

ANGUS COUNCIL**SCRUTINY AND AUDIT COMMITTEE – 24 AUGUST 2021****QUARTERLY COMPLAINTS REPORT – 1 APRIL 2021 – 30 JUNE 2021****REPORT BY JACKIE BUCHANAN, DIRECTOR OF LEGAL & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES****ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this report is to highlight the complaints received in Quarter 1 of 2020/21 and to assure members that work is ongoing to learn from complaints received by Angus Council.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 It is recommended that the Scrutiny & Audit Committee: -
- (i) To note the information on complaints outcomes and actions taken to improve services.
 - (i) To note the complaints statistics for the period 1 April 2021 – 30 June 2021; and
 - (ii) To note that whilst advice has been received from the SPSO that the category of “Customer Care Survey” is not mandatory, officers will look to provide a basis for this.

2. ALIGNMENT TO THE ANGUS COMMUNITY PLAN/COUNCIL PLAN

- 2.1 This report contributes to the following local outcome contained within the Community Plan:
- Angus is a safe, secure, vibrant and sustainable community.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) is the responsible body for complaints. They set and monitor complaints handling standards for the public sector in Scotland. These standards are published as the Model Complaints Handling Procedure (MCHP) and define how they expect the public service sector to handle complaints quickly and simply, with local and early resolution by empowered and well-trained staff.

In 2020-21 a review of the MCHP was carried out by the SPSO to establish its effectiveness and useability. On 1 April 2021, changes came into operation across public services.

As well as an Annual Report, Councils are required to publish quarterly information on complaints outcomes and actions taken to improve services’ performance. In addition, this Report provides to the Scrutiny and Audit Committee quarterly complaint statistics.

This report details the complaint numbers for Quarter 1 of 2021-22 along with performance information.

4. 2021/22 QUARTER 1 SUMMARY

In Quarter 1 of 2021, 1 April to 30 June 2021, Angus Council received 71 complaints, 61 received using the online Firmstep system and 10 via AccessLine.

Category	2021/22 Quarter 1
Dissatisfaction with council policy	2
Equalities issue	1
Failure to follow appropriate administrative procedures	1
Failure to provide service	15
Inadequate standard	18
Treatment or attitude of a staff member	10
Other	18
Delay in responding to enquiries & requests	5
Resolved Stage 1	1
Total	71

5. **Performance Indicators**

5.1 **Indicator One** – Complaints received per 1,000 population

To determine the number of complaints received per 1,000 population, we count those received at Stage1 and received directly at Stage 2.

The population of Angus in 2020-21 is 116,400

The total number of complaints received per 1000 population is 0.6.

5.2 **Indicator Two** – Closed complaints – Quarter 1

Category	Quarter 1
Stage 1 complaints	55
Stage 2 complaints	7
Escalated Stage 2	9
Total Closed	71

The total number of complaints closed in the period is 71.

5.3 **Indicator Three** – complaints upheld, partially upheld and not upheld

There is a requirement for a formal outcome to be recorded for each complaint. These outcomes are “upheld”, “partially upheld” or “not upheld”.

If it were found that the correct procedures had been followed or the service provided was as expected, a complaint would be recorded as “not upheld”. However, if this was not the case the complaint would be recorded as “upheld”. Where there are several points to a complaint and the decisions are a mixture of “upheld” and “not upheld”, the complaint is recorded as “partially upheld” overall. If an issue is resolved before it becomes a complaint, then this is recorded as resolved. This category came into operation on 1 April 2021.

Category	2021-22
Stage 1 Upheld	17
Stage 1 Not Upheld	23
Stage 1 Partially Upheld	15
Stage 2 Upheld	1
Stage 2 Not Upheld	3
Stage 2 Partially Upheld	3
Stage 2 Escalated Upheld	1
Stage 2 Escalated Not Upheld	4
Stage 2 Escalated Partially Upheld	4
Total Closed	71

5.4 **Indicator Four** – The average time in working days for a full response to complaints at each stage.

The table below shows the average working days taken to respond to complaints at each stage of the complaint’s procedure.

	Stage 1	Stage 2	Following escalation
Sum of the total number of working days taken for all complaints closed at -	160	135	109
Number of complaints – closed at -	55	7	9
The average time in working days for a full response to complaints at stage	2.9	19.3	12.1

5.5 **Indicator Five** – The number and percentage of complaints at each stage which were closed in full within the set timescales of 5 and 20 days.

We are required to respond to a Stage 1 complaint within 5 working days and a Stage 2 complaint within 20 working days.

Percentage of complaints closed within timescale	2021-22	
	Stage 1	72.7%
Stage 2	42.9 %	7
Escalated Stage 2	100%	9

5.6 **Indicator Six** – The number and percentage of complaints at each stage where an extension to the 5 and 20 working day timeline has been authorised.

