

S14. Complaints Annual Report 2019/20

The committee considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Housing Services presenting the Council's Complaints Annual Report for 2019/20.

The Complaints Annual Report set out the Council's performance against 8 indicators set by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman. They were:-

- Complaints received per 1,000 population
- Number of complaints closed
- Complaints upheld, partially upheld and not upheld
- Average response times
- Performance against timescales
- Number of cases where an extension is authorised
- Customer satisfaction
- Learning from complaints

Over the period, the Council had received 4979 complaints compared to 3670 in the previous year. This represented an increase from 22.9 per 1000 population to 30.9 per 1000.

Of these, 91% had been closed at stage 1 of the Complaints Handling Process.

In regard to performance against timescale, 89% of stage 1 complaints had been closed within the 5 day deadline and 63% of stage 2 complaints had been closed within the 20 day deadline (compared to 58% in 2018/2019 and 69% in 2017/18).

43% of complaints had been upheld or partially upheld at stage 1 with 49% upheld or partially upheld at stage 2 (compared to 51% and 49% respectively in 2018/19). There had been a significant increase in the number of complaints referred to the SPSO for resolution, from 22 in 2018/19 to 43 in 2019/20. However only 1 had been investigated by the SPSO and it was not upheld and there were no recommendations.

In 2019/20 the areas of service which had received the most complaints had been:-

Stage 1 Complaints

	Totals
Household waste collection	984
Housing repairs	980
Staff conduct	521
Other	173
Recycling advice	171
Household waste assisted collection	118
Local schools	109
Tenant support	109

Council tax account enquiries	104
Bulky household waste collection	59

Stage 2 Complaints

	Totals
Housing repairs	78
Household waste collection	57
Staff conduct	56
Local schools	30
Communal housing repairs	20
Household waste assisted collection	15
Housing nuisance	15
Recycling advice	11
Tenant support	10
Other	9

The committee welcomed the report. Members suggested that it would be helpful if future reports would include background information for context. For example, Kenny Gillespie confirmed that there had been approximately 50,000 housing repairs carried out in 2019/20. The 521 complaints equated to 2.2% of this. Members suggested this was still a high number of complaints. While Mr Gillespie agreed that it was, he also stated that the service aimed to have no complaints.

Members of the committee noted that complaints about the contact centre had featured in the top 10 complaints. Customers had previously, it was suggested, experienced difficulties getting through to the Council. While the new system had improved access, members suggested that once connected, the system was convoluted and left callers holding on while contact centre staff tried to connect them. Kenny Gillespie undertook to relay members comments to the Head of Service.

The committee then considered the 521 complaints against staff. The committee asked if information was available in regard to the nature of the complaints and whether the Council interrogated these complaints to learn lessons. Caroline Binnie stated that the information available was high level - the Council didn't collect the information behind this. The complaints were generally about conduct and interpersonal matters where for example a caller hadn't liked the way in which they were spoken to or the tone used. Or they didn't accept the answer given. The committee asked if the complaints had led to disciplinary measures. Ms Binnie stated that due to the nature of the complaints they normally did not.

The committee then asked if support and learning measures were put in place to support staff as a consequence of the complaints. Ms Binnie stated that the Complaints Officers' Working Group met twice a year to learn and share lessons from the complaints received. She undertook to take the committee's comments back to the group.

Following a question on the makeup of the 173 'other' complaints Caroline Binnie stated that this was defined in the SPSO complaints standards and there was a large variation in the nature of complaints within this category and undertook to provide examples to members.

Decision

The Scrutiny Committee noted the report.