**Standards & Audit Committee**

Date:7th October 2021
Agenda Item No.

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| **Complaints Update**  |
| Report by: Mike Enston Executive Director - Communities |
| Wards Affected: All |

**Purpose**

To provide a brief update on complaints closed between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021 (performance and information)

**Recommendation(s)**

That the Committee:

* Comment on the Council’s performance during the pandemic, noting the increased volume, the subject matter of complaints received, and the associated responsiveness.

**Resource Implications**

There are no direct resource implications arising from this report.

**Legal & Risk Implications**

There are no direct legal and risk implications arising from this report.

**Impact Assessment**

An EqIA has not been completed and is not necessary as the report does not propose a change or revision to existing policies and practices.

**Consultation**

No specific consultation has been carried out in relation to this report however there is continuous consultation with many Services through daily chasers, weekly status updates, quarterly and ad hoc performance reports.

**1.0 Background**

1.1 The Council responds to over 7 million contacts from customers across Fife every year. This figure then puts into context the comparatively small number of corporately defined complaints received. When we do receive complaints, we aim to resolve these quickly, and to learn from feedback to improve future services.

1.2 Reports on customer complaints made to the Council are presented twice a year to this Committee. We also publicly report complaints performance information quarterly online and benchmark with other local authorities. No update report was requested into 2020/21 and therefore reporting has been annual only over the last year.

1.3 The areas highlighted for improvement from the 2019/20 report included:

* Improving upon current responsiveness rates, such as targeting poorer performing Services (more effective queue management and professional administrational support).
* Learning and improving from complaints received (better corrective actions leading to revised processes or service provision)

1.4 Scottish Councils must follow the model complaint handling procedure developed by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO). The model was designed to provide a simpler, more consistent process for customers to follow and encourages local authorities to make best use of lessons learned from complaints. A revised version of the procedure with minor changes was launched in April 2021.

**2.0 Performance and Issues Arising from Complaints**

2.1 From the 3,217 complaints received from 1st April 2020 to 31 March 2021, 2,903 of these were closed (the remainder were still open, withdrawn or pending an allocation decision). This is a 33% increase on the same period last year when 2,425 complaints were received. The volume of complaints had generally been reducing however this increase can be attributed to changes to service provision throughout the Council’s response to the pandemic where services were reduced, withdrawn, or amended following safe working restrictions.

2.2 To improve customer satisfaction and reduce costs, we aim to complete 80% of complaints at Stage 1, and within 5 working days and the remaining 20% at Stage 2, within 20 working days. 87% of complaints were successfully handled at stage 1 in period, 89.5% of which were handled in timescale.

**Table 1**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Stage** | **Total No. of complaints closed** | **No. closed in target timescales** | **% closed in target timescales** |
|  | 2,903 | 2,562 | 88.3% (85.4 in 19-20) |
| Stage 1 (5 days) | 2,522 (87%) | 2,256 | 89.5% (85.6 in 19-20) |
| Stage 2 (20 days) | 381 (13%) | 306 | 80.3% (84.2 in 19-20) |

2.3 The graphs below show our performance over the last 7 years. The general trend is one of improvement, however performance is challenging to describe for this period. Where complaint volumes did increase, particularly for Domestic Waste, these were generally straightforward to respond to and a consequence of government restrictions at the beginning of the pandemic. Responsiveness to these increased volumes has driven up the overall performance. Other areas of the organisation require improvement as detailed throughout this report.



2.4 This year generally sees an improvement over last from all complaints and stage 1 complaints in timescale. Not shown is the fall in stage 2 cases in timescale from last year as detailed in the table following Paragraph 2.9, and the drop in performance for many Services from last year’s result. The general improvement in responsiveness may therefore simply be the effect of Domestic Waste volumes answered quickly.

2.5 The following graph shows the average working days to close a complaint and that from 2015 (and before) we have generally become quicker at responding to all the complaints received. The trend is an improving picture despite this year’s spike with the average working days to complete stage 2 cases. This increase (poorer performance) is a consequence of closing stagnant Education cases. Education complaints that had been open for 4 months or more with no change communicated were closed.



2.6 These Education cases were highlighted weekly to the Service contact on status reports and routinely expedited directly with the named complaint handlers. No evidence of formal closure or progress was provided however there was also no evidence of customers chasing these cases or approaching the SPSO to report any lack of responsiveness. 17 such cases were closed, from which 11 cases had remained open for greater than 100 working days and 5 were more than 280 working days. It should be recognised that some Education complaints will naturally run into additional working days as working days take no account of term time. School closure during the pandemic is also likely to have impacted on performance.

2.7 The following table provides a breakdown of the average working days at each stage by respective Services relative to the volume of complaints closed in 2020/21. The Volume Context offers some scale between the volume of complaints received and an indicative number of the activities carried out by the Services. The Volume Context is based upon indicative figures from 2018/19 however it should be recognised that the pandemic and safe working practices with less service provision available means these volumes may not be representative of 2020/21.

