

ANGUS COUNCIL

SCRUTINY AND AUDIT COMMITTEE – 22 AUGUST 2023

COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS REPORT – 1 JANUARY – 31 MARCH 2023

REPORT BY JACKIE BUCHANAN, DIRECTOR OF LEGAL & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this report and appendices is to highlight the complaints received in Quarter 4 from 1 January – 31 March 2023 and to assure members that work is ongoing to learn from complaints received by Angus Council. The Report also includes details of compliments received during the period.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 It is recommended that the Scrutiny & Audit Committee notes for the period 1 January – 31 March 2023: -
- (i) the complaints statistics for the period;
 - (ii) a sample of compliments received for the period; and
 - (iii) the complaints received by each of the Council's Directorates as outlined in Appendix 1 to this report.

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 As outlined in previous Complaints and Compliments Reports to this Committee, there is a national framework dealing with customer complaints made to public bodies which is under the auspices of the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO). Local authorities are bound to follow this framework. Please see report number [R402/22](#) for further information.

The detail within the appendix is a breakdown of the records logged by customers using the Council's "Contact Us" digital platform and other customer complaints uploaded there by staff.

4. 2023 QUARTER 4 SUMMARY

The Quarter 4 Summary of records by Directorate is attached at Appendix 1.

5. Performance Indicators

- 5.1 The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) have outlined four key performance indicators for local authorities to use to monitor practice and identify any trends.

Indicator One: The total number of complaints received 166.

This indicator records the total number of complaints received. This is the sum of the number of complaints received at Stage 1 (this includes escalated complaints, as they were first received at Stage 1), and the number of complaints received directly at Stage 2.

- 5.2 **Indicator Two:** the number and percentage of complaints at each stage that were closed in full within the set timescales of five and 20 working days.

The SPSO requires complaints to be closed within five working days at stage 1 and 20 working days at stage 2.

This indicator will report:

- (i) the number of complaints closed in full at stage 1 within five working days as % of all stage 1 complaints responded to in full
- (ii) the number of complaints closed in full at stage 2 within 20 working days as % of all stage 2 complaints responded to in full.

Escalated complaints are those that have been considered at Stage 1 and then have either moved to Stage 2 at the customer's request (because the customer was unhappy with the response at Stage 1) or because they have exceeded the maximum of ten working days at Stage 1 therefore have automatically been moved to Stage 2.

5.3 **Indicator Three:** the average time in working days for a full response to complaints at each stage.

This indicator represents the average time in working days for a full response to complaints at each stage.

This indicator will report:

- (i) the average time in working days to respond to complaints at stage 1
- (ii) the average time in working days to respond to complaints at stage 2
- (iii) the average time in working days to respond to complaints after escalation.

5.4 **Indicator Four:** the outcome of complaints at each stage.

There is a requirement for the outcome to be recorded for each complaint. There are four outcome categories: resolved, upheld, partially upheld or not upheld. Where some of the points of complaint are upheld and others are not, this should be reported as 'partially upheld'.

This indicator will report:

- (i) the number of complaints
 - (a) upheld
 - (b) partially upheld
 - (c) not upheld and
 - (d) resolvedas a % of all complaints closed at stage 1.

- (ii) the number of complaints
 - (a) upheld
 - (b) partially upheld
 - (c) not upheld and
 - (d) resolvedas a % of all complaints closed at stage 2.

- (iii) the number of complaints
 - (a) upheld
 - (b) partially upheld
 - (c) not upheld and
 - (d) resolved after escalationas a % of all complaints closed after escalation.

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

Table 1 - Council's total complaints per 1,000 population.

Measure	2021/22 Quarter 1	2021/22 Quarter 2	2021/22 Quarter 3	2022/23 Quarter 4
Angus Population	115,820	115,820	115,820	115,820
Total number of complaints received in the period	188	169	149	166
Total number of complaints received per 1,000 population	1.6	1.5	1.3	1.4

Total number of complaints closed in the period	145	75	59	78
Number of complaints closed per 1,000 population	1.3	0.6	0.5	0.7

5.6 Indicator Two – Total amount of Closed complaints

Category	Q1	%	Q2	%	Q3	%	Q4	%
Stage 1 complaints	116	80.0%	54	72.0%	43	72.9%	53	67.9%
Stage 2 complaints	6	4.1%	7	9.3%	8	13.6%	2	2.6%
Escalated Stage 2	23	15.9%	14	18.7%	8	13.6%	23	29.5%
Total Closed	145	100%	75	100%	59	100%	78	100%

The total number of complaints closed in Quarter 4 is 78.

