



**EAST DUNBARTONSHIRE
COUNCIL**

17 JUNE 2021

EPB/024/21/VMcN

**DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE – EDUCATION,
PEOPLE & BUSINESS**

CONTACT OFFICER:

**VINCE MCNULTY
EXECUTIVE OFFICER – CUSTOMER & BUSINESS
SUPPORT SERVICES**

SUBJECT TITLE:

**COMPLAINTS HANDLING - ANNUAL REPORT
2020/21**

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1** The purpose of this Report is to provide Members with details of the Council's complaints handling performance for 2020/21.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1** It is recommended that the Council :
- a)** Notes the contents of the annual complaints report 2020/21

**ANN DAVIE
DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE
EDUCATION PEOPLE & BUSINESS**

3.0 BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

- 3.1** This Report outlines the Council's performance against the complaints indicators set by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) from 1st April 2020 until 31st March 2021. The Council implemented Complaints Handling Procedures (CHP) in April 2017 to comply with the SPSO expectations and to ensure our CHP can be benchmarked against other Local Authorities within Scotland.
- 3.2** The Council is committed to providing quality services that reflect the needs of our customers. We value complaints and use information from them to help us improve our services. The Council publishes its performance of complaints handling to provide assurance in relation to our performance and to delivery of continuous improvement
- 3.3** A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction about our action or lack of action, or about the standard of the service provided by or on behalf of the Council. During 2020/2021, the Council received 395 complaints (compares to 513 in the previous year) which were recorded on the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system under the relevant categories as follows:

Complaint criteria

Category of Complaint	Number of Complaints Received
Services/Standards	261
Disagreement with Council decision	61
Council Policy	11
Employee (attitude/behavior)	61
Other	1
Total	395

Complaints by Executive Officer Area

Category of Complaint	Number of Complaints Received
Assets & Facilities	22
Customer & Business Support Services	40
Education	91
Health & Social Care Partnership	34
Housing	41
Land, Planning & Development	14
Legal & Democratic Services	11
Neighbourhood Services	95
Place & Community Planning	7
Roads & Transportation	40
Total	395

- 3.4** The SPSO requires organisations to report on six indicators. The following tables detail the Council's performance under each indicator.

Indicator 1 – Complaints Received Per 1,000 Population

The number of complaints per thousand population allows benchmarking across all authorities, the figures here show that the pandemic impacted on the overall number of complaints to the Council down from 513 in 2019/20 to 395 in 2020/21. This is most likely due to reductions in the number of services able to be delivered as a result of Covid-19 restrictions.

Year	Total Complaints Received	Per 1,000 Population
2019/2020	513	4.7
2020/2021	396	3.6

Indicator 2 – Closed Complaints

The total number of complaints closed in 2020/21 is lower than the previous year and reflects the lower total number of complaints received. The ratio of Stage 1, Stage 2 and Escalated complaints remains in line with the previous year. The ratio of complaints closed remains largely unchanged on the previous year.

	2020/2021	%	2019/2020	%
Total complaints Closed	370		520	
Total complaints closed at stage 1	216	58%	314	60%
Total complaints closed at stage 2	118	32%	140	27%
Number of complaints closed at stage 2 after Escalation	36	10%	66	13%

Indicator 3 – Complaints Upheld, Partially Upheld & Not Upheld

This indicator shows a breakdown of how complaints were closed for each of the stages. There has been an increase in the percentage of complaints not upheld for all stages. It is difficult to fully understand the underlying reason for this, however, there have been a number of complaints this year about restricted services as a result of the pandemic which may have impacted the results.

