

North Ayrshire Council Complaint Report 2022/23

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Introduction

North Ayrshire Council always seeks to deliver the best services possible to its customers and residents but it is recognised that dissatisfaction will sometimes occur. When it does we want to know what went wrong, why it went wrong and what we can do to make things right.

The Council recognises valuable lessons can be learnt from complaints which are defined as being expressions of dissatisfaction from members of the public about actions, or lack of actions, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of the Council.

The Council's complaint handling procedure (CHP) has two stages for handling complaints from the public:-

Stage One complaints (also known as *Frontline Resolution*) are straightforward, non-complex complaints the Council can resolve at the initial point of contact or as close to the point of service delivery as possible. The Council has up to 5 working days to resolve these.

Stage Two complaints (also known as *Investigations*) are complaints the Council are typically unable to resolve at Stage One and need more time to carry out further investigation. This may be because the nature of the complaint is complex, serious or high risk. The Council has up to 20 working days to resolve these.

This report details the Council's complaint handling performance covering financial year 2022/23 (1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023) and is referred to in the report as 2022. Performance is measured via several Scottish Public Services Ombudsman indicators (some of which have national targets) and complaint data relating to previous years has been included in certain sections to allow comparisons to be made.

Reporting complaints is a statutory requirement and is monitored by Audit Scotland.

This report has been accessibility checked prior to publishing.

1 Volume of complaints closed

The Council received 2,576 complaints during 2022/23 and closed 2,629. The table below provides a breakdown of the closed complaints per Directorate:

| Directorate | Volume |
|----------------------|--------|
| Place | 2173 |
| Health & Social Care | 117 |
| Communities | 167 |
| Chief Executive's | 163 |
| Multi-Service | 9 |

The following tables highlight complaint volumes per Directorate under each Stage:

| Place | Stage One | Stage Two |
|---------------------|--------------|-----------|
| Building Services | 293 | 6 |
| Housing | 142 | 14 |
| Planning | 31 | 1 |
| Property Management | 104 | 9 |
| Protective Services | 9 | 1 |
| Regeneration | 1 | 2 |
| Roads | 72 | 1 |
| Streetscene | 105 | 4 |
| Sustainability | 2 | 1 |
| Transport | 2 | - |
| Waste Services | 1,371 | 2 |
| Total | 2,132 | 41 |

| Multi-Service | Stage One | Stage Two |
|--|-----------|-----------|
| Complaints involving more than one service | 7 | 2 |
| Total | 7 | 2 |

| Health & Social Care Partnership | Stage One | Stage Two |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Children, Families & Criminal Justice | 27 | 13 |
| Health & Community Care | 46 | 15 |
| Mental Health | 8 | 2 |
| Support Services | 6 | - |
| Total | 87 | 30 |

| Communities | Stage One | Stage Two |
|----------------------------------|------------|-----------|
| Community Facilities | 4 | 1 |
| Community Learning & Development | 1 | 1 |
| Education (HQ) | 24 | 10 |
| Education (Schools) | 79 | 22 |
| Facilities Management | 22 | - |
| Information & Culture | 3 | - |
| Total | 133 | 34 |

| Chief Executive's | Stage One | Stage Two |
|--------------------------|------------|-----------|
| Customer Services | 123 | 11 |
| Financial Services | 5 | 1 |
| Information Technology | 12 | - |
| Legal Services | 11 | - |
| Total | 151 | 12 |

- Although there is no target for the volume of complaints handled under each Stage, the Council seeks to maximise closure at Stage One wherever possible and 95% were handled at this Stage during the period.
- Some Services handled all their complaints at Stage One.
- Some Services that received higher complaint volumes than other Services handled very few complaints at Stage Two, notably Building Services and Waste Services
- Whilst 52% of all complaints received during the year related to Waste Services (the majority being missed bin collections/assisted pullouts), the Service empties over 102,000 household waste bins each week. As this equates to approximately 4.9 million collections over the year, only 0.03% of all bins collected resulted in complaints being received. This is worth highlighting given Waste Services experienced operational challenges during the year (more information on these challenges can be found later in this report).
- Multi-Service complaints have a table of their own as they are not attributable to a specific Service.

