

PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL

Scrutiny Committee – 20 June 2012

COUNCIL COMPLAINTS REPORT FOR OCTOBER 2011 – MARCH 2012

Report by Head of Legal Services

ABSTRACT

This report outlines the performance of the Council Complaints Procedure for the period October 2011 to March 2012.

1 RECOMMENDATION

The Scrutiny Committee is asked to note the report.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 The Council introduced its current complaints procedure in September 2008. This report covers the period from October 2011 to March 2012.

2.2 It draws on information extracted from the Council's electronic Complaints Relationship Management system. This system holds all the Council's complaint information including Community Care and Children's Services complaints. These complaints are also reported separately to the Scrutiny Committee.

2.3 The Council's current complaints procedure has two stages, with the first stage being an investigation by the relevant Service. If the complainant is dissatisfied, then a further review or investigation is carried out by the Council Complaints Team based in Legal Services on behalf of the Chief Executive or Depute Chief Executive.

3 COMPLAINTS RECEIVED

3.1 The number of complaints received during each six-monthly period since October 2007 is given below.

Period	Stage 1	Stage 2	Percentage
Oct 2007 - Mar 2008	58	15	26%
Apr 2008 - Aug 2008	71	18	25%
Sept 2008 - Mar 2009	64	24	38%
Apr 2009 - Sept 2009	47	21	45%

Oct 2009 - Mar 2010	37	20	54%
April 2010 – Sept 2010	34	19	56%
Oct 2010 – March 2011	39	23	59%
April 2011 – Sept 2011	37	23	62%
Oct 2011 – March 2012	42	25	59%

The number of stage 1 and 2 complaints has risen slightly in the last six months. Overall the number of stage 2 complaints has remained reasonably static, but remains high when viewed as a percentage of stage 1 complaints. This is thought to reflect a determination by complainants to seek redress either from the Chief Executive or the SPSO rather than a weakness in the handling of complaints at stage 1.

3.2 Stage 1 Complaints received by Service

Service	Percentage of Complaints		
	Oct 10 – Mar 11	April 11 – Sept 11	Oct 11 – March 12
Chief Executives	8%	5%	4%
Education & Children's Service	26%	22%	14%
Environment Services	41%	54%	59%
Housing & Community Care	25%	19%	21%

3.3 Stage 1 Complaints received by Category

Category	Percentage of Complaints		
	Oct 10 – Mar 11	April 11 – Sept 11	Oct 11 – March 12
Service Delivery	54%	55%	59%
Performance/Staff Attitude	28%	33%	36%
Policy/Procedure	18%	12%	5%

Complaints are categorised as shown, but, whilst there have been changes from period to period, the split has remained reasonably constant although there has been an overall decrease in Policy/Procedure complaints.

4 RESPONSIVENESS TO COMPLAINTS

- 4.1 The Council's complaints procedure specifies that complaints should be acknowledged within five working days and should receive a response within 15 working days.

	Oct – Mar 11		April 11 – Sept 10		Oct 11 – March 12	
Acknowledged within five working days	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 1	Stage 2
	95%	87%	97%	94%	100%	95%
Full response within target	82%	78%	86%	94%	83%	79%

- 4.2 The rate of response for acknowledgements is very good and has consistently improved over the last two periods.
- 4.3 The level of full responses for stage 1 complaints is very consistent, but less than 100%, and reflects the challenging nature of the target.
- 4.4 The response rate for stage 2 complaints has decreased due to a number of complaints which were both difficult and complex to investigate.
- 4.5 Since January 2010, the target for completing Stage 2 complaints is 15 working days or a timescale agreed with the complainant. Where the complainant has expressed dissatisfaction with the extended timescale, the complaint is classified as exceeding the deadline.

5 OUTCOME OF COMPLETED STAGE 2 INVESTIGATIONS

	Chief Executives	Education & Children's Services	Environment Services	Housing & Community Care	Total
Complaints	3	5	5	8	21
Complaint points	18	16	20	33	87
Points Upheld	5	1	3	7	16
Points Partially Upheld	3	1	1	7	12
Points No conclusion	1	0	0	1	2
Points Not Upheld	9	14	16	18	57

- 5.1 The total number of complaints escalated to Stage 2 during this period was 25 however one complaint is on hold, one is still under investigation and two were withdrawn by the complainants.
- 5.2 Stage 1 investigations are carried out by Investigating Officers within each Service. The Services have their own Stage 1 response letter format and they are not currently required to report whether the complaint has been upheld or not. It is proposed that in the future there will be a standardised format introduced following the review detailed below.

6 FUTURE

- 6.1 The SPSO's Model Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP) was published in late February 2011 and guidance on it was published by the SPSO in February 2012. Work has started on how it should be implemented on a Council wide basis.
- 6.2 The recommendations from the Scrutiny Committee's report "Learning from Complaints and Customer Feedback" (12/148) will be taken into consideration during this process.
- 6.3 The model CHP will be the subject of a further report once this preliminary work is finalised and options for implementation have been devised.
- 6.4 The Council's current complaints policies and procedures will be reviewed as part of the implementation of the model CHP.

7 CONSULTATION

Each Service's Complaints Co-ordinator were consulted during the preparation of this report.

8 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

There are no resource implications arising directly from this report.

9 COUNCIL CORPORATE PLAN OBJECTIVES 2009-2012

This report supports all the Council's Corporate Plan Objectives.

10 CONCLUSION

Complaints are an important means of receiving information about the delivery of Council services and the actions of our employees. The complaints process appears to be working reasonably well although it is acknowledged that Stage 2 complaints are taking longer than 15 days. As the new complaints process is developed a more qualitative performance assessment will be introduced.

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