1 - 2 | Total 2019/20 |
|-------------------------|------------|-----------|----------------------|---------------|
| <b>Total complaints</b> | <b>312</b> | <b>45</b> | <b>15</b>            | <b>372</b>    |

### COMPLAINTS CLOSED BY SERVICE AREA – STAGE 1

| Directorate  | Upheld | Not Upheld | Partially Upheld | Total | Not Corporate Complaint |
|--|--------|------------|------------------|-------|-------------------------|
| AngusAlive   | 16     | 12         | 14               | 42    | 0                       |
| Angus Health & Social Care Partnership                     | 3      | 5          | 5                | 13    | 5                       |
| Schools  | 11     | 48         | 34               | 93    | 12                      |
| Finance incl. Revenues & Benefits and Welfare Rights       | 1      | 4          | 4                | 9     | 0                       |
| Legal & Democratic Services                                | 1      | 0          | 1                | 2     | 0                       |
| Children, Families & Justice                               | 2      | 9          | 1                | 12    | 2                       |
| Housing  | 3      | 16         | 14               | 33    | 3                       |
| Communities  | 24     | 32         | 11               | 67    | 2                       |
| Communities - Business Support (Place)                     | 5      | 8          | 8                | 21    | 1                       |
| HR, Digital Enablement, IT, & Business Support             | 3      | 1          | 1                | 5     | 1                       |
| Infrastructure   | 6      | 5          | 3                | 14    | 5                       |
| Strategic Policy, Transformation and Public Service Reform | 0      | 1          | 0                | 1     | 1                       |

|                          |    |     |    |            |    |
|--------------------------|----|-----|----|------------|----|
| Total Stage 1 Complaints | 75 | 141 | 96 | <b>312</b> | 32 |
|--------------------------|----|-----|----|------------|----|

### COMPLAINTS CLOSED BY SERVICE AREA – STAGE 2

| Directorate  | Upheld | Not Upheld | Partially Upheld | Total | Not Corporate Complaint |
|--|--------|------------|------------------|-------|-------------------------|
| AngusAlive   | 1      | 0          | 0                | 1     | 1                       |
| Angus Health & Social Care Partnership               | 0      | 1          | 0                | 1     | 0                       |
| Schools  | 3      | 11         | 8                | 22    | 0                       |
| Finance incl. Revenues & Benefits and Welfare Rights | 1      | 0          | 0                | 1     | 0                       |
| Legal & Democratic Services                          | 1      | 0          | 0                | 1     | 0                       |
| Children, Families & Justice                         | 0      | 3          | 3                | 6     | 0                       |
| Housing  | 2      | 2          | 4                | 8     | 0                       |
| Housing, Regulatory & Protective Services            | 0      | 3          | 2                | 5     | 0                       |
| Chief Executive                                      | 0      | 0          | 0                | 0     | 1                       |
| Technical & Property Services                        | 0      | 0          | 0                | 0     | 1                       |
| Total Stage 2 Complaints                             | 8      | 20         | 17               | 45    | 2                       |

### ESCALATED COMPLAINTS CLOSED BY SERVICE AREA

| Directorate  | Upheld | Not Upheld | Partially Upheld | Total | Not Corporate Complaint |
|--|--------|------------|------------------|-------|-------------------------|
| AngusAlive   | 1      | 0          | 0                | 1     | 0                       |
| Angus Health & Social Care Partnership               | 0      | 0          | 0                | 0     | 1                       |
| Schools  | 1      | 1          | 2                | 4     | 0                       |
| Finance incl. Revenues & Benefits and Welfare Rights | 0      | 0          | 0                | 0     | 0                       |
| Children & Young People                              | 0      | 2          | 0                | 2     | 0                       |
| Housing  | 0      | 2          | 0                | 2     | 0                       |
| Housing, Regulatory & Protective Services            | 0      | 1          | 3                | 4     | 0                       |
| Technical & Property Services                        | 0      | 1          | 0                | 1     | 0                       |
| HR, Digital Enablement, IT, & Business Support       | 0      | 1          | 0                | 1     | 0                       |
| Total Escalated Complaints                           | 2      | 8          | 5                | 15    | 1                       |

## 6. SATISFACTION WITH THE COMPLAINTS PROCESS

- 6.1 Indicator 7 of the Performance Management Framework requires councils to report on customer satisfaction with complaints process. To achieve this, we issue satisfaction surveys six weeks after the complaint has been closed to all complainers. 14 completed

questionnaires were returned in 2019/20, a return rate of only 3.8%. The results should be read in the context of it being a survey on customer satisfaction with complaints process and the fact that there was only a 3.8% uptake.

6.2 The results for 2019/20 are shown in the table below.

| <b>1. Is our complaints handling procedure easy to follow?</b> |                         |                       |
|--|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Answer Options</b>  | <b>Response Percent</b> | <b>Response Count</b> |
| Yes  | 35.71%                  | 5                     |
| No   | 42.86%                  | 6                     |
| Unaware of complaints handling procedure                       | 14.29%                  | 2                     |
| Other (please specify)   |                         | 0                     |
| <i>answered question</i>                                       |                         | <b>13</b>             |
| <i>skipped question</i>  |                         | <b>1</b>              |

| <b>2. If the investigation into your complaint took longer than 20 working days, did the council keep you informed on the progress of your complaint?</b> |                         |                       |
|---|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Answer Options</b>   | <b>Response Percent</b> | <b>Response Count</b> |
| Yes   | 28.57%                  | 4                     |
| No  | 42.86%                  | 6                     |
| Not applicable  | 28.57%                  | 4                     |
| Other (please specify)  |                         | 0                     |
| <i>answered question</i>  |                         | <b>14</b>             |
| <i>skipped question</i>   |                         | <b>0</b>              |

