



To: Audit, Scrutiny and Petitions Board

On: 15th February 2015

Report by: Chief Executive

Heading: Annual Complaints Report 2014/15

1. Summary

- 1.1 Our complaints handling procedure ensures we know how well we are delivering services and shows our commitment to valuing complaints. It seeks to resolve customer dissatisfaction as close as possible to the point of service delivery and to conduct thorough, impartial and fair investigations of customer complaints so that, where appropriate, we can make evidence-based decisions on the facts of the case.
- 1.2 Our procedure complies with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman's (SPSO) guidance on a model complaints handling procedure and aims to help us 'get it right first time'. We want quicker, simpler and more streamlined complaints handling with local, early resolution by capable, well-trained staff.
- 1.3 Renfrewshire Council received 5725 complaints in 2014/15. This report provides information on the complaints Renfrewshire Council received in 2014/15 and shows how we have used this information to ensure that the services we deliver are of high quality, efficient and responsive to people's needs, and to highlight any improvements we have made to services as a result of these complaints.
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2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that Audit, Scrutiny and Petitions Board:
- Notes the contents of this report,

3. **Background**

- 3.1 This is the third year since the new Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP) was introduced by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) to help simplify, standardise and improve complaints handling across all Scottish Local Authorities.
- 3.2 The aim of the procedure is to implement a consistent process for customers to follow which makes it simpler to complain, ensures staff and customer confidence in complaints handling and encourages public bodies to make best use of lessons from complaints.
- 3.3 A key element of the procedure is the requirement to monitor and log all complaints coming into the authority and use this information to drive service improvement.
- 3.4 In line with SPSO recommendations, the procedure uses a two stage process: Frontline Resolution and Investigation stage.

Stage 1: Frontline Resolution

Frontline Resolution aims to quickly resolve straightforward customer complaints that require little or no investigation. Any member of staff may deal with complaints at this stage.

The main principle is to seek early resolution, resolving complaints at the earliest opportunity and as close to the point of service delivery as possible. This may mean a face-to-face discussion with the customer, or asking an appropriate member of staff to deal directly with the complaint.

The Council has **5 days** to respond to these complaints.

Stage 2: Investigation

Not all complaints are suitable for frontline resolution and not all complaints will be satisfactorily resolved at this stage. Complaints handled at the Investigation stage of the complaints handling procedure are typically complex or require a detailed examination before the Council can state its position. These complaints may already have been considered at the frontline resolution stage, or they may have been identified from the start as needing immediate investigation.

An investigation aims to establish all the facts relevant to the points made in the complaint and to give the customer a full, objective and proportionate response that represents our final position.

The Council has **20 days** to respond to these complaints.

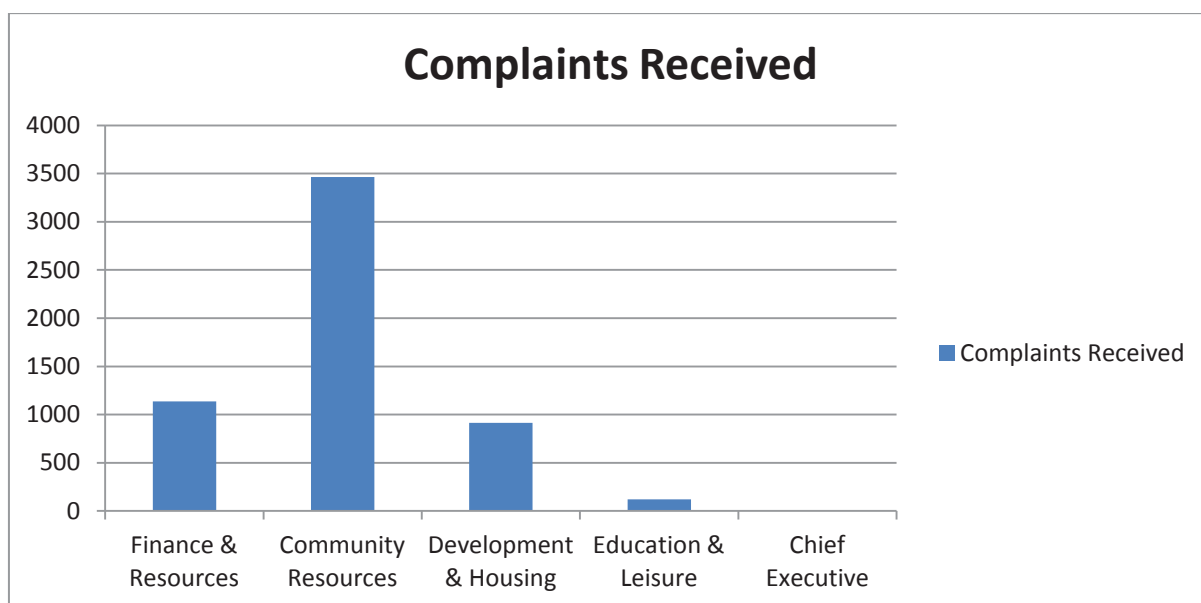
- 3.5 Social Work services are legally required to follow a separate process for handling complaints; this is covered in more detail in section 4.
- 3.6 Complaints are a valuable source of information for identifying performance and areas for improvement. The new Policy and Commissioning function will implement a more joined-up approach to complaints to ensure that this valuable information is used to improve the customer experience.
- 3.7 Councils are required to assess their complaints handling performance around a range of high-level performance indicators related to the SPSO complaints handling procedure. Appendix 1 contains a full summary of these SPSO performance indicators for 2014/15.