**Table 2**



2.8 Complaints that necessarily run into extra time (procedural extensions) are counted for statistical purposes as having not met timescale. Customers are however informed when an extension becomes strictly necessary. The procedure allows for such extensions. Overall, 39% of cases that are determined in this report as out of timescale, fell within extended timescale. This then provides the statistic that 93% of all complaints were in either procedural or customer agreed timescales.

2.9 The table shows complaint responsiveness by the Services / departments in receipt of >90% of FC complaints. Ordered by percentage all in timescale, worst to best. Please note that 8% of Building Services’ complaints were attributed to 3rd parties (20 out of the total of 257).

**Table 3**



**NB: Grey areas highlight a reduction over the previous year and overall responsiveness worse than the Council average.**

2.10 From the greyed figures in the “% All in timescale 2020/21” column the comparative performance allowing for agreed extensions is as follows:



2.11 Escalation & Resolution continued to support Services in day-to-day business including providing information, procedural support, qualitative review and information around performance. They are also engaged daily in reminding Services of due dates in advance of their deadlines and supporting the administration of extensions and following due process.

**Qualitative Checks**

2.12 Last year’s report detailed that the qualitative methodology would continue. Call backs were replaced by the Council’s approach to satisfaction where a short online survey was emailed automatically to all customers that we hold an email address for, four weeks after their case was recorded. Following the launch of the new website fife.gov.uk the transaction survey needed replaced as this was previously coded to suit older technology. Work to replace the transactional survey that included complaints remains pending.

2.13 There were 365 complaint survey forms returned this year, however only 37% of customers were satisfied overall with the elements surveyed relating to their complaint. This has improved from last year’s data where 35% of customers had overall satisfaction. Emails are issued to customers in receipt of the full range of decisions, including a percentage where their complaint was not or only partially upheld. See paragraph 2.14



2.14 There were both positive and negative comments received from the surveys:

**Positive Comments:**

* Very well handled, thank you.
* Prompt and effective response assuring remedial action would be taken.
* Complaint was taken in a professional manner. Further information requested was dealt with on time.
* I was treated courteously and with respect throughout my complaint return call. I now know what to do should a similar incident occur.
* Was very happy with how complaint was dealt with by the lady who I spoke to on the phone and how she also dealt with complaint in writing.

**Negative Comments:**

* The response I got was pathetic & I was left hanging. Basically, take it or leave it attitude.
* The issue has still not been rectified.
* I think Fife Council's complaints system is a waste of time because our complaint has never been resolved.
* Despite my complaint, all the issues I have raised remain unresolved
* I do feel that if I was not the kind of person to persist with this that my complaint may well have been dismissed at this stage.
* No feedback or update was given

2.15 The following table provides the details of complaint decisions across Fife:

**Table 4**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|   | **Upheld** | **Not Upheld** | **Partial Upheld** |
| Overall Complaints | 35% | 48% | 17% |
| Stage 1 | 36% | 48% | 16% |
| Stage 2 | 27% | 49% | 25% |

**Other Customer Issues**

2.16 The complaints procedure includes a clear definition of a complaint which means that some issues are recorded as fault reports or requests for service rather than as complaints. Some of these customer issues may have been recorded as complaints prior to the revised definition as the Council definition at the time allowed issues to be considered as a ‘complaint’ where a customer requested this.

2.17 Service requests considered outside of the definition include the volumes as shown in Table 5. Note that missed bins are generally considered as complaints however given the complexity and volumes, these are logged outside of the complaints system unless there is clear evidence of repeated failures or broader issues that are more than a missed collection.

**Table 5**



**Note:** The table is an extract from our CMS providing the volume of enquiries logged against an enquiry type. Services may express enquiry volumes differently

2.18 Provision of this sort of data continues to be developed for future reports to provide Committee members with a fuller picture of matters raised. No further comment is offered on the changing volumes over time as any interpretation could be flawed as often changes are made to how such requests are made and recorded therefore influencing an extract from the database. Additional information is also available from the Enterprise and Environment Directorate Section/Service Performance Reports that formed part of the Environment and Protective Services Sub Committee meeting of 2 September 2021. Annual figures for all of Fife Council such as illegal dumping, grounds maintenance requests etc. are available. See the link within Background Papers.

**Area Comparison**

2.19 Table 7 provides the latest comparison of the volume of main Service complaints by area (presented per million of the population to provide better readability). Note that complaints made anonymously or from outside of Fife are not attributed to any Area Committee (therefore the grand total will not sum to 2,903 complaints). Population information copied over from last year’s report.