5.7 Indicator Three – complaints resolved, upheld, partially upheld and not upheld

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

A complaint is resolved when both Angus Council and the customer agree what action (if any) will be taken to provide full and final resolution for the customer, without making a decision about whether the complaint is upheld or not upheld. Angus Council try to **resolve** complaints wherever possible, although we accept that this will not be possible in all cases.

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 of “resolved” came into operation on 1 April 2021.

Category	1 April – 30 June 2022 Q1	%	1 July – 30 Sept 2022 Q2	%	1 Oct– 31 Dec 2022 Q3	%	1 Apr – 31 Mar 2023 Q4	%
Stage 1 Upheld	19	16.4%	17	31.5%	10	23.3%	15	28.3%
Stage 1 Not Upheld	13	11.2%	23	42.6%	19	44.2%	20	37.7%
Stage 1 Partially Upheld	16	13.8%	10	18.5%	14	32.6%	18	34.0%
Stage 1 Resolved	68	58.6%	4	7.4%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Total Stage 1	116	100%	54	100%	43	100%	53	100%
Stage 2 Upheld	2	33.3%	0	0.0%	1	12.5%	0	0.0%
Stage 2 Not Upheld	2	33.3%	4	57.1%	3	37.5%	2	100%
Stage 2 Partially Upheld	2	33.3%	3	42.9%	4	50.0%	0	0.0%
Stage 2 Resolved	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Total Stage 2	6	100%	7	100%	8	100%	2	100%
Stage 2 Escalated Upheld	1	4.3%	3	21.4%	3	37.5%	9	39.1%
Stage 2 Escalated Not Upheld	6	26.1%	6	42.9%	0	0.0%	7	30.4%
Stage 2 Escalated Partially	4	17.4%	3	21.4%	5	62.5%	7	30.4%
Stage 2 Resolved after	12	52.2%	2	14.3%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Total Stage 2 Escalated	23	100%	14	100%	8	100%	23	100%
Total Closed	145		75		59		78	

5.8 **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.

	Sum of the total number of working days taken for all complaints closed at relevant stage	Number of complaints closed at relevant stage	The average time in working days for a full response to complaint
Stage 1 Q1	412	116	3.6
Stage 2 Q1	174	6	29.0
Following Escalation Q1	412	23	17.9
Stage 1 Q2	503	54	9.3
Stage 2 Q2	126	7	18.0
Following Escalation Q2	184	14	13.1
Stage 1 Q3	202	43	4.7
Stage 2 Q3	102	8	12.8
Following Escalation Q3	202	8	25.3
Stage 1 Q4	239	53	4.5
Stage 2 Q4	41	2	20.5
Following Escalation Q4	239	23	10.4

5.9 **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. Extensions are permitted for Stage 1 complaints of 5 working days. The deadline for responding to stage 2 complaints can be extended subject to informing the complainant.

	The number of complaints – closed – Stage 1 within 5 working days	Number of complaints – closed at Stage 1 (frontline resolution)	The number of complaints closed at stage 1 within 5 working days as a % of total number of stage 1 complaints
Stage 1 Q1	89	116	76.7%
Stage 1 Q2	44	54	81.5%
Stage 1 Q3	35	43	81.4%
Stage 1 Q4	35	53	66.0%

	The number of complaints – closed – Stage 2 within 20 working days	Number of complaints – closed at Stage 2 ((investigation)	The number of complaints closed at stage 2 within 20 working days as a % of total number of stage 2 complaints
Stage 2 Q1	1	6	16.7%
Stage 2 Q2	3	7	42.9%
Stage 2 Q3	2	8	25.0%
Stage 2 Q4	1	2	50.0%

	The number of complaints – closed – after escalation within 20 working days	Number of complaints – closed after escalation	The number of complaints closed after escalation within 20 working days as a % of total number of escalated complaints
Stage 1 Q1	20	23	87.0%
Stage 1 Q2	13	14	92.9%
Stage 1 Q3	2	8	25.0%
Stage 1 Q4	1	23	4.3%

5.10 **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 working days. There is no fixed timeframe for an extension to a Stage 2 complaint investigation. Any extensions to the Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaint timelines must be authorised by the relevant manager.

Number of complaints with an extension	1 April – 30 June 2022 Quarter 1		1 July – 30 September 2022 Quarter 2		1 October – 31 December 2022 Quarter 3		1 January – 31 March 2023 Quarter 4	
Stage 1	20	17.2%	13	24.1%	7	16.3%	63	23.7%
Stage 2	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2	100%
Stage 2 Escalated	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	7	87.5%	0	0.0%

5.11 Complaints per Service Area

The attached Appendix 2 shows the areas complaints have been received.

