

# Comments & Complaints



How to comment or  
complain about a  
Council service



“Feedback from our customers is essential if we are to really understand how well we are delivering our services. I see complaints as a valuable part of that feedback. We clearly want to get things right first time, and a formal complaint means we may have got something wrong. This does though give us the opportunity to better understand and learn how our customers experience dealing with the council. The council therefore welcomes complaints and actively listens to our customers, so we can learn from what you tell us to help improve our services.”

Chief Executive, Fife Council

# Fife Council complaints procedure

Fife Council is committed to providing **excellent customer service**.

We value complaints and use information from them to help us improve our services.

If something goes wrong or you are dissatisfied with our services, please tell us. This leaflet describes our complaints procedure and how to make a complaint. It also tells you about our service standards and what you can expect from us.

## What is a complaint?

We regard a complaint as any expression of dissatisfaction about our action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by us or on our behalf.

## What can I complain about?

### **You can complain about things like:**

- failure to provide a service
- inadequate standard of service
- dissatisfaction with Council policy
- treatment by or attitude of a member of staff
- disagreement with a decision where the customer cannot use another procedure (for example an appeal) to resolve the matter
- Fife Council's failure to follow the appropriate administrative process

Your complaint may involve more than one council service or be about someone working on our behalf.

## What can't I complain about?

**There are some things we can't deal with through our complaints handling procedure. These include:**

- a routine first-time request for a service
- a request for compensation only
- issues that are in court or have already been heard by a court or a tribunal
- disagreement with a decision where a statutory right of appeal exists, for example in relation to council tax or planning
- an attempt to reopen a previously concluded complaint or to have a complaint reconsidered where we have already given our final decision

In the majority of cases, the council is also unable to deal with complaints about councillors, particularly where the complaint alleges that a councillor has breached the Councillors' Code of Conduct.

## Who can complain?

Anyone can make a complaint to us, including the representative of someone who is dissatisfied with our service. A representative will be required for young people under 12 years of age. Please also read the section in this leaflet '**Getting help to make your complaint**'.

## How do I complain?

**You can complain in any of the following ways:**

- Go online at **[www.fife.gov.uk/complaints](http://www.fife.gov.uk/complaints)**
- phone our general enquiries line: **03451 55 00 00** (8am-6pm Monday to Friday)
- BT text direct for the deaf: **18001 01592 55 11 91**
- visit us at any Council office and speak to a member of staff
- fill in our comments and complaints form at the end of this leaflet and hand it in or post it to us, you don't need a stamp
- write to us at: Freepost RTBZ-BBJT-BBYC, Comments and Complaints, Fife Council, Fife House, Glenrothes, KY7 5LT
- if you are deaf and have registered for the Council's SMS text service, please send your complaint to the number given when you registered.

It is easier for us to resolve complaints if you make them quickly and directly to the service concerned. So please talk to a member of our staff at the service you are complaining about. Then they can try to resolve any problems on the spot.

**When complaining, tell us:**

- your full name and address
- as much as you can about the complaint
- what has gone wrong
- how you want us to resolve the matter.

## How long do I have to make a complaint?

**Normally, you must make your complaint within six months of:**

- the event you want to complain about, or
- finding out that you have a reason to complain, but no longer than 12 months after the event itself.

In exceptional circumstances, we may be able to accept a complaint after the time limit. If you feel that the time limit should not apply to your complaint, please tell us why.

## Handling anonymous complaints

We value all complaints. This means we treat all complaints including anonymous complaints seriously and will take action to consider them further, wherever this is appropriate. Generally, we will consider anonymous complaints if there is enough information in the complaint to enable us to make further enquiries. If, however, an anonymous complaint does not provide enough information to enable us to take further action, we may decide not to pursue it further. This will be at the discretion of the Service and the appropriate managers therein.

If an anonymous complaint makes serious allegations, we will refer it to the appropriate line management or management team in the Service deemed most appropriate to consider the matters raised.

# What happens when I have complained?

We will always tell you who is dealing with your complaint.

Our complaints procedure has two stages:

## **Stage one – frontline resolution**

We aim to resolve complaints quickly and close to where we provided the service. This could mean an on-the-spot apology and explanation if something has clearly gone wrong, and immediate action to resolve the problem.

We will give you our decision at Stage 1 in five working days or less, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

If a complaint has not been closed within ten working days, it should be escalated to stage 2 for a final response.

## **Stage two – investigation**

Stage 2 deals with two types of complaint: those that have not been resolved at Stage 1 and those that are complex and require detailed investigation.

### **When using Stage 2 we will:**

- acknowledge receipt of your complaint within three working days
- discuss your complaint with you to understand why you remain dissatisfied and what outcome you are looking for
- We will contact the customer to clarify the points of complaint and outcome sought (where these are already clear, we will confirm them in the acknowledgement).

If our investigation will take longer than 20 working days, we will tell you. We will agree revised time limits with you and keep you updated on progress.

## What if I'm still dissatisfied?

After we have fully investigated, if you are still dissatisfied with our decision or the way we dealt with your complaint, you can ask the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) to look at it. There is no further level of appeal within the Council.

The SPSO cannot normally look at:

- a complaint that has not completed our complaints procedure (so please make sure it has done so before contacting the SPSO)
- events that happened, or that you became aware of, more than a year ago
- a matter that has been or is being considered in court.