In summary, for 2014/15:

- Renfrewshire Council received 5725 complaints
- 97% of these complaints were handled at the frontline stage, showing that we are being responsive to initial reports of dissatisfaction about complaints
- 79% of complaints at frontline and 91% at investigation were completed within target timescales
- The average time to respond to a frontline complaint was 5.7 days
- The average time to respond to an investigation level complaint was 13.2 days
- 74% of complaints were upheld at frontline and 37% at investigation stage

- 3.8 Key areas of complaints were:

- grounds maintenance issues such as grass cutting, trees etc.
- waste bin collections
- housing repairs not completed within target times
- issues with contractors
- delays in processing housing benefit claims



3.9 As a result of analysing these complaints, a range of improvements to services have taken place to improve customer experience and to ensure problems do not happen again. Noted below are a range of improvements which have been made during 2014/15:

What the customer said	What we did
A number of complaints were made in relation to the length of time customers waited to receive their council tax refunds	A new process has now been set up to priorities refunds that have been requested to ensure they are issued within a reasonable time. Due to staff levels and the number of requests received, it was agreed to set a timescale of 21 days to receive a refund which was viewed as a reasonable and realistic achievement. If any customer advises they require the refund quicker, such as due to financial hardship, these can be highlighted to the supervisor to enable these to be processed within 24 hours. A decision was made to also change the way the requests are recorded by the Customer Service Unit so the back office can easily identify any customer requests in order to prioritise them.
A number of complaints were made about waiting times at the Blue Badge assessment desk	Customer Service and Occupational Therapists are working together to monitor wait times and changes have been made to the number of assessment appointments available when the wait

	times show signs of increase. At peak times when assessment queues are increasing then Occupational Therapists allocate extra staff to tackle these queues in a bid to ensure wait times are kept to a minimum. Extra appointments are scheduled in the assessment diary.
There have been a number of complaints relating to bullying in schools	Schools continue to be supported to implement the Tackling Bullying policy. Updated training for staff is planned for 2016/17. We have a robust tackling bullying policy which all schools SMT teams are aware of. All incidents of bullying reported are treated seriously and are investigated by a member of the SMT, with parents spoken to if required.
There were several complaints regarding incorrect information being provided regarding services	The Customer Service Unit have a range of communication and training processes in place to keep all staff up to date with any changes in service. If there are issues raised by customers about wrong information being provided, these are resolved on an individual basis.

- 3.10. There are a number of areas where a significant number of complaints are received due to the volume of services being delivered and where service performance is still strong.

For example, while we received 2,268 complaints relating to waste collections, this represents 0.02% of all bin collections in Renfrewshire. Similarly, while there were 499 complaints relating to delays in housing repairs, 94% of housing repairs are completed within target timescales. We work closely with contractors to monitor volume and type of repairs and adjust resource accordingly to improve performance on this indicator. However there will always be occasions where the target timescale is not achieved despite best efforts of all involved, for example due to the complexity of repair / weather conditions etc.

4. Social Work Complaints

- 4.1 The current legislative framework demands Social Work manage their complaints process differently from the rest of the Council. Social Work endeavours to acknowledge complaints within 3 working days and reply to complaints within 20 working days or within 28 days in line with the current legislation if more detailed investigation is required. A service user or individual who is still unhappy with the complaint can appeal to

the Director of Service or the Chief Executive if the Director has already been involved in the complaint. Finally if they are still unhappy they may have their complaint reviewed by the Social Work Complaints Review Committee (CRC).

- 4.2 The Scottish Government has conducted national consultation on potential changes and is proposing to bring Social Work complaints into line with other Council Services. This would involve moving to a 20 working day investigation phase and the Social Work CRC being replaced by SPSO. The necessary changes in legislation will take around 2 years to complete. Until the necessary changes to legislation are passed, the service continues to process complaints through this 3 stage process.
- 4.3 During 2014/15, Social Work received 98 formal complaints. The main areas of complaint were issues relating to child care (33%) and issues related to services to Older People (28%).
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Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** - none

2. **HR & Organisational Development** - none

3. **Community Planning –**

Children and Young People – The Chief Executive's Service will support services and partners to meet the targets set out in the Community Plan.

Community Care, Health & Well-being – The Chief Executive's Service will support services and partners to meet the targets set out in the Community Plan.

Empowering our Communities – The Chief Executive's Service will support services and partners to meet the targets set out in the Community Plan.

Greener – The Chief Executive's Service will support services and partners to meet the targets set out in the Community Plan.

Jobs and the Economy – The Chief Executive's Service will support services and partners to meet the targets set out in the Community Plan.