5.12 Compliments

Our customers have an opportunity to submit compliments via the website, by contacting staff directly or via Accessline. Below is an example of the compliments received for the fourth quarter of 2022/23.

- Customer was unable to book an uplift for a large item and the website kept crashing. Accessline called customer and dealt with the payment and booking of the uplift. Customer remarked that Angus Council had provided an ‘outstanding service and a big help on a bad tech day. Very much appreciated.’
- Customer had forgotten to put purple bin out on a rural route. Angus Council had returned to empty the bin and the customer had remarked, “Thank you to the team for emptying as it makes a huge difference #smallactsofkindness whoever you are.”
- Customer was grateful to an Angus Council bin lorry driver remarking, “I would like to thank your bin lorry team who were absolutely great today. I was out on my horse on a narrow track, they slowed right down and passed quietly, its hugely appreciated. Great bunch of guys.”
- Customer was pleased with timeframe to remedy a maintenance issue and remarked, “I wanted to say thank you for your prompt response to my report of a blocked drain. 24hr service is amazing! Thank you.”

Housing repairs and comments/compliments

During the period the following repairs were completed (reactive repairs):

- 1219 Emergency repairs
- 442 Urgent repairs
- 568 Priority repairs

- 1345 Routine repairs

Of the reactive repairs reported in the quarter, 152 are outstanding.

Repairs completed within the quarter (void repairs):

- 136 Void 5 days
- 171 Void 10 days

There are 23 void repairs outstanding from those reported in the quarter.

Monthly Repair Satisfaction Survey

A repair satisfaction survey is carried out monthly by Knowledge Partnership (KP) on behalf of Angus Council's Housing Services using a telephone survey method. The survey questionnaire was administered during:

- **April 2023 to a population of 547 tenants** whose homes had received one or more repairs during March 2023. Working with this population, a random sample of **155 telephone interviews** was completed, giving a response rate of 28.3%¹. Each interview lasted approx. 10 minutes according to the needs of the respondent. This survey report feeds back on the results of these 155 repair service interviews.
- **May 2023 to a population of 466 tenants** whose homes had received one or more repairs during April 2023. Working with this population, a random sample of **131 telephone interviews** was completed, giving a response rate of 28.1%¹. Each interview lasted approx. 10 minutes according to the needs of the respondent. This survey report feeds back on the results of these 131 repair service interviews.
- **June 2023 to a population of 470 tenants** whose homes had received one or more repairs during May 2023. Working with this population, a random sample of **143 telephone interviews** was completed, giving a response rate of 30.4%¹. Each interview lasted approx. 10 minutes according to the needs of the respondent. This survey report feeds back on the results of these 143 repair service interviews.

Feedback responses from tenants

There were 77 feedback responses received in April, 60 in May and 66 in June.

Below is an overview of the feedback received, including some of the comments: -

- Quality of work is always good.
- Very quick to attend to the repair. Access Line were fine and the work itself was carried out to a high standard.
- Really good service from QAPM very efficient and work was done promptly. Staff at Access Line were also very helpful.
- Guy was fantastic and good service from the council.
- Was very pleased. Contractors were very polite and efficient.
- The electrician behaved impeccably and had great communication, so I am very pleased with the process for reporting repairs, the appointment call and the work undertaken.
- The contractor was very thorough, given the previous issues with this work that was much appreciated.
- Great quality work and materials - quick response - highly delighted.
- A number of complaints regarding housing officers
- Make it easier to make the report online rather than a phone call.
- It took a long time to connect with the Access Line.
- When you get put through to the repair service there are too many confusing options.
- Not great service at all. Been in the property for over 2 years and suffering badly with bathroom mould and lack of flooring in places. Need to find a fix to this immediately.

5.13 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 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. Communication with customers remains one of the key issues in relation to the complaints raised. Every effort is being made to ensure that this situation improves and communication with our customers is key in terms of expectations etc. However, it has to be recognised that as we reduce and stop a number of things that we do, this inevitably increases the number of complaints. The impact of reduced resources invariably means that it takes longer to respond to enquiries. As a council we have reduced resources and the impact will be seen as customers' expectations have not reduced in line with our reducing capacity to undertake services or our need to prioritise some services over others.

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

You Said	We Did
That the Waste Team left your bins in the wrong place.	We have initiated regular toolbox talks with Waste Teams on Angus Council Bin Policy & Code of Conduct
That we do not communicate well with our tenants	We will endeavour to effectively communicate with tenants to ensure they are fully informed of the council's policies.
That the information on the council's website about seagulls was not up to date	The information was checked and was found to be relevant

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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Appendix 1: Breakdown per Service Area