 **Table 6**

|  **Area Committee** | **Dunfermline** | **Cowdenbeath** | **Glenrothes** | **Kirkcaldy** | **Levenmouth** | **North East Fife** | **South West Fife** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Population Volume | 56,832 | 41,288 | 50,257 | 60,214 | 37,288 | 74,674 | 49,777 |
| Service Complaints by 1Million Population  | Per 1M  | Per 1M | Per 1M | Per 1M | Per 1M | Per 1M | Per 1M |
| Benefits - C/Tax | 510 | 533 | 398 | 448 | 563 | 415 | 382 |
| Bereavement  | 18 | 97 | 40 | 33 | 27 | 27 | 60 |
| Building Services | 440 | **945** | **816** | **664** | **805** | **522** | 382 |
| Catering & Facilities  | 35 | 0 | 40 | 33 | 0 | 147 | 100 |
| Contact Centre | 70 | 194 | 199 | 166 | 54 | 121 | 40 |
| Customer Service  | 35 | 48 | 20 | 17 | 27 | 40 | 20 |
| Domestic Waste | **2745** | **2204** | **2507** | **2475** | **2145** | **2745** | **2150** |
| Education | 387 | 291 | 139 | 382 | 215 | 201 | 141 |
| Housing | **1425** | **1284** | **1333** | **1810** | **1153** | **643** | **542** |
| Local Office | 0 | 48 | 60 | 33 | 27 | 0 | 0 |
| Parks Streets  | 194 | 315 | 279 | 183 | 188 | 94 | 161 |
| Planning | 53 | 97 | 20 | 66 | 54 | 201 | 80 |
| Protective Services | 53 | 48 | 40 | 66 | 27 | 27 | 40 |
| Safer Communities | 53 | 145 | 60 | 66 | 107 | 94 | 121 |
| Sustainability | 158 | 170 | 239 | 83 | 215 | 228 | 100 |
| Transportation | **721** | 557 | 617 | 515 | 456 | 429 | **462** |
| Total | 6968 | 7096 | 6984 | 7141 | 6141 | 6066 | 4781 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

2.20 The table identifies in bold the top 3 Committee area complaints received by Service*.* Domestic Waste and Housing are in the top 3 for each area with the biggest percentage of complaints concerning failure to collect or empty bins. Housing complaints with the highest volumes refer to dissatisfaction with policy or current delivery arrangements.

2.21 There is some variation in area responsiveness to complaints. This ranges from 86% (down from 90% in 2019/20) of all complaints responded to in timescale in the City of Dunfermline area to 92% (up from 87% in 2019/20) of all complaints in the North East Fife area. Work continues to explore the nature of the variation however the high volume of missed bin complaints that were readily addressed in timescale will have influenced this result.

2.22 The majority of complaints increasingly come in via our website, the table displays the shift over time away from traditional methods of receiving complaints (letters and telephone calls) to electronic, best value channels. The increase in web traffic during 2020/21 is an impact of the pandemic.



**3.0 Customer Satisfaction**

3.1 A new council wide approach to measuring customer satisfaction was launched in 2017. A link to a short online survey is emailed automatically to all customers that we hold an email address for, 4 weeks after their case is logged on our customer management system (Lagan). Some of the transaction types selected for the survey include:

* Repairs i.e., housing
* Reporting faults i.e., potholes, street lighting
* Environmental i.e., domestic waste

3.2 The satisfaction survey methodology has us ask customers how much they agree or disagree with the following statements 4 weeks after they have completed a range of transactions:

* I got everything I needed from the service
* I was happy with the time taken to deal with my request or enquiry
* I got all the information I needed
* I was happy with the way I was treated

3.3 The automated distribution of this new, short customer satisfaction survey to high volumes of customers has generated a high response levels where we have seen a peak of an 18% return rate. By linking up to Lagan, feedback is based on real transactions and gives us a comprehensive picture of customer satisfaction with the transaction undertaken.

3.4 The expectation is for Services to consider the customer feedback, particularly the comments, following up by contacting customers where required, with the aim of improving service delivery. Services are simply asked to consider the content of quarterly reports with the aim of improving service delivery or introducing corrective action to mitigate repeat circumstances that cause dissatisfaction.

3.5 The Fife Council overall results for 2020/21 has 57% of those surveyed (58% 2019/20) agree with the satisfaction statements (see 6.2), graph as shown (6904 surveys returned):



3.6 The breakdown by transaction family type is as shown in table 7 below:

 **Table 7**

| **Transaction Family** | **No of Surveys** | **Overall Satisfaction** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Bins/Waste | 3521 | 57% |
| Blue Badge | 17 | 91% |
| Comments/Enquiries | 3 | 42% |
| Community Alarms | 92 | 95% |
| Complaint | 365 | 37% |
| Concessionary Travel | 3 | 75% |
| Environmental Complaint | 16 | 53% |
| Garden Maintenance | 1 | 100% |
| Housing | 328 | 68% |
| Licence | 1 | 100% |
| Meals on Wheels | 36 | 87% |
| MyFife Card | 378 | 95% |
| Payment Receipt | 159 | 87% |
| Pest Issue | 77 | 91% |
| Road or Street Fault | 1879 | 43% |
| Traffic or Streetlight Fault | 28 | 57% |
| **Total** | **6904** | **57%** |

**4.0 Learning from Complaints**

4.1 One key element of handling complaints is using customer feedback to rectify or improve upon the service provided. It has previously been reported that the improvements introduced allowed for more and better corrective actions to be captured.

4.2 Every upheld or partially upheld complaint presents an opportunity for the Council to address the failings identified, and this is also a requirement of the procedure. As was reported last year there are very few instances of no corrective action statements being entered when it was appropriate to do so.