Safer and Stronger – The Chief Executive's Service will support services and partners to meet the targets set out in the Community Plan

4. **Legal** – none

5. **Property/Assets** – none

6. **Information Technology** - none

7. **Equality & Human Rights**

- (a) The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report because for example it is for noting only. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.

8. **Health & Safety** - none

9. **Procurement** – none

10. **Risk** - none

11. **Privacy Impact** - none

List of Background Papers

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Renfrewshire Council Annual Complaints Report SPSO Indicators

Priority 01. The total number of complaints received per thousand population

Short Name	Long Term Trend	2013/14	2014/15	Q1 2015/16	Q2 2015/16
		Value	Value	Value	Value
Total number of complaints received	↑	5,209	5,725	1,813	1,351
Total number of complaints received per 1000 population	↑	3.25	7.25	8	7

Priority 02. Complaints closed at stage 1 and stage 2 as a percentage of all complaints closed

Short Name	Long Term Trend	2013/14	2014/15	Q1 2015/16	Q2 2015/16
		Value	Value	Value	Value
Number of complaints closed at stage 1	↑	5,007	5,441	1,468	1,308
Number of complaints closed at stage 2	↓	225	198	54	43

Short Name	Long Term Trend	2013/14	2014/15	Q1 2015/16	Q2 2015/16
		Value	Value	Value	Value
Number of complaints closed at stage 2 after escalation	➡	20	5	3	0
Number of complaints closed at stage 1 as a percentage of all complaints	⬅	95.68%	97.2%	96.5%	96.8%
Number of complaints closed at stage 2 as a percentage of all complaints	➡	4.33%	3.5%	3.6%	3.2%
Number of complaints closed at stage 2 after escalation as a percentage of all complaints	➡	0.4%	0.1%	0.2%	0%

Priority 03. The number of complaints upheld/partially upheld/not upheld at each stage as a percentage of complaints closed at each stage

Short Name	Long Term Trend	2013/14	2014/15	Q1 2015/16	Q2 2015/16
		Value	Value	Value	Value
Number of complaints upheld at stage 1 as a percentage of all complaints closed at stage 1	⬆	71.53%	74.3%	86.5%	85.3%
Number of complaints not upheld at stage 1 as percentage of all complaints closed at stage 1	⬆	16.13%	17.5%	8.4%	10.2%
Number of complaints partially upheld at stage 1 as percentage of all complaints closed at stage1	➡	12.38%	8.3%	5.1%	4.5%
Number of complaints upheld at stage 2 as percentage of all complaints closed at stage 2	➡	37.5%	36.9%	22.2%	18.6%
Number of complaints not upheld at stage 2 as percentage of all complaints closed at stage 2	⬆	37.28%	51.5%	64.8%	60.5%

Short Name	Long Term Trend	2013/14	2014/15	Q1 2015/16	Q2 2015/16
		Value	Value	Value	Value
Number of complaints partially upheld at stage 2 as percentage of all complaints closed at stage 2	➡	25.23%	11.6%	12.9%	20.9%
Number of escalated complaints upheld at stage 2 as percentage of all complaints at stage 2	➡	2.85%	2.17%	3.7%	0%
Number of escalated complaints not upheld at stage 2 as percentage of all complaints closed at stage 2	➡	3.75%	6.52%	1.9%	0%
Number of escalated complaints partially upheld at stage 2 as percentage of all complaints closed at stage 2	➡	1.68%	0%	0%	0%

Priority 04. The average time in working days for a full response to complaints at each stage

Short Name	Long Term Trend	2013/14	2014/15	Q1 2015/16	Q2 2015/16
		Value	Value	Value	Value
Average time in working days to respond to complaints at stage 1	➡	3.43	5.7	4.6	3
Average time in working days to respond to complaints at stage 2	➡	12.83	13.2	10.4	12.3
Average time in working days to respond to complaints after escalation	➡	8.75	10.8	5.7	0

Priority 05. The number and percentage of complaints at each stage which were responded to in full within the set timescales of 5 and 20 working days

Short Name	Long Term Trend	2013/14	2014/15	Q1 2015/16	Q2 2015/16
		Value	Value	Value	Value
Number of complaints closed at stage one within 5 working days as a percentage of the total number of stage one complaints	↓	82.08%	79.4%	84.5%	85.1%
Number of complaints closed at stage 2 within 20 working days as a percentage of total number of stage 2 complaints	↑	90.83%	90.9%	92.5%	95.4%
Number of escalated complaints closed within 20 working days as a percentage of total number of stage 2 complaints	↓	8.9%	7.13%	5.6%	0%

Priority 06. The number and percentage of complaints at each state where an extension to the 5 or 20 working day timeline has been authorised

Short Name	Long Term Trend	2013/14	2014/15	Q1 2015/16	Q2 2015/16
		Value	Value	Value	Value
Number of complaints closed at stage 1 where extension was authorised, as a percentage of all complaints at stage 1	↓	1.7%	0.9%	0.1%	0.2%
Number of complaints closed at stage 2 where extension was authorised, as a percentage of all	↓	4.25%	0.5%	0%	4.7%

Short Name	Long Term Trend	2013/14	2014/15	Q1 2015/16	Q2 2015/16
		Value	Value	Value	Value

complaints closed at stage 2