

**ANGUS COUNCIL**

**SCRUTINY AND AUDIT COMMITTEE – 30 NOVEMBER 2021**

**QUARTERLY COMPLAINTS REPORT – 1 JULY 2021 – 30 SEPTEMBER 2021**

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

**ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this report is to highlight the complaints received in Quarter 2 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) Note the information on complaints outcomes and actions taken to improve services;
- (ii) Note the complaints statistics for the period 1 July 2021 – 30 September 2021; and
- (iii) Note that it is proposed that a further report on Complaints will next be brought to this Committee on 1 March 2022.

**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.

This Report provides to the Scrutiny and Audit Committee details of quarterly complaint statistics for Quarter 2 of 2021-22 along with performance information.

**4. 2021/22 QUARTER 1 SUMMARY**

In Quarter 2 of 2021, 1 July to 30 September 2021, Angus Council received 81 complaints, 69 using the online Granicus system and 12 via AccessLine.

<b>Category</b>	<b>2021/22 Quarter 1</b>	<b>2021/22 Quarter 2</b>
Dissatisfaction with council policy	2	1
Disagreement with a decision where customer cannot use another procedure	0	2
Inadequate Standard	0	2
Service Request/Comment	0	1
Equalities issue	1	0
Failure to follow appropriate administrative procedures	1	
Failure to provide service	15	21

Inadequate standard	18	4
Treatment or attitude of a staff member	10	9
Other	18	33
Delay in responding to enquiries & requests	5	7
*Resolved Stage 1	1	1
Total	71	81

\* A complaint is resolved when the complainant and organization agree what action will be taken to resolve the complaint. Where a complaint is resolved, it is not usually necessary to continue to investigate, although an organization may choose to do so.

## 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 116,040

The total number of complaints received per 1000 population is 0.7.

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

Category	Quarter 1	Quarter 2
Stage 1 complaints	55	72
Stage 2 complaints	7	3
Escalated Stage 2	9	6
Total Closed	71	81

The total number of complaints closed in the Quarter 2 period is 81.

### 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 Quarter 1	2021-22 Quarter 2
Stage 1 Upheld	17	26
Stage 1 Not Upheld	23	31
Stage 1 Partially Upheld	15	15
Stage 2 Upheld	1	0
Stage 2 Not Upheld	3	2
Stage 2 Partially Upheld	3	1
Stage 2 Escalated Upheld	1	4
Stage 2 Escalated Not Upheld	4	2
Stage 2 Escalated Partially Upheld	4	0
Total Closed	71	81

### 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	
	Q 1	Q2	Q 1	Q2	Q1	Q2
Sum of the total number of working days taken for all complaints closed at -	160	272	135	43	109	53
Number of complaints – closed	55	72	7	3	9	6
The average time in working days for a full response to complaints	2.9	3.8	19.3	14.3	12.1	8.8

- 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 Quarter 1		2021-22 Quarter 2	
Stage 1	72.7%	40	76.4%	55
Stage 2	42.9 %	7	100 %	3
Escalated Stage 2	100%	9	50 %	3

- 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 Quarter 1		2021-22 Quarter 2	
Stage 1	16.4%	9	6.9 %	5
Stage 2	0.0%	0	0.0%	0
Stage 2 Escalated	100%	9	100%	6

- 5.7 Customer Satisfaction Survey

A project within the Change programme on Customer Experience will incorporate a Customer Satisfaction Survey in due course. This project is being led by the Director of Human Resources, Information Technology and Business Support.

- 5.8 Governance Arrangements

Members will be aware that to-date the quarterly figures are submitted to S & A Committee however, there is no requirement for this approach to continue. As a council we must have clear systems in place to act on issues identified in complaints. The Management Team of each service will be scrutinising complaints on a monthly basis, and we will publish quarterly information on complaint outcomes and actions taken to improve service. This information will be available on the website. This will demonstrate improvements initiated by Services resulting from complaints. This will also help improve transparency in our complaints handling and will show customers that we value their complaints. It is proposed that a further report on Complaints will be brought to the Scrutiny and Audit Committee on 1 March 2022 outlining a proposals and a framework for future reporting to committee.

## 5.9 Staff Training

The SPSO require all staff to be aware of the Complaints Handling Procedure. Significant work has already been done to share knowledge on the new SPSO framework which became operational in April 2021. Workshops have taken place this month hosted by SPSO focussing on Stage 2 Complaints. Work has also been developed to produce e-learning, for all staff. The module for this e-learning will be in two parts for Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaint handling. The module was expected to launch early September however work is still ongoing with completion expected shortly. Taken together these initiatives will help ensure that all staff are equipped to handle complaints quickly and efficiently.

## 5.10 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 18 months staffing has been significantly affected by COVID19 as well as 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
Many complaints had been received regarding the steps at Mill Road, Montrose	It was accepted that it had taken longer to complete the works than expected but the wall at Mill Street steps has now been completed and in order to avoid a similar situation in future we will ensure works are completed in a timely manner.
That an FOI request only provided minimal records and did not reflect accurate or detailed recording.	Resource will be provided to access and use fuller functionality of the "In Touch" roads management system
That we did not get repairs completed timeously.	Regular meetings are being held with the Councils contractor to ensure that repairs are completed quickly and efficiently.
We did not respond to timeously to correspondence and our Customer Care Standards were ignored	We apologised to the customer and acknowledged that the customer care standards were not met on this occasion. An apology was issued and the officer reminded of the need to respond in a timely manner.

## 5.11 SPSO

During the second quarter of 2021, three complaints have progressed to the SPSO.

No decisions have been received to date.

## 6. FINANCIAL AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. There are no differential impacts on persons with protected characteristics.

## 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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Equality Impact/Fairer Scotland Duty Assessment Form

**Step 1**

**Name of Proposal – Quarterly Complaints Report – 1 July – 30 September 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.