4.3 There remains some corrective action statements that refer simply to the outcome of the complaint, rather than specific actions that could prevent future reoccurrence. Outcome statements now have a place in the latest version of the procedure given the new decision category of ‘resolved’. Previously the choices were simply upheld, not upheld or partially upheld.

4.4 There are particularly good examples when the Council applies corrective action by listening to customer feedback and making improvements. Some from this reporting period included:

* A complaint concerning the location of goal posts in a local play park will be moved accordingly to avoid ball strikes to a nearby building’s window. More reasonable consideration of such an issue to be incorporated into the planning of parks in future.
* The discharging procedure for glass collection vehicles was changed following complaints about glass fragments left on a road and liable to cause punctures. Glass collection vehicles are now steam cleaned to remove traces of glass shards that were falling into the road.
* The letter templates used with planning enforcement were updated to provide additional clarity. This ensures that developers are aware of their responsibility in the initial letter that planning permission should have been obtained where an unauthorised development conflicts with a land use policy of Fife Council’s development plan.
* Bereavement Services have improved upon practice in the event of damage to graves during routine grounds maintenance where pro-forma will capture details of any accidental damage, date, times and location therefore allowing Service administrators to contact any families to discuss any accidental damage when necessary in advance of bereaved families finding such damage of their own accord.
* Where complaints were about the actions of employees (behaviour, poor driving, wrong information provided, process / procedure not followed etc.) the complaint has been addressed directly with employees, so they are aware of the impact on their customers.

**5.0 Conclusions**

5.1 Performance has generally improved over the previous year in terms of all complaints responded to in timescale despite the increased volumes however notably many complaints raised were responded to with a generic response that reflected the necessity for service reduction during the pandemic.

**List of Appendices**

1. Appendix 1: Complaint type summary by Service
2. Appendix 2: Summary table of SPSO cases

**Background Papers**

The following papers were relied on in the preparation of this report in terms of the Local Government (Scotland) Act, 1973:

1. Standards & Audit Complaints Update Annual Report from October 2020 [Link](http://fish.fife/fish/uploadfiles/Publications/Public%20Agenda%20Pack%202020-10-15.pdf)
2. SPSO revised model complaint handling procedure for 2021 [Link](https://www.spso.org.uk/sites/spso/files/csa/LAMCHPPart3.pdf)
3. Enterprise and Environment Directorate Section / Service Performance Reports

[Performance Report](https://fish-fifecloud.msappproxy.net/fish/uploadfiles/Publications/EPS%20Public%20Agenda%20Pack%202021-09-02.pdf#page=160)

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**Appendix 1: Complaint and compliment examples** **(from Services that take >75% of all the complaints received by the Council)**