| <b>3. Did we address all the issues raised in your complaint?</b> |                         |                       |
|---|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Answer Options</b>   | <b>Response Percent</b> | <b>Response Count</b> |
| Yes   | 7.14%                   | 1                     |
| No  | 92.86%                  | 13                    |
| Other (please specify)  |                         | 0                     |
| <i>answered question</i>  |                         | <b>14</b>             |
| <i>skipped question</i>   |                         | <b>0</b>              |

| <b>4. Were you satisfied with the quality and clarity of our response?</b> |                         |                       |
|--|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Answer Options</b>  | <b>Response Percent</b> | <b>Response Count</b> |
| Yes  | 23.08%                  | 3                     |
| No   | 76.92%                  | 10                    |
| Other (please specify)   |                         | 0                     |
| <i>answered question</i>   |                         | <b>13</b>             |
| <i>skipped question</i>  |                         | <b>1</b>              |

| <b>5. Did we treat you fairly when dealing with your complaint?</b> |                         |                       |
|---|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Answer Options</b>   | <b>Response Percent</b> | <b>Response Count</b> |
| Yes   | 14.29%                  | 2                     |
| No  | 78.57%                  | 11                    |
| Other (please specify)  |                         | 0                     |
| <i>answered question</i>  |                         | <b>13</b>             |
| <i>skipped question</i>   |                         | <b>1</b>              |

| 6. Even if you did not agree with the outcome, overall how satisfied are you that we handled your complaint well? |                  |                |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| Answer Options  | Response Percent | Response Count |
| Very satisfied  | 0.00%            | 0              |
| Fairly satisfied  | 7.14%            | 1              |
| Neither satisfied or dissatisfied   | 0.00%            | 0              |
| Fairly dissatisfied   | 0.00%            | 0              |
| Very dissatisfied   | 92.86%           | 13             |
| Other (please specify)  |                  | 0              |
| <i>answered question</i>  |                  | <b>14</b>      |
| <i>skipped question</i>   |                  | <b>0</b>       |

\*The percentages in this table may not add up to 100% in each question due to some people having answered more than one option.

| 7. If you would like to make any further comments or suggestions, please do so. |                |
|---|----------------|
| Answer Options  | Response Count |
|   | 14             |
| <i>answered question</i>  | <b>13</b>      |
| <i>skipped question</i>   | <b>1</b>       |

| 8. Date feedback form completed |                  |                |
|---------------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Answer Options                  | Response Percent | Response Count |
| Date                            | 100.0%           | 14             |
| <i>answered question</i>        |                  | <b>14</b>      |
| <i>skipped question</i>         |                  | <b>0</b>       |

## 7. LEARNING FROM COMPLAINTS

7.1 Each Service is asked to identify and act on the key learning points from the complaints received about their service.

A number of key learning points have resulted in council services improving the way we do things including: -

- As a result of a complaint regarding Council tenants not adhering to tenancy conditions the Service has introduced a warning letter advising that continual refusal to communicate would result in further action being taken against them, should they not comply with their conditions of tenancy;
- Work is underway with a software supplier to rectify the misleading information presented on an automated payment system;
- Following decant of council tenants the council failed to keep the tenants informed of progress. The Council in future will be more realistic around timescales and keep tenants regularly informed; and
- As a result of a failure in communication the service carried out a full learning event and the lessons shared with other colleagues in the service.

Whilst the number of complaints continues to increase it must be acknowledged that there are fewer staff within the council to both respond to issues timeously and to investigate complaints.

## **8. COMPLIMENTS**

**8.1** The Council has received a few compliments over the year and detailed below is an example of those received.

- Abbey View Campus – A letter was received thanking an officer for a tour given to 10 former pupils, who were the first into the Old Hayshead School when it opened. The officer gave an excellent presentation and had amazing background knowledge. The details which he provided, along with his thorough and detailed responses to questions from the group, left them in no doubt that he was someone who really could “Walk the talk”. A great ambassador for Angus Council and Education.  
The employee received a letter directly from the group and they took the time to contact the Chief Executive.
- An email was received praising the work of a Senior Practitioner in Children, Families & Justice.
- Several letters received following the retirement of the Lord Lieutenant, Georgiana Osborne, thanking the Council for the organisation and success of a Civic Reception held to recognise the contribution made by the Lord Lieutenant during her time representing Angus.
- A letter received from a tenant of Angus Council for keeping them informed of works to be carried near them, what to be expected and an expected completion date.
- A thank you received for assistance with a pension matter. The individual was charming to deal with and a credit to Angus Council.

## **9. CONTACT US**

**9.1** On 1 July 2020 the Council moved to an online Contact Us system via the Firmstep Platform. Members of the public will be able to submit Comments, Complaints and Compliments online. This approach is in line with the Councils commitment to Digital by Design and ensures that customers have the flexibility to access the service 24/7. The system should help to improve the response time to our customers and provide greater data to analyse the potential learning from the complaints. The customer journey will be fully digital, and the system also allows for comments and compliments to be submitted.

AngusAlive previously recorded all complaints in the Council system however, they have now moved to a standalone recording system. All complaints will still be reported annually for AngusAlive to Scrutiny and Audit Committee

## **10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

**10.1** There are no financial implications arising from this report.

## **11. CONSULTATION**

**11.1** The Chief Executive, Chief Social Work Officer and all Service Directors have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

**NOTE:** No background papers, as detailed by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to a material extent in preparing the above report.

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List of Appendices

Appendix 1 – Complaints Management Reporting – Performance Indicators