Year on Year comparison

The table below shows a comparison of the volume of complaints received over the last three years:

| Year | Volume of complaints |
|-------------|-----------------------------|
| 2020 | 2,541 |
| 2021 | 2,827 |
| 2022 | 2,629 |

The table below shows the volume breakdown for each Directorate over the last three financial years:

| Directorate | 2020/21 | 2021/22 | 2022/23 | Variance (2021 – 2022) |
|-------------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------------------|
| Chief Executive's | 176 | 254 | 163 | -36% |
| Communities | 90 | 133 | 167 | +25% |
| HSCP (Social Work complaints) | 127 | 159 | 117 | -26% |
| Place | 2,128 | 2,259 | 2,173 | -4% |
| Total | 2,521* | 2,805* | 2,620* | -7% |

*Multi-service complaints have been excluded to allow for true Directorate comparisons

- There has been a decrease in complaints received within most Directorates when comparing 2022/23 with the previous year.
- Whilst the Council introduced measures and changed policies, processes and practices to combat the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020/21, the pandemic continued to affect service delivery in some areas and resulted in increased complaint volumes for some Services (particularly those that involve manual labour/public-facing roles).
- Communities complaints for 2022/23 would have been in line with the previous year but Facilities Management transferred from the Place Directorate to the Inclusion & Educational Support service to during the year, contributing to the 25% uplift in complaints for Communities for 2022/23.

2 Volume of complaints closed on time at both Stages

| Stage | % closed on time | Target |
|-----------|------------------|---------------|
| Stage One | 83% | 80% and above |
| Stage Two | 92% | 85% and above |

- The volume closed on time includes extended complaints that met their new due dates.

3 Volume of complaints not closed on time per Directorate

This section provides details of complaints not closed on time under each Stage and includes extended complaints that did not meet their new timescales.

Stage One

Chief Executive's

| Department | Volume |
|------------------------|--------|
| Customer Services | 4 |
| Information Technology | 6 |

- Reasons provided for complaints breaching timescale included complaint handlers awaiting information from complainants/third parties to progress complaints, resourcing issues and system issues. Extensions could have been considered for the majority of these given they were closed within the extra 5 working day extension allowance.

Communities

| Department | Volume |
|-----------------------|--------|
| Community Facilities | 1 |
| Education HQ | 5 |
| Schools | 11 |
| Facilities Management | 3 |

- Some Education complaints breached due to employees being unavailable to assist with investigations and complainants not engaging in the complaint process.

HSCP (Social Work complaints)

| Department | Volume |
|-------------------------|--------|
| Children & Families | 7 |
| Health & Community Care | 5 |
| Mental Health | 2 |

- There were various reasons these complaints did not meet timescale, including complaint handlers, employees and/or complainants not being available to progress or assist with investigations. Extensions could have been considered for some of these given they were closed within the extra 5 working day extension allowance.

Place

| Department | Volume |
|---------------------|--------|
| Building Services | 16 |
| Housing | 7 |
| Planning | 28 |
| Property Management | 13 |
| Roads | 1 |
| Streetscene | 22 |
| Sustainability | 1 |
| Transport | 1 |
| Waste Services | 285 |

- Reasons for complaints not closed on time included complaint handlers being unavailable to progress complaints, complainants/third parties being unavailable to assist with investigations and resourcing issues (including Chief Officer availability).
- Of the 374 Place complaints not closed on time, 60% could have been considered for extension given they were closed within the extra 5 working day extension allowance.
- Regarding the volume of Waste complaints that did not meet timescale, see additional commentary on next page.

Waste Services (operations) complaints in 2022/23

Waste Operations experienced a particularly challenging year and two main factors (as a knock-on effect from the Covid-19 pandemic) continued to affect service delivery. These factors were vehicle issues and workforce resource.

In terms of vehicle issues, planning processes for vehicle replacements during the year took longer than usual, resulting in older waste vehicles remaining in the fleet longer than planned. This was due to extended manufacturing lead times for delivery of new vehicles which particularly affected the lead time of specialist vehicles. Regarding the workforce, there was evidence of employees waiting longer for medical assessments and treatments which also impacted service provision.

Other factors that resulted in missed waste bin collections included the change in collection day as a result of the Queen's funeral and a supply issue with purple bins (which Waste Operations and Procurement are attempting to resolve with the supplier at the time of producing this report).

On a positive note the Service has been focusing on reducing missed collections post-pandemic and the full year figure for missed bins reduced to 77 per 100,000 collections compared to 94 per 100,000 the previous year (a reduction of 21%). In addition, a particular focus has been placed on assisted collections and as a result of interventions by a supervisory group the missed assisted collection volume for the year was 1,190 compared to 1,516 the previous year (a reduction of 22%).