| **Service type** | **Summary data** | **Complaint & compliment examples, including details of any learning (all from upheld complaints)**  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Benefits & Council Tax** | **Received: 7%** of FC complaints **Main categories:** Procedures/Policy (25%) | **Complaint Examples:**Hi, I am trying to apply for a council tax discount due to being a student. I enquired and sent my offer letter which very promptly I was told was not adequate. I then sent my matriculation letter which I was asked for and received no response. So, on 23rd September I sent an email asking if what I had sent was appropriate and chasing it up. I then received a very unprofessional response. "I am delighted to be assisting you today. NOTHING ATTACHED. Thank you." This person did not give a name, however I very promptly replied attaching my matriculation letter for a 2nd time this month. I would appreciate that my student discount is looked at and applied with response from the department. I am not pleased with the email I received, I do not feel it is appropriate or professional for the capital letters in an email, had the person dealing with my email looked at my case they would have seen the matriculation letter required.**Outcome:**Complaint Upheld. Service has apologised to customer for how application has been handled. Service have spoken to scanning and indexing team and templates used will be looked at and amended to provide a more professional and consistent approach.**Compliments:**I would just like to pass on some feedback about one of your employees in the benefits team who I spoke to on the phone about my mums Council tax reduction. His name was Gordon, and he was polite and cheerful and very helpful. Very often you come across people on the other end of the phone who sound like they 'can't be bothered' but he was a credit to your organisation. I hope this can be passed onto him. |
| **Bereavement Services** | **Received:** **1%** of FC complaints **Main categories:** Damage / Vandalism to Property e.g., Headstones (40%) | **Complaint Examples:**I am deeply upset to find that my father’s memorial stone has been damaged at Hayfield Cemetery- Kirkcaldy, by your workers trimming the grass. The stone is less than 6 months old and cold me a lot of money. It’s devastating to see that chip out of the slate caused by a strimmer. I feel this is very careless and utterly disrespectful - I now have the distress of seeing this imperfect memorial every time I visit my father’s resting place. I would appreciate if you could fix this or provide me with some compensation so that I can get this restored. I look forward to hearing from you.**Outcome:**Complaint upheld with apology offered. Third party claim form sent to customer for the damage and advised the grass cutting squad to be more careful when cutting grass in the cemetery.**Compliments:**Everything went without a hitch. My Dad got a beautiful send-off considering the covid19 restrictions. Thank you so much for all your help and support. I really appreciate it all. |
| **Building Services** | **Received: 9%** of FC complaints **Main categories:** Failure to fix first time (14%) | **Complaint Examples:**Over the past few months, I have struggled with no hot water coming through my shower. I have had at least 8 different engineers coming and going 'this job is not for me'. Had a man come from Rosyth on Thursday to fix the problem and he barely communicated with myself. I understand work being stressful with everything going on but, he took my name and number to pass on to someone else and I never heard back, he has left me with no hot water and the boiler is left uncovered as he said this other man was 'in the area' and would take the cover off anyway. I suffer from *medical condition* and the pain has been unbearable over the past few days due to this ongoing situation. I am not amused nor am I happy about my boiler being left uncovered. I am aware it was the start to a bank holiday weekend but that's no reason to rush a job? 'he does not want you left with no hot water' is what I got from the guy before he left on Thursday and off he went? I don't want to cause grief to anyone but it’s clear the job was just left?**Outcome:** Complaint upheld. Apology given and new contractor was sent out who were able to repair fault. Note also put on council system for this contractor to deal with future issues in this street as they are aware of the system.**Compliments:**Customer would like to say thank you to an electrician who visited her today. His name was Greg, he was so kind and patient with me I’m 80 years old. He was such a pleasure to have such good service from a young man. He should be commended for his fantastic service. I thank him very much. |
| **Catering & Facilities** | **Received: 1%** of FC complaints **Main categories:** Inconsiderate / inappropriate use of council vehicle (30%) | **Complaint Examples:**Hello, we have an older lady who lives in our road (it's more like a lane, as it's unadopted and very narrow) who receives daily meals from FC - which is great. During lockdown we had some very thoughtful drivers who drove slowly and at an appropriate speed past our houses, which open directly onto the lane. Sometimes however, there are drivers who pass much faster. We've spoke to some drivers in the past and asked them to slow down and explained why (children, pets, deaf person and older people) and they have always responded well. In wet weather the puddles in our lane mean that fast drivers splash water over our windows and doors, as has happened, I work for the Council, and there are frequently a lot of complaints here about the speed of the FC drivers here - it would be a simple thing to address. I do understand that there are a lot of people to get around and time is always pushed but the difference between driving carefully and dangerously here makes not even 10 seconds of time difference. The driver today drove past far too fast, faster than any of the worse delivery drivers we get on occasion. Please could this message be passed to whoever manages the Meals on Wheels team to tell them to drive very slowly (5mph) past the houses. We're getting tired of speaking to drivers individually and the problem never being properly addressed. Thank you**Outcome:**Complaint upheld. Drivers have been spoken to remind them of driving safely and the rules in the highway code, apology email sent on behalf of the Council.**Compliments:** I just wanted to write to say thank you for providing meals for my aunt in St Andrews each day. You cannot begin to imagine the relief that her son and I feel knowing that she now has food delivered daily. Without your service I quite simply do not know what we would have done. You take your place alongside NHS staff for me as being among the many unsung heroes of the current crisis. Well done. Keep going. |