Where a response has taken longer to be issued, an update is given to the complainant with a new date for response.

Stage 1 complaints may be extended by a further 5 days. The timeframe for an extension to a Stage 2 complaint investigation is not set and is determined based on factors such as the nature of the complaint, the evidence available and if the complaint relates to more than one service or department.

Number of complaints with an extension	2021-22	
	Stage 1	16.4%
Stage 2	0.0%	0
Stage 2 Escalated	100%	9

5.7 Customer Satisfaction Survey

At the last meeting of the Scrutiny & Audit Committee it was reported that the new system was unable to accommodate the Customer Satisfaction Survey and every effort would be made to manually achieve this. In order to achieve this, staff are required to go into every case and extract the necessary information. To date this has not been possible due to staff pressures over the summer months. Since the last meeting of Scrutiny and Audit, Information has now been received from the SPSO advising that this category is not mandatory.

In the past, the return on the surveys has been extremely low and a new way of engaging the public to improve our services is required. Although the SPSO have indicated that the category of "Customer Care Survey" is not mandatory, officers will look to provide a basis for this. It would be anticipated that an update will be provided in the next Quarterly Complaints Report.

5.8 Staff Training

The SPSO require all staff to be aware of the Complaints Handling Procedure and work has been developed to produce e-learning, for all staff. The module will be in two parts for Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaint handling. The module is expected to launch early September. This improvement will ensure that all staff are equipped to handle complaints quickly and efficiently.

5.9 Complaint Actions and Outcomes

In order to demonstrate that as an organisation we are learning from the findings of complaints, the digital system records any lessons learned.

The highest number of complaints, were received by those services providing frontline services. Waste collections, housing, parks and cemeteries, council tax collection enquiries and issues within schools/school meals/school transport.

These complaints are quickly addressed and relate mainly to misunderstanding of council policy, delays in responses being issued or communication failure. It has to be recognised that during the past year staffing has been impacted by COVID19 and other priorities which has impacted on timeframes for responding. Every effort is being made to ensure that this situation improves and communication with our customers is key in terms of expectations etc.

Below is a sample of the changes made as a direct result of a complaint being received.

You Said	We Did
Each year Angus Council collect the Christmas Wreaths that have not been removed. The customer did not see the signage and didn't return in time to remove wreath before Council collected it.	We apologised and agreed to increase the signage and to carry out more comprehensive communications in January/February to make the public aware.
The disabled toilet in one of our burghs was not in an acceptable standard as it had been left unlocked for a protracted time resulting in a very unpleasant experience for our customer.	We apologised and agreed to enhance the signage on use and the need for a RADAR lock key to use the facility.
A contractor had carried out work outside a customer's home, with no notification being given leaving the family vulnerable as they were unable to leave the home easily	We apologised and advised our contractor to be more customer focused and notify individuals of the likely disruption and timescales.
Our staff at a Recycling Centre handled a customer's telephone to see site booking	Additional training on the precautions to be taken during COVID was given to staff
Our temp staff had been taking shortcuts over pathed areas with grass cutting machines	We informed all operators, including temps, that shortcuts should not be taken and of the behaviours expected

Continual Complainers

A number of complaints can be attributed to a few individuals who remain repeatedly dissatisfied at the investigation findings. As a Council we are finding this extremely difficult to manage and are reminding those individuals that the final stage is to progress their complaint to the SPSO, which is the final stage in the complaints process. The development of an Unacceptable Actions Policy will also commence to ensure that staff feel supported and can refer to the policy when required.

5.10 SPSO

During the first quarter of 2021, eight complaints have progressed to the SPSO. The SPSO have advised that they will not be taking forward six of the complaints (all from the same individual). Notification on the outcome for the remaining two is still outstanding.

5.11 Complaints Monitoring Group

The Council Leadership Team recently agreed the establishment of a Monitoring Group with representation from all Council areas. This will provide an opportunity to discuss and highlight experience of complaints as well as share lessons learned within the organisation with a view to improving the overall approach to complaints within the organisation.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

7. CONSULTATION

7.1 The Chief Executive and all 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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**JACKIE BUCHANAN
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Equality Impact/Fairer Scotland Duty Assessment Form

Step 1

Name of Proposal – Quarterly Complaints Report – 1 April 2021 – 30 June 2021

Step 2

Is this only a **screening** Equality Impact Assessment Yes/No

(A) If Yes, please choose from the following options **all** reasons why a full EIA/FSD is not required:

(i) It does not impact on people Yes/No

(ii) It is a percentage increase in fees which has no differential impact on protected characteristics
Yes/No

(iii) It is for information only Yes/No

(iv) It is reflective e.g. of budget spend over a financial year Yes/No

(v) It is technical Yes/No

If you have answered yes to any of points above, please go to **Step 16**, and sign off the Assessment.