The supervisory group and management team strive to deliver the best service they can and continue to work with colleagues in support services to ensure operational challenges that impact service delivery are mitigated.

Stage Two

Communities

| Department | Volume |
|----------------|--------|
| Education (HQ) | 2 |

- The audit trails for these two complaints note that each was extended, however, the extension information was not recorded and is why these complaints show as breaching timescale.

HSCP (Social Work complaints)

| Department | Volume |
|-------------------------|--------|
| Children & Families | 2 |
| Health & Community Care | 3 |

- These complaints breached due to the complexity of the complaints, service pressures and additional considerations. Some of these could have had their timescales extended.

Place

| Department | Volume |
|---------------------|--------|
| Building Services | 1 |
| Property Management | 1 |

- Both of these complaints breached the 20-working day timescale by a small number of days due to a delay in concluding one complaint and the authorising of a response letter for the other. Both complaints could have had their timescales extended to prevent them breaching.

4 Key complaint topics

Key topics for upheld and partially upheld complaints for Services are listed below. Services will not be listed if there were low complaint volumes that did not allow meaningful analysis.

Chief Executive's

| Service | Key complaint topic(s) |
|-------------------|---|
| Customer Services | • Council tax issues |
| | • Employee Actions (incl. alleged or perceived) |
| IT | • Systems issues (payments, systems etc.) |

Communities

| Service | Key complaint topic(s) |
|----------------------------|---|
| Education (HQ and Schools) | • Sensitive issues relating to teachers and/or pupils |
| | • Service delivery/provision |
| | • Employee Actions (incl. alleged or perceived) |
| Facilities Management | • Public Conveniences (maintenance) |

HSCP (Social Work complaints)

| Service | Key complaint topic(s) |
|--|---|
| All Services (Children & Families, Health & Community Care, Mental Health) | • Service delivery/provision |
| | • Employee Actions (incl. alleged or perceived) |

Place

| Service | Key complaint topic(s) |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Building Services | • Follow Up appointments |
| | • Quality of work issues |
| Housing | • Anti-social behaviour |
| | • Customer Care |
| Planning | • Employee Actions (incl. alleged or perceived) |
| Property Management & Investment | • Gas Central Heating (maintenance etc.) |
| | • Planned Works |
| Roads | • Road/footpath conditions |
| | • Road works |
| Streetscene | • Tree/grass/verge/hedge cutting issues |
| Waste Services | • Employee Actions (incl. alleged or perceived) |
| | • Failed bulky waste collections |
| | • Issues with new bin deliveries |
| | • Missed bin collections (all colours) |

| | |
|--|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Missed assisted bin collections (all colours) |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recycle scheme issues (shortage of food waste bags etc.) |

- ‘Employee Actions (incl. alleged or perceived)’ appears as a key topic for some Services but the definition is broad and has been used where complainants either alleged or perceived employee actions or behaviour to be unacceptable. Whilst investigations may determine this is not always the case, where unacceptable behaviour was identified by Services appropriate action will have been taken to address.

5 Average time in working days for a full response

The average time in working days to close complaints under both Stages during the year is noted below. Values for previous years have been included to allow comparisons to be made. Any complaints that had their timescales extended have been excluded from the calculations.

| Stage One | Average number of working days to close | Target |
|-----------|---|-------------------------|
| 2020 | 4.6 | 5 workings days or less |
| 2021 | 4.2 | 5 workings days or less |
| 2022 | 4.2 | 5 workings days or less |

| Stage Two | Average number of days to close | Target |
|-----------|---------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 2020 | 14.4 | 20 working days or less |
| 2021 | 15.4 | 20 working days or less |
| 2022 | 14.9 | 20 working days or less |

- The average time to close complaints under both Stages has consistently exceeded target.

The tables below detail Services that did not meet the average time in working days for a response under either Stage. Services that met the target are not listed and any complaints that had their timescales extended have been excluded from the calculations.

Chief Executive's

| Stage One | Average number of working days to close | Target |
|-----------|---|-------------------------|
| IT | 7.8 | 5 workings days or less |

- Whilst 50% of all IT complaints received were closed within timescale, some of the remainder were closed well beyond the 5 working day timescale, which resulted in the average national target not being met. Reasons for those not closed on time included complaints where information was awaited from other employees or complainants and some could have been considered for extension given they were closed within the extra 5 working day extension allowance.