| **Children & Families**  | **Received: 4%** of FC complaints**Main categories:** Dissatisfaction with assessment outcome - Parent/Carer (21%) | **Complaint Examples:**I'm writing regarding the information I have received regarding a copy of social work reports I have had accessed for my daughter, now I have phoned regarding the treatment my daughter is receiving due to paternal alienation and that my step daughter is no longer having contact with any of her parents which was the only reason she was placed in care of my mother and the things my 4 year old daughter is saying for you to say its malicious well its far from malicious it was in concern for my daughters wellbeing to be removed from all contact and for my mother to be playing all the games with a child whom 1 does not see any of her parents and I have now thought that you have not got my daughters best interest at heart when I called more than once to say that the behaviour is going affect the girls later in life and to read it was malicious is I want to make a formal complaint against who made the decision to say my worry and concerns are not appropriate it’s my daughter and I want the best for her and her to be used as a pawn is not acceptable and far from malicious phone calls**Outcome:**Complaint Upheld. The service offered an apology for the referral to social work being recorded as ‘malicious’; The service agreed that this is not an appropriate way to record the outcome of a duty assessment. It was agreed that the service would record a manager’s note on the customers daughter’s SW record to reflect this apology. In addition, in terms of SW practice, it will be highlighted to the team to use appropriate terminology, as well as making the service manager aware of the outcome of our discussion.**Compliments:** Mrs Cook called wishing to compliment all the good work social work do as they always hear the bad press. She said that Social Work helped her grandchildren.  |
| **Contact Centre** | **Received: 2**% of FC complaints**Main categories:** Inappropriate staff attitude / behaviour (41%) | **Complaint Examples:**Tenant called faults & repairs line & spoke with an advisor customer not sure how to report a fault with her thermostat. Advisor was very rude & made the tenant feel inadequate with his attitude. He advised to reset the boiler & which tenant wasn’t sure how to do that & he replied that it wasn’t rocket science. He then proceeded to advise tenant to reset the boiler by pushing the button again tenant wasn’t sure how to do this as there was 5 buttons on the boiler, she also advised him she couldn’t see very well & he responded by saying well put the light on which there wasn’t a light in the cupboard. Then she told him she would go & find a torch & her glasses & pushed a random button, he advised her to go to the thermostat & turn it off till she heard a click which she did but didn’t hear the click, then was told if she had any more problem to call the 99 number after 5pm. Thermostat still not working.**Outcome:**Complaint Upheld. Service apologised for the advisor’s behaviour and had an appointment scheduled with advisor to pick up points from call regarding lack of customer skills.**Compliments:** Tenant would like to pass on her thanks for the service she has received following no heating and hot water. This includes the contact centre who she said were most helpful. |
| **Domestic Waste** | **Received: 34**% of FC complaints**Main categories:** Failure to collect / empty bin (30%) | **Complaint Examples:**My green bin was collected today. Some of the contents were left in the bottom of the bin, and part contents of other bins were left on the street. I cleaned up what was left in the road. I have a photo, but I am unable to attach it. With the reduced service that we are receiving, I would have thought that now more than ever, those collecting our waste would be more conscientious about ensuring a good service. I do hope that your teams are able to up their game on future collections. I look forward to your reply.**Outcome:**Complaint Upheld. Apology given to customer and bin will emptied when crews are next in area.**Compliments:** This is not a complaint but a thank you to brown bin collectors today who waited a few seconds whilst I ran for my bin, am so grateful, thanks to them for that and for being at work at this horrible time , I really appreciate what they do! |
| **Education** | **Received: 5**% of FC complaints**Main categories:** Dissatisfaction with policy current arrangements (27%) | **Complaint Examples:**Vaccine given without consent. My son attends the local primary school and yesterday they were doing flu vaccination. My son has never had flu vaccine or been given permission for it to be given. Yesterday he came home saying he had been given it and the school has admitted he has been although unsure how he has been given another child's vaccine for a child with the same first name in his class although spelled differently. I would like this investigated so it never happens again in any school. I'm sure your aware children can have reactions to the vaccine including severe allergic reactions, luckily my son did not but now expect him to get minor cold symptoms due to this. School has said due to my son bringing other child's information home they will alert Fife Council about the breach for confidentiality (GDPR) Although unsure they would have done this is if I hadn't mentioned it. My son is off school today as I feel I cannot trust the school due this massive breach on their part, I want something put in place, so this never happens again.**Outcome:**Complaint upheld. Service apologised by bringing flowers and card to customer. Further staff training will be completed to ensure procedures are tight. NHS staff delivering the vaccine should have been more careful and double checked. NHS have contacted customer and apologised.**Compliments:** I wanted to send a quick message to thank you very much for providing so many tasks for us to do at home. Carla and her sisters are getting into a rhythm with their home learning, and I am trying my best to ensure they all get plenty done while managing the obvious frustrations of trying to teach them all at once! |
| **Housing** | **Received: 17**% of FC complaints**Main categories:** Dissatisfaction with policy / current delivery arrangements e.g., timescales, priorities, criteria (11%) | **Complaint Examples:**I have just returned home to a note saying I have missed 2 appointments for my gas service. I wish to make a formal complaint that this is completely incorrect. First of all, a work person just arrived at my property one day expecting someone to be in. Myself and my husband both works. After he/she left a card I contacted the relevant people and rearranged for *date* as my husband does not work on a Monday. My husband stayed in between 8 and 1 as advised on the phone call they would attend between them times. Today is *date* both myself and my husband work and someone attended today and now we have a slip saying we have missed 2 appointments. Completely inaccurate and we did not miss a 2nd appointment your work person did not turn up!! I therefore did adhere to making sure someone was in for the check and now I'm being given one final opportunity to allow some in to complete the service! This is not my fault. You can't expect to just turn up at a property unannounced for a service and expect someone who works full time to be in and class that as an appointment. I am more than happy to allow the service to be carried out at a time when I am in the property. Now housing services are going to contact me to rearrange for one last opportunity to allow someone in! Please reply to this formal complaint confirming someone will attend at a time suitable and someone will be in the property.**Outcome:**Complaint Upheld. Apology given as card was not left for first appointment. Appointment has been arranged for gas check to be carried out at a time that suits complainant.**Compliments:** I wanted to thank my housing officer Sam Young and the communities officer Tracey for all their help removing rubbish out of my neighbour’s garden so efficiently, he is disabled and could never have done this himself. I was really worried about rats and mice and pest control came out. Thank you both again, I am really very impressed. |