Stage 1 Complaints

	2020/2021	2019/2020
Number of complaints closed at Stage 1	216	314
Number of complaints upheld at Stage 1	91	141
Number of complaints upheld at stage 1 as a % of all complaints Closed in full at stage 1	42%	45%
Number of complaints partially upheld at stage 1	37	74
Number of complaints partially upheld at stage 1 as a % of all complaints closed at stage 1	17%	24%
% Of complaints upheld or partially upheld at stage 1	59%	69%
Number of complaints not upheld at stage 1	88	99
Number of complaints not upheld at Stage 1 as a % of all	41%	31%

complaints closed in full at stage 1		
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Stage 2 Complaints

	2020/2021	2019/2020
Number of complaints closed at stage 2	118	140
Number of complaints upheld at stage 2	27	34
Number of complaints upheld at stage 2 as a % of all complaints closed In full at stage 2	23%	24%
Number of complaints partially upheld at stage 2	17	36
Number of complaints partially upheld at stage 2 as a % of all Complaints closed at stage 2	14%	26%
% Of complaints upheld or partially Upheld at stage 2	37%	50%
Number of complaints not upheld at stage 2	74	70
Number of complaints not upheld at Stage 2 as a % of all complaints closed in full at stage 2	63%	50%

Escalated Complaints

	2020/2021	2019/2020
Number of complaints closed after escalation	36	66
Number of complaints upheld after escalation	5	16
Number of escalated complaints upheld at stage 2 as % of all escalated complaints closed in full at stage 2	14%	24%
The number of complaints partially upheld after escalation	9	24
Number of escalated complaints partially upheld at stage 2 as a % of all escalated complaints closed in full at stage 2	25%	36%
% Of complaints upheld or partially upheld after escalation	39%	60%
Number of complaints not upheld after escalation	22	26
Number of escalated complaints not upheld at stage 2 as a % of all escalated complaints closed in full at stage 2.	61%	40%

Indicator 4 – Average Response Times

This indicator shows our average time for responding to complaints. It shows a marked increase in the time take to resolve complaints. This is due to the pandemic and the reallocation of resources in the complaints team and service areas to Covid-19 response duties.

	2020/2021	2019/2020
STAGE 1		
Number of complaints closed at stage 1 (frontline resolution)	216	314
Average time in working days for a full response at stage 1	10.6	4.8
STAGE 2		
Number of complaints closed at stage 2 (investigation)	118	140
Average time in working days for a full response at stage 2	24.6	20.6
ESCALATED		

Number of complaints closed after escalation	36	66
Average time in working days for a full response after escalation	25.9	16.5

Indicator 5 – Performance against timescales

Indicator 5 assess our performance compared to the timescales set out by the SPSO and our CHP. The decrease in performance has been due to the resource reallocations outlined in 3.12.

	2020/2021	2019/2020
STAGE 1		
Number of complaints closed at stage 1 (frontline resolution)	216	314
Number of complaints closed at Stage 1 within 5 working days.	102	245
Number of complaints closed at stage 1 within 5 working days as a % of total stage 1 complaints.	47%	78%
STAGE 2		
Number of complaints closed at Stage 2 (investigation)	118	140
Number of complaints closed at Stage 2 within 20 working days	66	97
Number of complaints closed at stage 2 within 20 working dates as a % of total stage 2 complaints.	56%	69%
ESCALATED		
Number of complaints closed after escalation	36	66
Number of complaints closed after escalation within 20 working days	18	49
Number of complaints closed after escalation within 20 working days as a % of total escalated complaints	50%	74%

Indicator 6 Use of Extensions

This indicator measures extensions which are requested before the deadline has been reached. The figures for 2020/2021 are largely reflective of the previous year which indicates that services are not requesting extensions before deadlines.

	2020/2021	2019/2020
STAGE 1		
Total number of complaints closed at stage 1	216	314
Total number of complaints closed at stage 1 where an extension was authorised.	14	19
Total number of complaints closed at stage 1 where an extension was authorised as a % of total stage 1 complaints.	6%	6%
STAGE 2		
Total number of complaints closed at stage 2	118	140
Total number of complaints closed at stage 2 where an extension was authorised.	22	19
Total number of complaints closed at stage 2 where an extension was authorised, as a % of total stage 2 complaints	19%	14%

ESCALATED		
Total number of complaints closed after escalation	36	66
Total number of complaints closed after escalation where an extension was authorized	7	3
Total number of complaints closed after escalation where an extension was authorised as a % of complaints escalated	19%	4%

- 3.5** The SPSO requires councils to have processes in place to help them learn from complaints and review and change service delivery if required. We consider complaints as useful feedback and an opportunity to improve our service. The following are two examples where our service provision/processes have been reviewed and improved as a result of a complaint.