Communities

| Stage One | Average number of working days to close | Target |
|----------------|---|-------------------------|
| Education (HQ) | 5.6 | 5 workings days or less |

- A small number of HQ complaints were closed well beyond the Stage One 5 working day timescale which impacted on the national target not being met. Most of these complaints could/should have been considered at Stage Two given the length of time it took to conclude them.

HSCP (Social Work complaints)

| Stage One | Average number of working days to close | Target |
|---------------------|---|-------------------------|
| Children & Families | 5.4 | 5 workings days or less |
| Mental Health | 6.2 | 5 workings days or less |

| Stage Two | Average number of working days to close | Target |
|---------------------|---|--------------------------|
| Children & Families | 21 | 20 workings days or less |

- A small number of Children & Families and Mental Health Stage One complaints were closed outside the 5 working day timescale, resulting in the national targets not being met. Reasons for breaching included the complexity of the complaints and service pressures. Some of these could have had their timescales extended and/or considered at Stage Two.

Place

| Stage One | Average number of working days to close | Target |
|----------------|---|-------------------------|
| Sustainability | 6 | 5 workings days or less |
| Planning | 12 | 5 workings days or less |

- A large number of Stage One complaints regarding a Planning Committee did not meet the 5 working day timescale due to Chief Officer availability. Extensions could have been considered for some of these given they were subsequently closed within the extra 5 working day extension allowance.
- The Sustainability service handled 2 Stage One complaints during the year but as one was closed just beyond the 5 working day timescale this resulted in the national target not being met (the other complaint was closed within timescale).

6 Extended complaints

- 77 complaints had their timescales extended during the year (59 at Stage One and 18 at Stage Two). The complaints related to various Services across all Directorates.
- There were numerous reasons for extending, including complainants, third parties and employees being unavailable to assist or support with investigations, additional information having to be sought to support investigation decisions and resourcing/operational issues that continued to arise during the early part of the year as a knock-on effect of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Of the 77 complaints that had their timescales extended, over 80% were closed within their new due dates.

7 Complaint Outcomes

Up to 31 March 2021, a complaint that meets our complaint criteria could be upheld, partially upheld or not upheld. From 1 April 2021, a fourth outcome became available to use called 'Resolved'. Resolved complaints are where the Council has taken action to address the problem/issue without making a decision on whether there were any failings (this would happen where we agree a solution with the complainant at the outset without needing to actually investigate the complaint).

The charts below detail the number of complaints upheld, partially upheld, not upheld or resolved under both Stages.

Stage One

| Outcome | |
|------------------------------|-----|
| % closed as Resolved | 47% |
| % closed as Upheld | 30% |
| % closed as Partially Upheld | 9% |
| % closed as Not Upheld | 14% |

- Of all complaints upheld and partially upheld* at Stage One, just over half related to Waste Services and in particular bin collections. This was anticipated given issues the service continued to encounter as a result of Covid-19 during the early part of the year.
- Two thirds of all Resolved complaints also related to Waste Services (again mainly missed bin collections), indicating many residents simply wanted their bins collected without the need for any investigation.
- Complaints that were not upheld related to policies, regulations or were complaints that were poor quality/unfounded.

Stage Two

| Outcome | |
|------------------------------|-----|
| % closed as Resolved | 3% |
| % closed as Upheld | 11% |
| % closed as Partially Upheld | 40% |
| % closed as Not Upheld | 46% |

- All Stage Two complaints that were upheld or partially upheld* were split across multiple Services across all Directorates.
- Of the 46% of complaints not upheld, these related to various reasons, including policies, regulations and complaints that were unsubstantiated.

Note Partially Upheld complaints are complaints that contain more than one complaint element and at least one of them is upheld.

8 Improvements made as a result of complaints

Council Services continually seek to identify improvements in service delivery and complaint information is analysed regularly to inform service improvements. Some improvements were implemented as a result of complaints received during the year and a selection is noted below.

