

ANGUS COUNCIL

SCRUTINY AND AUDIT COMMITTEE – 23 JUNE 2022

**QUARTERLY COMPLAINTS REPORT – 1 OCTOBER – 31 DECEMBER 2021 &
1 JANUARY – 31 MARCH 2022**

REPORT BY JACKIE BUCHANAN, DIRECTOR OF LEGAL & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this report is to highlight the complaints received in Quarters 3 & 4 of 2021/22 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 complaints statistics for the period 1 October – 31 December 2021 and 1 January 2022 – 31 March 2022;
- (ii) Note that, whilst there is no requirement to submit quarterly information in the future but to publish outcomes and learning to improve service delivery, quarterly reporting to this committee will continue also;
- (iii) Note that a report will also be submitted quarterly to senior management on the key performance indicators and analysis of the trends and outcomes of complaints; and
- (iv) Agree that information on complaints outcomes and actions taken to improve services is published quarterly.

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 Council is efficient and effective
- 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 2021/22, Councils were required to publish quarterly information on complaints. This report provides to the Scrutiny and Audit Committee quarterly complaint statistics for Quarters 3 & 4 of 2021-22.

4. 2021/22 QUARTERS 3 and 4 SUMMARY

In Quarter 3, 1 October to 31 December 2021, Angus Council received 56 complaints, 47 using the online Granicus system and 9 via Access Line.

In Quarter 4, 1 January to 31 March 2022, Angus Council received 51 complaints, 47 using the online Granicus system and 4 via Access Line. The Granicus system is the online platform introduced in 2020 to allow our customers to log a complaint online which supports the council's approach to become a more digital council.

Category	1 Apr-30 June 2021 Quarter 1	1 Jul-30 Sept 2021 Quarter 2	1 Oct-31 Dec 2021 Quarter 3	1 Jan-31 Mar 2022 Quarter 4
Dissatisfaction with council policy	2	1	0	3
Disagreement with a decision where customer cannot use another procedure	0	2	1	2
Inadequate Standard	0	2	0	0
Service Request/Comment	0	1	0	0
Equalities issue	1	0	0	0
Failure to follow appropriate administrative procedures	1	0	1	
Failure to provide service	15	21	12	2
Inadequate standard	18	4	8	4
Treatment or attitude of a staff member	10	9	5	4
Other	18	33	25	30
Delay in responding to enquiries & requests	5	7	4	6
*Resolved Stage 1	1	1		
Total	71	81	56	51

* A complaint is resolved when the complainant and organisation 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 organisation may choose to do so.

Other Category

It is clear that many complaints are registered against the “other” category. These are issues that do not fall into the categories in place from the SPSO. For example, NHS Dentist, Angus Alive complaints, energy efficiency etc. However, it is clear from scrutinising the complaints allocated in this category that they are being incorrectly assigned to the “other category” by staff closing complaints. The majority of complaints could have been allocated to one of the recognised categories in the above chart. Staff will therefore be issued with examples to ensure that they are registering the complaint to the correct category in future.

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 2021/22 is 116,040

The total number of complaints received per 1000 population in Quarter 3 is 0.5 and Quarter 4 is 0.4.

5.2 Indicator Two – Closed complaints

Category	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4
Stage 1 complaints	55	72	45	36
Stage 2 complaints	7	3	4	5
Escalated Stage 2	9	6	7	10
Total Closed	71	81	56	51

The total number of complaints closed in Quarter 3 period is 56 and closed in Quarter 4 is 51.

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	1 Apr-30 June 2021 Quarter 1	1 Jul-30 Sept 2021 Quarter 2	1 Oct-31 Dec 2021 Quarter 3	1 Jan-31 Mar 2022 Quarter 4
Stage 1 Upheld	17	26	18	7
Stage 1 Not Upheld	23	31	15	20
Stage 1 Partially Upheld	15	15	12	9
Stage 2 Upheld	1	0	0	2
Stage 2 Not Upheld	3	2	3	2
Stage 2 Partially Upheld	3	1	1	1
Stage 2 Escalated Upheld	1	4	0	5
Stage 2 Escalated Not Upheld	4	2	4	5
Stage 2 Escalated Partially Upheld	4	0	3	0
Total Closed	71	81	56	51

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	
	Q1	Q2	Q1	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 days	3.8 days	19.3 days	14.3 days	12.1 days	8.8 days

	Stage 1		Stage 2		Following Escalation	
	Q3	Q4	Q3	Q4	Q3	Q4
Sum of the total number of working days taken for all complaints closed at -	161	115	90	0	63	77
Number of complaints – closed	45	36	4	5	7	10
The average time in working days for a full response to complaints	3.6 days	3.2 days	22.5 days	12 days	9 days	7.7 days

- 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	1 Apr-30Jun 2021 Quarter 1		1 Jul-30Sept 2021 Quarter 2		1 Oct-31 Dec 2021 Quarter 3		1 Jan-31 Mar 2022 Quarter 4	
Stage 1	72.7%	40	76.4%	55	86.7%	39	75.0%	27
Stage 2	42.9 %	7	100 %	3	25%	1	20%	1
Escalated Stage 2	100%	9	50 %	3	10%	1	10%	1

- 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 also five days however, complex complaints may take substantially longer to close.

Number of complaints with an extension	1 Apr-30Jun 2021 Quarter 1		1 Jul-30Sept 2021 Quarter 2		1 Oct-31 Dec 2021 Quarter 3		1 Jan-31 Mar 2022 Quarter 4	
Stage 1	16.4%	9	6.9 %	5	13.3%	6	22.2%	8
Stage 2	0.0%	0	33.3%	1	25%	1	40%	2
Stage 2 Escalated	100%	9	100%	6	100%	7	100%	10

- 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. This project will look further at a Customer Satisfaction Survey for all council activity and is scheduled for completion in March 2023.

- 5.8 Governance Arrangements

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 monthly, and we will publish quarterly information on complaint outcomes and actions taken to improve service. This information will be available on the website. Quarterly Reports to Scrutiny and Audit Committee will continue. This will demonstrate the improvements resulting from complaints and will show that complaints can help to improve our services. This will also help improve transparency in our complaints handling and will show customers that we value their complaints.

- 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 were held for Senior Officers which focussed on Stage 2 complaint handling.

The SPSO also requires all staff to be familiar with the process for handing complaints and an E-Learning module was launched in January 2022 which is mandatory for all staff to undertake.

- 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. Housing repairs have seen an increase in complaints over the year, many of which are out with the councils control. Communication with customers remains predominant throughout the year. 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
To make service users aware of support available to them during Social Work Interviews	We recognise that agreeing clear expectations between staff and people who use services is important, how we will communicate and expected timescales for return of calls etc. The service has taken learning from complaints where a lack of communication has been the issue, and this has informed work carried out by the service on using digital communication and ensuring duty/colleagues cover when people are off unexpectedly. The service continues to operate teams and services under pressure including staff shortages, particularly during covid and priority is given to high-risk calls/contacts. Staff are reminded to be open, transparent and respectful in our communications.
That there was no detailed recording of maintenance or that ditch drains are not cleaned, and the council system only provided minimal records and estimated dates rather than actual dates.	A service work action for 2022/23 has been established and started to use the fuller functionality of the 'In Touch' roads management system, which will improve planning and record keeping for roads drainage operations.

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.

8. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out and is attached.

JACKIE BUCHANAN, DIRECTOR OF LEGAL & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

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: Alison Watson, Service Leader - Legal

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