| **Parks Streets Open Spaces** | **Received: 3%** of FC complaints**Main categories:** Grass Cutting (24%) | **Complaint Examples:**The employee cutting the grass outside my house drove his ride-on mower over my front path while turning his machine. The concrete slabs my path is made of will not withstand the weight of this machine and I do not want this to happen again. The slab he drove over is one we had to replace because it was broken and we never knew how it got broken, but we now suspect it was damaged when it was driven over previously. The mower also drove over the edge of the public tarmac path bordering my front garden. The edge of the public path is being broken up by the machine driving over it, as this has happened several times before. I have complained about this in previous years, and I did not expect to have to do so again. I spoke to the operative and was told he could not help driving on my path as he had to turn his machine, but he wouldn't be cutting the grass again anyway. I would like an assurance that the area directly in front of my house will be cut with a smaller mower in future so that there is no need to drive large machinery over my property. I tried to insert a picture showing exactly where the mower left tracks inside the boundary of my garden but couldn't - I can provide this if required. I would appreciate a prompt reply and an assurance it will not happen again, and that this area will no longer be cut with a ride-on mower.**Outcome:**Complaint upheld. Service apologised to Customer. Customer advised from now on Service will get a small machine to cut this grass. This will ensure the slabs don't get damaged.**Compliments:** Please pass on my thanks to all the Parks etc Teams - just seeing a couple of lads strimming in Braehead St Monans doing a great job. All the best and keep safe.  |
| **Planning** | **Received: 1%** of FC complaints**Main categories:** Failure to follow process (20%) | **Complaint Examples:**Planning application ref: *reference number* and Listed Building consent ref: *reference number*, we refer to our email sent, attached below. It forms part of the objection to the planning application and listed building consent application. Although a formal letter of acknowledgement was emailed to us, the substantive issues raised in our email have yet to be addressed. The letter sent was merely an acknowledgement. We call on the Council to provide a substantive response and to reject the applications made for Full Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent because they have not been made in respect of the properties affected or by the whole owners thereof. A false and misleading statement about ownership and property affected by the applications has been made in the planning application. The agent signing off the application is the son of the owners of the property. He should be aware of the extent of ownership of his parents, Please, see attached extract from Land Register title sheet *reference number* which confirms that it is owned.**Outcome:**Complaint was partially upheld. Full letter of explanation issued BSS to follow up on the Building Standards question and a reminder has been issued to Enforcement Officers to stick to response dates. **Compliments:** Many thanks also for your prompt reply to my enquiry and glad to note business appears to be as best as can be expected during this period. |
| **Protective Services** | **Received: 1%** of FC complaints**Main categories:** Unsatisfactory response to previous complaint / request for service / enquiry / reported fault (33%) | **Complaint Examples:**Your irresponsible unfounded Facebook post re mask is in salons posted on Friday, I have a letter from local MSP, Jason Leitch team, government guidelines, my insurance company and your EHO who all say we can perform treatments from the side and behind including facials. Your EHO also informed me face masks is not a council matter but a police matter, I want the name of the person, their position, a written copy of the post to pass onto my lawyer as well as the Information you have that supersedes Jason Leitch. I will also be looking for compensation, for defamation of character and loss of business. This weekend alone I have been insulted, people trying to set up false facial appointments in a hatred bid and clients questioning and cancelling appointments. This is disgusting and I want an immediate reply and an apology posted on your Facebook page, a pub you can go in no mask get drunk, we wear mask visor gloves and disposable apron and are way cleaner than a supermarket pub or anywhere else. Your post is disgusting, and I want answers I'm trying to get my business to survive ... you are so irresponsible and uneducated it's disgusting.**Outcome:**Partially Upheld. Apology letter sent for incorrect information received and MSP provided with correct information.**Compliments:** Just a note to say that I’m sure you are well aware, but your team are awesome. They are so understanding of our unknowns at the moment and have been so patient with our patchwork communication. It’s really enjoyable every time I have a call with them, and I look forward to speaking to them knowing it’s a safe space for good conversations with really kind and understanding people. |
| **Recycling Centres** | **Received: 2%** of FC complaints**Main categories:** Dissatisfaction with policy / current organisational arrangements including opening times (75%) | **Complaint Examples:**I attended Dunfermline recycling centre today which turned out to be a total waste of time. When I arrived, I was asked what type of waste I had. I started reeling off the multiple types of waste and I had to be stopped in my tracks at the first item. Tyres. I checked your A to Z of waste where it states tyres cannot go to landfill but must go to recycling centres. After wasting my time today I've now checked the individual page for every recycling centre in Fife where they all say they don't take tyres. The next item on my list, engine oil, which I specifically drove to that site to dispose of, could also not be done. Engine oil tank was full. The look on the staff members face indicated he wanted me to continue reeling off items which I'm sure he would find issue with. So, I left. I'm sure coronavirus will be the excuse for the oil tank being full but please change you A to Z regarding the tyres.**Outcome:**Partially Upheld. The A-Z recycling list does have a large COVID disruption banner in red at the top directing the customer to look at the individual site information, where it does say tyres are not accepted. The booking system does not have a disposal option of tyres on the materials list – they should currently be disposed of via tyre dealers when they are being replaced. An apology was given regarding the oil bank being full, the oil bank was emptied eventually. The service was not taking oil for some time and were initially unable to have uplifts due to Covid restrictions.**Compliments:** Fantastic service at Dunfermline waste site this afternoon. Staff were excellent. Well done. |
| **Safer Communities** | **Received: 1%** of FC complaints**Main categories:** Unsatisfactory response to previous complaint / request for service / enquiry / reported fault (26%) | **Complaint Examples:**We are aware that the initial complaint *reference number* was treated incorrectly as a service request despite the fact that it was sent as a complaint, clearly worded as a complaint, we have repeatedly made service requests to Safer Communities in the past, and we are more than capable of selecting the correct forms for the circumstances. If we do not receive the final response, we will proceed with escalating the complaint to the SPSO.**Outcome:**Complaint partially upheld. Apology letter sent for poor level of Service received and copy of Service processes in tackling antisocial behaviour documents posted.**Compliments:** Stuart the gentleman who dealt with the rat that was under our hut, was so professional in every way. Was so informative, phoned every time before arrival, maintained social distancing, masks etc. A credit to Fife Council. Please pass this on to his boss Mr Graeme Anderson. Stuart is a credit to Fife Council. |