| What happened? | What we did |
|---|---|
| A resident complained about the condition of Irvine Moor after the Marymass Festival had departed. | It was determined that the post-event audit that takes place was delayed on this occasion due to unforeseen factors. To reduce the possibility of recurrence, the Council and partner agencies have agreed to develop a cross-service, post-event procedure that will help reduce the impact of events on residents, the environment and the surrounding area in future. |
| A complaint was received in relation to a contractor whilst undertaking work on a property. The complainant alleged that loud music was being played and their garden was left untidy as the works continued. | Dilapidation photos were taken before the works commenced to ensure the garden was reinstated to the same condition prior to commencement and once the work was completed the garden was reseeded where necessary. The contractor was reminded that while works are taking place around tenant's homes music should not be played loudly and noise disturbance should be kept to a minimum. All operatives have been reminded to keep noise to a minimum and supervisors will monitor this. |
| A person complained at the lack of contact/communication regarding a Council Tax issue. | The employees that handled the complainant's Council Tax issues received additional training and 121 support around call-back processes to ensure such issues are not repeated. |
| A pupil injured themselves whilst playing in a school playground with an object that should not have been there. | An apology was offered and the object removed. A signed checklist was introduced to ensure school staff complete visual checks of areas before play/activities take place and weekly signed grounds checks were also introduced for the Janitor to inspect for hazardous items around the school grounds. The relevant risk assessment was reviewed and updated to reflect these new practices. |
| A tenant complained that scaffolding was still in place around their property after some work had been done to the roof. | The contractor was asked to programme sub-contractor works more effectively to avoid unnecessary delay of scaffolding being dismantled and taken off site. |

9 Compliments

Over 200 compliments were recorded cross-Council during the year and whilst they cannot all be highlighted in this report a selection is noted below.

| | |
|---|---|
| <i>"I had two Building Services workers replace my garden fence. Both these men done an amazing job of my fence, working very tidy and polite at all times. They are a credit to the company and should be recognised for their outstanding work."</i> | <i>"I would like to thank Waste Services for their timely response regarding replacement food caddy liners. Please pass on my thanks for their timely resolution of my issue."</i> |
| Some compliments received from tenants who wanted to thank Building Services employees for making repairs to their properties and being polite and helpful throughout. | Several compliments received for Health and Community Care for the help, support and assistance provided to service users. |
| <i>"A big thank you to the Customer Services Contact Centre Adviser that handled my Council Tax arrears payment and enquiry with kindness and professionalism. This makes such a difference when you are in a difficult financial situation and the Adviser's manner made a difficult situation for me so much better and made me feel that this is a support service and not an enforcement service."</i> | <i>"I want to thank the Customer Services Registrar for her kindness and professionalism during the process of arranging our marriage. She had such a lovely, encouraging manner and made everything so easy, simple and straightforward."</i> |
| <i>"Went to Eglinton Park for a wander with a friend and got talking to the senior caretaker. The man is an absolute legend. Please make sure that someone takes the time to tell this star that he is really appreciated."</i> | <i>"Would like to say thanks to all involved in Roads with the resurfacing of Ladyford Avenue, Kilwinning. The road condition was such an eyesore – now a HUGE improvement and was done quickly with very little disruption to the street. Very much appreciated."</i> |
| <i>"I want to say how happy I am at the brilliant service I have had from the Housing Homelessness team. I will always be very grateful for the support I received and my children and I finally have a safe place to call our home."</i> | <i>"I phoned to report I had found wasp nests and an Environmental Health pest control officer attended and removed the offending nests and gave me advice for any future problems. He was very patient, kind and efficient."</i> |

10 ALEO complaints

An Arms-Length External Organisation (ALEO) is an organisation formally separate from a local authority but still subject to its control and influence. KA Leisure (KAL) is an ALEO for North Ayrshire Council and this section highlights complaints handled by KAL in 2022/23 using the same Two Stage procedure the Council operates.

It should be noted that KAL have undergone a staff realignment over the last year, which has resulted in a change of both position and personnel for many managerial and support staff to ensure the company can adapt to changing business needs. One of the main changes was to the Customer Service and Data team which occurred between July and December 2022. KAL appreciates the importance of timely responses to customers and have increased the Customer Service Team to meet the demand of customer enquiries (and complaints) received.

Going forward KAL are looking to develop this area further, ensuring they capture a true representation of customer feedback and the actions they take as a company. Not only are KAL looking to develop this across the various types of feedback, but also the various platforms the feedback is received through. This will result in changes to how KAL report and present customer feedback/complaints and as a result some categories will change as they receive more correspondence regarding Fitness and Learn to Swim in particular and the company moves more of its booking systems online.

KAL complies with the Council's Two Stage complaint handling procedure and continually seeks to identify and make improvements on receipt of feedback/complaints in order to maintain a high standard of customer service.