(B) If you have answered No to the above, please indicate the following: Is this a full

Equality Impact Assessment Yes/No

Is this a Fairer Scotland Duty Assessment Yes/No

If you have answered Yes to either or both of the above, continue with Step 3.

If your proposal is a **strategy** please ensure you complete Step 13 which is the Fairer Scotland Duty Assessment.

Step 3

(i)Lead Directorate/Service: Legal & Democratic Services

(ii)Are there any **relevant** statutory requirements affecting this proposal? If so, please describe.

N/A

(iii)What is the aim of the proposal? Please give full details.

N/A

(iv)Is it a new proposal? Yes/**No** Please indicate OR

Is it a review of e.g. an existing budget saving, report, strategy, policy, service review, procedure or function? Yes/**No** Please indicate

Step 4: Which people does your proposal involve or have consequences for?

Please indicate all which apply: Employees

Yes/No

Job Applicants

Yes/No

Service users

Yes/No

Members of the public

Yes/No

Step 5: List the evidence/data/research that has been used in this assessment (links to data sources, information etc which you may find useful are in the Guidance). This could include:

Internal data (e.g. customer satisfaction surveys; equality monitoring data; customer complaints).

Internal consultation (e.g. with staff, trade unions and any other services affected).

External data (e.g. Census, equality reports, equality evidence finder, performance reports, research, available statistics)

External consultation (e.g. partner organisations, national organisations, community groups, other councils).

Other (general information as appropriate).

Step 6: Evidence Gaps.

Are there any gaps in the equality information you currently hold? Yes/No

If yes, please state what they are, and what measures you will take to obtain the evidence you need.

Step 7: Are there potential differential impacts on protected characteristic groups? Please complete for each group, including details of the potential impact on those affected. Please remember to take into account any particular impact resulting from **Covid-19**.

Please state if there is a potentially positive, negative, neutral or unknown impact for each group. Please state the reason(s) why.

Age

Impact

Disability

Impact

Gender reassignment

Impact

Marriage and Civil Partnership

Impact

Pregnancy/Maternity

Impact

Race - (includes Gypsy Travellers)

Impact

Religion or Belief

Impact

Sex

Impact

Sexual orientation

Impact

Step 8: Consultation with any of the groups potentially affected

If you have consulted with any group potentially affected, please give details of how this was done and what the results were.

If you have not consulted with any group potentially affected, how have you ensured that you can make an informed decision about mitigating action of any negative impact (Step 9)?

Step 9: What mitigating steps will be taken to remove or reduce potentially negative impacts?

Step 10: If a potentially negative impact has been identified, please state below the justification.

Step 11: In what way does this proposal contribute to any or all of the public sector equality duty to: eliminate unlawful discrimination; advance equality of opportunity; and foster good relations between people of different protected characteristics?

Step 12: Is there any action which could be taken to advance equalities in relation to this proposal?

Step 13: FAIRER SCOTLAND DUTY

This step is only applicable to **strategies** which are key, high level decisions. If your proposal is **not** a strategy, please leave this Step blank, and go to Step 14.

Links to data sources, information etc which you may find useful are in the Guidance.

Step 13(A) What evidence do you have about any socio-economic disadvantage/inequalities of outcome in relation to this strategic issue?

Step 13(B) Please state if there are any gaps in socio-economic evidence for this strategy and how you will take measures to gather the evidence you need.

Step 13(C) Are there any potential impacts this strategy may have specifically on the undernoted groupings? Please remember to take into account any particular impact resulting from Covid-19.

Please state if there is a potentially positive, negative, neutral or unknown impact for each grouping.

Low and/or No Wealth (e.g. those with enough money to meet basic living costs and pay bills but have no savings to deal with any unexpected spends and no provision for the future.

Impact

Material Deprivation (i.e. those unable to access basic goods and services e.g. repair/replace broken electrical goods, warm home, leisure and hobbies).

Impact

Area Deprivation (i.e. where people live (e.g. rural areas), or where they work (e.g. accessibility of transport)).

Impact

Socio-economic Background i.e. social class including parents' education, people's employment and income.

Impact

Other – please indicate

Step 13(D) Please state below if there are measures which could be taken to reduce socio-economic disadvantage/inequalities of outcome.

Step 14: What arrangements will be put in place to monitor and review the Equality Impact/Fairer Scotland Duty Assessment?

Step 15: Where will this Equality Impact/Fairer Scotland Duty Assessment be published?

Step 16: Sign off and Authorisation. Please state name, post, and date for each: Prepared by:

Elaine Whittet, Legal & Democratic Services

Reviewed by: Approved

by:

NB. There are several worked examples of separate EIA and FSD Assessments in the Guidance which may be of use to you.