**Appendix 2 – Summary of SPSO Decisions**

A2.1 The final stage for complainants is the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) and the following table presents the decisions taken by this office to Fife Council complaints they received in period.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **SPSO Ref No** | **Service Responsible** | **SPSO Decision** |
| SPSO 202002768 | Area Services | Not taken forward for investigation |
| SPSO 201911806 | Assessor / Ben C-Tax | Not taken forward for investigation |
| ***SPSO 202006321*** | ***Benefits Council Tax*** | ***Not Upheld***  |
| ***SPSO 202007167*** | ***Benefits Council Tax*** | ***Not Upheld***  |
| ***SPSO 201900081*** | ***Children & Families*** | ***Partially Upheld 1*** |
| SPSO 202005453 | Children & Families | Not taken forward for investigation |
| SPSO 202000643 | Children & Families  | Not taken forward for investigation  |
| SPSO 202003046 | Children & Families  | Not taken forward for investigation |
| SPSO 201911026 | Customer Service Improvement  | Not taken forward for investigation |
| SPSO 202000637 | Education | Not taken forward for investigation  |
| SPSO 201908869 | Education | Not taken forward for investigation |
| SPSO 202003300 | Education | Not taken forward for investigation |
| SPSO 202003944 | Education | Not taken forward for investigation |
| SPSO 201907985 | Education  | Not taken forward for investigation |
| SPSO 202004180 | Education  | Not taken forward for investigation |
| SPSO 202001000 | Environment  | Not taken forward for investigation |
| SPSO 202002487 | Environment  | Not taken forward for investigation |
| SPSO 202002905 | Environment  | Not taken forward for investigation |
| SPSO 201906888 | Housing | Not taken forward for investigation  |
| SPSO 202002670 | Housing | Not taken forward for investigation |
| SPSO 202002797 | Housing | Not taken forward for investigation |
| SPSO 202002248 | Housing | Not taken forward for investigation |
| SPSO 202006844 | Housing | Not taken forward for investigation |
| SPSO 201911870 | Housing  | Not taken forward for investigation |
| SPSO 201905952 | Housing  | Not taken forward for investigation |
| SPSO 201908565 | Housing  | Not taken forward for investigation |
| SPSO 202001988 | Housing  | Not taken forward for investigation |
| SPSO 202005051 | Housing  | Not taken forward for investigation |
| SPSO 202005911 | Housing  | Not taken forward for investigation |
| SPSO 202006235 | Housing  | Not taken forward for investigation |
| SPSO 201911004 | Planning | Pending |
| ***SPSO 201904682*** | ***Planning***  | ***Partially Upheld 2*** |
| SPSO 202007566 | Risk Management  | Not taken forward for investigation |
| SPSO 201907647 | Roads & Transportation | Not taken forward for investigation |
| SPSO 202000921 | Welfare Fund | Not taken forward for investigation |

A2.2 Not taken forward for investigation typically means that the SPSO decision was that these complaints were either, out of their jurisdiction, the complainants’ outcome is unachievable or that in the opinion of the SPSO they can add nothing further to the decision already reached. The SPSO remain obliged to alert the Council of these cases under their governing Act.

A2.3 The overwhelming decision to not take cases forward for investigation may suggest that resolutions provided are the correct ones. The decisions from the two cases where the SPSO did uphold some element of the complaints investigated are detailed below. These decisions are also available on the SPSO’s website.

1. *The SPSO decision was that the Council had not acted reasonably in response to the concerns Mr C has raised regarding what was in child A’s best interest however they did not uphold that the Council failed to reasonably communicate and engage with Mr C. The SPSO recommended that the Council offer an apology for the failing identified and that these findings were fed back to staff concerned in a supportive manner. The findings identified were that the Council’s complaint response did not address a number of Mr C’s points of complaint and that it failed to include an apology for a service failing identified during the investigation.*
2. *The SPSO decision was that the Council had failed to carry out a reasonable and appropriate assessment of planning application A in line with obligations however they did not uphold that the Council failed to act reasonably in respect of the sale of land that application A proposed to develop on. The SPSO recommended that the Council offer an apology for failing to consider certain matters appropriately in their assessment of the planning application A and that the report of handling did not contain sufficient detail about parts explaining the decision making. The outcome the SPSO required from the Council were that reports of handling should be sufficiently detailed and contain clear justifications for the decisions reached.*