

**REPORT TO: SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 13 JUNE 2012**

**REPORT ON: COMPLAINTS STATISTICS 2011/12**

**REPORT BY: CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

**REPORT NO: 191-2012**

## **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To provide the Committee with an analysis of the formal complaints processed through the Council's electronic recording system during 2011/12.

## **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Committee:

- i) notes the attached analysis of formal complaints processed through the electronic recording system between April 2011 and March 2012, with comparisons to the figures for 2008/09, 2009/10 and 2010/11
- ii) remits chief officers to ensure that complaints are logged on the system, to analyse complaints about their service and to aim to use lessons learned from complaints to drive service improvements
- iii) notes that changes made to processes, training etc as a result of complaints continue to be summarised as part of the annual report to Policy and Resources Committee on how the Council uses feedback from customers and service users to improve its services
- iv) notes that local authorities are being asked to adopt a standard model complaints handling procedure, including a set of performance indicators which will form the basis for future statistical reports, details of which will be reported to the Policy and Resources Committee soon

## **3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

None

## **4. BACKGROUND**

4.1 An electronic system to log, monitor and report on formal complaints was introduced on a phased basis during 2007 and 2008. This report analyses the complaints logged on the system between 1 April 2011 and 31 March 2012, and includes breakdowns of complaints by service, nature and channel of complaint, as well as information on the time taken to resolve complaints, repeat complainants and the outcome of complaints. Comparisons are given with the figures for 2008/09, 2009/10 and 2010/11. During the course of 2011/12, Council departments were restructured and a new Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation, Leisure and Culture Dundee, was established. Best efforts have been made to allocate complaints from before the reorganisation, including in previous years, to the new departments and the SCIO, for which the Council system has still been used to manage complaints despite its separate legal status.

4.2 The attached tables show that 354 complaints were recorded on the electronic system in 2011/2012. This is an increase on the figure of 216 in 2010/11 but this reflects continued encouragement to departments to log formal complaints on the system and

the fact that 2011/2012 was the first full year in which the system was used to record complaints about Education and Social Work.

- 4.3 The formal complaints system focuses on issues which require investigation and response. There are separate corporate systems which deal with high volume requests (such as complaints to the Environment Department about missed bins) which can be resolved simply without detailed investigation.
- 4.4 The complaints recording system was developed in-house and has been commented on favourably by external inspectors. The auditor for the (then) Leisure and Communities Department's ISO Quality Management System Certification described it as 'an excellent development, a true example of continuous improvement, with cogent, well-laid out guidelines for use'. Departments have been asked to ensure that complaints are logged on the system and that analysis of complaints statistics and the details of individual complaints are used to drive service improvements.
- 4.5 As well as ensuring that individual complaints are investigated and responded to, a key aim of the complaints system should be to help us learn from complaints, seeing them as valuable feedback on service performance. Depending on whether or not complaints are justified, and on their root cause, there may be a need to change policies or procedures, provide training for staff or consider service improvements. It is proposed that the Chief Executive's Department continue to collate information on how this has worked in practice as part of a wider exercise to demonstrate the impact of customer feedback on service delivery. Such information is included in the report on Improving Services Through Listening to Customers and Service Users which is submitted annually to the Policy and Resources Committee.
- 4.6 The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman has developed a new model complaints handling procedure which local authorities are being asked to adopt. A report on this will be considered soon by the Policy and Resources Committee. The model includes an indicative set of performance indicators, which will form the basis for future statistical reports, and requires more analysis of the causes of complaints and the actions taken to prevent recurrence. The indicators have still to be finalised but are expected to include:
- the total number of complaints received
  - the number and percentage of complaints considered at the frontline resolution stage
  - the number and percentage of complaints closed at the frontline resolution stage within five working days
  - the number and percentage of complaints where an extension to the five working day timeline has been authorised
  - the number of complaints upheld or not upheld at the frontline resolution stage as a percentage of all complaints closed at this stage
  - the average time in working days to resolve complaints at the frontline resolution stage
  - the number and percentage of complaints considered at the investigation stage
  - the number and percentage of complaints resolved at the investigation stage within 20 working days
  - the number and percentage of complaints where an extension to the 20 working day timeline has been authorised

- the number of complaints upheld at the investigation stage as a percentage of all complaints closed at this stage
- the average time in working days to resolve complaints at the investigation stage
- a statement outlining changes or improvements to services or procedures as a result of the consideration of a complaint
- a measure to assess customer satisfaction with the complaint service provided (as opposed to the outcome of their complaint)

**5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 This report has been screened for any policy implications in respect of sustainability, strategic environmental assessment, anti-poverty, equality impact assessment and risk management. There are no major issues.
- 5.2 The complaints logging system incorporates a feature which asks officers to identify, when closing complaints, whether the complaint related to an equalities issue - age, disability, gender, LGBT, race or religion. Four complaints in 2011/12 were identified as relating to an equalities issue, one relating to gender and three relating to disability. These have been brought to the attention of the Council's Equality and Diversity Co-ordinator.