You can contact the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman:

**In Person:**

SPSO  
Bridgeside House  
99 McDonald Road  
Edinburgh EH7 4NS

**By Post:**

Freepost SPSO

Freephone: **0800 377 7330**

Online contact: **[www.spsso.org.uk/contact-us](http://www.spsso.org.uk/contact-us)**

Website: **[www.spsso.org.uk](http://www.spsso.org.uk)**

## Care complaints

If your complaint relates to a care service we provide, you can choose whether to complain to us or the Care Inspectorate. You can find out more about their complaints procedure, or make a complaint, by contacting them.

The Care Inspectorate has several offices around Scotland.

Online: **[www.careinspectorate.com](http://www.careinspectorate.com)**

Telephone: **0345 600 9527**

Email: **[concerns@careinspectorate.gov.scot](mailto:concerns@careinspectorate.gov.scot)**

Fife HSCP online: **[www.fife.gov.uk/services/fife-council-complaints-form/health-and-social-care](http://www.fife.gov.uk/services/fife-council-complaints-form/health-and-social-care)**

## Getting help to make your complaint

We understand that you may be unable, or reluctant, to make a complaint yourself. We accept complaints from the representative of a person who is dissatisfied with our service. We can take complaints from a friend, relative, or an advocate, if you have given them your consent to complain for you.

You can find out about advocates in your area by contacting the Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance.

### Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance

Tel: **0131 510 9410** Website: **[www.siaa.org.uk](http://www.siaa.org.uk)**

Email: **[enquiry@siaa.org.uk](mailto:enquiry@siaa.org.uk)**

We are committed to making our service easy to use for all members of the community. In line with our statutory equalities duties, we will always ensure that reasonable adjustments are made to help customers access and use our services. If you have trouble putting your complaint in writing, or want this information in another language or format, such as large font or Braille please contact us on 03451 55 55 00.

## Making a comment

As well as complaints, we are always interested in your comments on Council services, policies and procedures. Your comments can help us to:

- improve the quality of services we provide, and
- plan and improve services which better meet your needs.

We also like to know when things have gone well and you have received good customer service, we can then pass this on to the staff involved.



## Our contact details

Please contact us by the following means:

Go online at **www.fife.gov.uk**

Phone our general enquiries line: **03451 55 00 00**  
(8am-6pm Monday to Friday)

Visit us at any Council office and speak to a member of staff.

Information about Fife Council can be made available in large print, braille, audio CD/tape and Gaelic on request by calling **03451 55 55 00**

**SMS Service for Deaf customers (you will need to be registered)**  
please text (SMS) 07781 480 185 lines open from 8am-8pm

### **BT Text Direct:**

18001 03451 550000

### **Language lines**

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خط هاتف اللغة العربية: 03451 55 55 77

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বাংলায় আলাপ করার জন্য টেলিফোন লাইন: 03451 55 55 99

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中文語言熱線電話: 03451 55 55 88

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Polskojęzyczna linia telefoniczna: 03451 55 55 44

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# Quick guide to our complaints procedure

## Complaints procedure

You can make your complaint through the web or email, by phone or in writing / completing our comments and complaints leaflet.

We have a **two-stage complaints procedure**. We will always try to deal with your complaint quickly. But if it is clear that the matter will need a detailed investigation, we will tell you and keep you updated on our progress.

### Stage 1: frontline resolution

We will always try to resolve your complaint as soon as possible, within **five working days** if we can.

If you are dissatisfied with our response, you can ask us to consider your complaint at Stage 2.

### Stage 2: investigation

We will look at your complaint at this stage if you are dissatisfied with our response at Stage 1. We also look at some complaints immediately at this stage, if it is clear that they are complex or need detailed investigation.

We will acknowledge your complaint within **three working days**. We will give you our decision as soon as possible. This will be after no more than **20 working days** unless there is clearly a good reason for needing more time.

## The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman

If, after receiving our final decision on your complaint, you remain dissatisfied with our decision or the way we have handled your complaint, you can ask the SPSO to consider it.

We will tell you how to do this when we send you our final decision.

# Fife Council Comments & Complaints Form

PLEASE WRITE YOUR NAME & ADDRESS IN BLOCK CAPITALS

**Title:** ☐ Mr ☐ Mrs ☐ Miss ☐ Ms ☐ Dr ☐ other

**Forename:**

**Surname:**

**Address:**

**Postcode:**

**Email:**

**Contact Tel:**

**My comment/complaint:** (Please tick the relevant boxes and give as many details as possible, noting what action you would like us to take)

☐ **Comment** ☐ **Complaint** ☐ **I would like a response**

Continue on a separate sheet if necessary

**Signature**

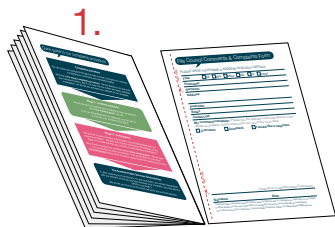
**Date**

The information you have supplied will be used by Fife Council to manage your comment or complaint. Further details on how your information is managed can be found at [www.fife.gov.uk/privacy](http://www.fife.gov.uk/privacy). For further information contact the Councils Data Protection Officer at [dataprotection@fife.gov.uk](mailto:dataprotection@fife.gov.uk).

3. tape edges closed

To return your comments and complaints form either:

- Hand it into a member of staff or
  - Post it to us following the instructions below.
1. Separate the form from this booklet (see illustration).
  2. Fold along dotted line (see illustration).
  3. Tape edges closed (see illustration).



2. fold along dotted line

2



Freepost RTBZ-BBJT-BBYC  
Comments and Complaints  
Fife Council  
Fife House  
Glenrothes  
KY7 5LT



3. tape edges closed

3. tape edges closed