Example 1

Complaint received from a resident who lives close to one of the Council's public halls where social events can be hosted. The resident complained of noise outside the hall from people coming and going during social events.

Actions:

- additional signage was displayed reminding patrons of the Council's no smoking policy and to be considerate of neighbours
- additional condition added to the occasional licence application stating no drinks, whether alcoholic or not, permitted to be taken beyond the internal doors of the hall
- Letting Terms & Conditions were updated reminding patrons attending events to be considerate to residents in the immediate vicinity of the hall.

Example 2

Complaint received from a resident who lives closed to one of the Council's school pitches, which is regularly let to football clubs for training/matches. In particular, he was complaining about unauthorised use of the pitch outwith letting time.

Action:

- It was agreed that the goals would be chained to the fence during school holidays to prevent or at least discourage such unauthorised use and the potential for anti-social behaviour.

- 3.6** If dissatisfied with our response, some customers will choose to take their complaint to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman whose office will review both our service delivery and our handling of the customer's complaint. If the Ombudsman upholds or partially upholds a complaint they will make recommendations to the Council. These recommendations are discussed with the service teams and any required changes are implemented with evidence provided to the Ombudsman. Specific improvement actions will vary depending on the nature of each case.

- 3.7** The following table details the complaints considered by the SPSO in 2020/21:

	2020/2021	INVESTIGATION OUTCOMES
Total number of complaints received by the SPSO	19*	
Complaints investigated by the SPSO	2	Ongoing no outcomes yet
Complaints not taken forward by the SPSO	14	
Complaint still open - no decision yet	4**	
Outcomes received for complaints submitted in a previous year.	3	1 – not taken forward by SPSO 2 – Not Upheld

* one complaint was subsequently withdrawn by the complainant, resulting in 18.

** this figure includes the 2 complaints under investigation

3.8 The Complaints Team are always looking to achieve continuous improvement and have identified the following areas for improvement during 2021/2022:

- Provide bi-annual reporting to Council to reflect the work undertaken on complaints handling across the organisation.
- Engagement with Executive Officers to provide more detailed reports on their teams' performance.
- Improve the recording and reporting of information on learning from complaints and the relevant actions taken to facilitate service improvements.

4.0 IMPLICATIONS

The implications for the Council are as undernoted.

4.1 Frontline Service to Customers – Improved service delivery through continuous improvement and management of performance.

4.2 Workforce (including any significant resource implications) – None

4.3 Legal Implications – None

4.4 Financial Implications – None

4.5 Procurement – None

4.6 ICT – None

4.7 Corporate Assets – None

4.8 Equalities – None

5.0 MANAGEMENT OF RISK

5.1 The risks and control measures relating to this Report are as follows:-

5.2 Ensuring effective scrutiny of service performance and driving improvement in service delivery.

6.0 IMPACT

6.1 ECONOMIC GROWTH & RECOVERY – None

6.2 EMPLOYMENT & SKILLS – None

6.3 CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE – None

6.4 SAFER & STRONGER COMMUNITIES – None

6.5 ADULT HEALTH & WELLBEING – None

6.6 OLDER ADULTS, VULNERABLE PEOPLE & CARERS – None

6.7 STATUTORY DUTY – This report forms part of our statutory duty of performance reporting.

7.0 POLICY CHECKLIST

7.1 This Report has been assessed against the Policy Development Checklist and has been classified as being an operational report and not a new policy or change to an existing policy document.

8.0 APPENDICES

8.1 None