**6. CONSULTATIONS**

The Director of Corporate Services, Head of Democratic and Legal Services and all Chief Officers have been consulted on this report.

David K Dorward  
Chief Executive

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07/06/2012

**Table 1: Complaints each month by service**

Department/Organisation	April 2011	May 2011	June 2011	July 2011	August 2011	Sep 2011	Oct 2011	Nov 2011	Dec 2011	Jan 2012	Feb 2012	March 2012	Total 11/12	Total 10/11	Total 9/10	Total 08/09
Chief Executive's	2	1	1	1			1			1			7	3	4	13
City Development	1	3	1		1	2		2		2	2		14	13	18	50
Corporate Services	7	11	8	8	10	9	2	6	10	11	10	6	98	102	73	89
Education	1	3			2	1	2	3	4	1	10	7	34	15	2	6
Environment	2		2	3						1			8	23	22	37
Housing	4	16	5	5	6	4	6	22	10	8	8	8	102	41	55	114
Social Work	7	3	9	7	6	12	8	6	4	7	11	7	87	16	3	8
SCIO - Leisure and Culture Dundee		1	1		1				1				4	3	9	9
<b>Totals</b>	25	39	32	25	27	29	20	39	31	35	42	29	354	216	186	326

Note: The restructure of departments, and the establishment of Leisure and Culture Dundee as a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation, took place during the course of 2011/12. Best efforts have been made to allocate complaints from before the re-organisation, including from previous years, to the new departments (and Leisure and Culture Dundee) which would have been responsible for these under the current structure

**Table 2: Nature of complaints**

Nature of Complaint	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Service not to the standard expected	46.9%	33.7%	30.5%	22.8%
Delay or failure to respond to a query or request for service	16.7%	14.2%	18.1%	16.1%
Failure to follow the Council's agreed policies or procedures	1.6%	3.2%	1.4%	5.1%
An employee's attitude or behaviour	11.2%	15.3%	12.5%	19.6%
Failure to take account of relevant matters	5.4%	13.1%	14.4%	10.7%
Malice, bias or unfair discrimination	2.2%	4.2%	4.6%	3.2%
Other	16.0%	16.3%	18.5%	22.5%

**Table 3: Complaints by Channel**

Channel	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Email	23.1%	19.0%	25.0%	27.9%
Letter	29.7%	34.7%	26.4%	27.1%
Telephone	28.4%	20.0%	21.3%	14.7%
Contact Centre	4.1%	11.6%	11.1%	12.6%
In Person	0.9%	4.7%	3.7%	4.6%
Website	9.7%	6.3%	9.3%	5.4%
Complaint from	4.1%	3.7%	3.2%	6.4%
Customer survey card	-	-	-	1.3%

**Table 4: Complaints by days taken to resolve**

Numbers of Days Taken to Resolve	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Less than 3 days	32.2%	23.6%	24.1%	27.6%
3 or more, but less than 6 days	39.2%	31.9%	46.3%	32.7%
6 or more, but less than 9 days	14.3%	23.1%	10.2%	15.4%
9 days or more	14.3%	21.4%	19.4%	24.3%

**Table 5: Repeat Complainants**

Number of complaints made by same person	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
2	20	4	12	15
3	1	2	1	4
4			1	1
5	1			
more than 5			1	1

38% of complaints were resolved outwith the published target of 5 days. However, the complaints procedure acknowledges that some complaints are complicated and take longer than 5 days to investigate. This is mentioned in acknowledgement letters to complainants. The electronic system will continue to remind officers that a response is due unless they amend the target date, at which point they should record the reason why the complaint is taking longer and keep complainants informed. 32.7% of complaints were assessed as being 'upheld' compared to 39.3% in 2008/09, 40.1% in 2009/10 and 47.7% in 2010/11