Complaints received per Business Area and Complaint Category

| Business Area | Complaint Category | Volume |
|----------------------|--------------------------|--------|
| LEISURE | | |
| Irvine | Activities & Programming | 7 |
| | Facilities General | 28 |
| | Customer Service | 13 |
| | Policy/General | 6 |
| Three Towns | Activities & Programming | 3 |
| | Facilities General | 4 |
| | Facilities Cleanliness | 1 |
| | Customer Service | 6 |
| | Policy/General | 1 |
| Garnock & Kilwinning | Activities & Programming | 2 |
| | Facilities General | 14 |
| | Facilities Cleanliness | 1 |
| | Customer Service | 1 |
| North Coast & Arran | Activities & Programming | 3 |
| | Facilities General | 10 |
| | Facilities Cleanliness | 1 |
| | Customer Service | 2 |

| PHYSICAL ACTIVITY | | |
|---------------------|--------------------------|----|
| Active Lifestyles | Activities & Programming | 1 |
| Community Sport | Activities & Programming | 1 |
| | | |
| Elevate Memberships | Customer Service | 7 |
| | Policy General | 15 |
| | Marketing/Promo | 3 |

- KAL received and handled 130 complaints during the year. As 253 were received the previous year this is a decrease of 49% when comparing the two years.
- Towards the end of the year there was an issue with KAL's online booking system and whilst this was raised directly with the supplier, the issue was not resolved immediately and escalation was required. This resulted in a higher number of contacts with the customer services team assisting, where possible, to book members into classes and activities.

Complaint categories by volume

| Category | Volume |
|----------------------------|------------|
| Facilities General | 59 |
| Facilities Cleanliness | 3 |
| Customer Service | 44 |
| Activities and Programming | 17 |
| Policy/General | 7 |
| Total | 130 |

Three-year Complaint Category comparison

| Category | 2020/21 | 2021/22 | 2022/23 |
|--------------------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Facilities General | 25 | 71 | 59 |
| Facilities Cleanliness | 12 | 10 | 3 |
| Customer Service | 56 | 55 | 44 |
| Activities & Programming | 41 | 68 | 17 |
| Policy/General | 16 | 47 | 7 |
| Marketing/Promotion | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| Total | 150 | 253 | 130 |

- A reduction in complaints across all categories when comparing 2022/23 with the previous year.
- Two main issues KAL faced in 2022/23 were online booking system outages and class cancellations. Following return from the pandemic KAL have struggled to recruit for certain posts, in particular Swim Instructors, however this was identified and in March 2023 the company recruited 12 additional instructors.

Complaints handled at each Stage by category

| Category | Stage One | Stage Two |
|----------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Facilities General | 36 | 18 |
| Facilities Cleanliness | 2 | 1 |
| Customer Service | 41 | 6 |
| Activities and Programming | 14 | 5 |
| Policy/General | 5 | 2 |
| Total | 98 | 32 |

- 75% of all complaints KAL received in 2022/23 were handled at Stage One, meaning many were non-complex or straightforward in nature.

Examples of complaints received

| Category | Nature of complaints | KAL Response/Action |
|-------------------------------------|---|--|
| Facilities General | Customer complained regarding her son who was advised his National Entitlement card was no longer accepted at venues and had to be a Young Scot card. | Explanation provided regarding National Entitlement and Young Scot card provisions and their use. |
| Facilities Cleanliness | Customer complained about condition of Kilwinning Sports Club facilities. | Apology offered and explanation provided as to ongoing issues being experienced with the facilities and action being taken to resolve. |
| Customer Service | Customer complained that they were having difficulty contacting the Portal. | Apology offered for inconvenience. Due to staffing issues there was only one receptionist at the time and visitors were taking priority over callers. |
| Activities & Programming | Customer complained regarding the low volume of social swimming classes at Auchenharvie Leisure Centre. | Explanation provided as to what caused the low volume and updated timetable highlighting extra social swimming dates provided. |
| Policy/General | Customer complained that a golf course was closed during the festive holidays. | Explanation provided that all KAL golf courses are closed on the same days to allow golf course employees to enjoy time off with their families during the festive period. |

11 SPSO complaint referrals

The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) is the final stage for complaints about Local Authorities in Scotland. The table below details the volume of complaints relating to the Council that were referred to the SPSO during 2022/23:

| Type of Complaint* | Volume |
|-------------------------------------|--------|
| Consumer Protection | 1 |
| Education | 2 |
| Environmental Health & Cleansing | 1 |
| Finance | 3 |
| Housing | 5 |
| Land & Property | 1 |
| Legal & Admin | 1 |
| Personnel | 1 |
| Planning | 2 |
| Roads & Transport | 1 |
| Social Work | 2 |
| Subject unknown/out of jurisdiction | 1 |

* this terminology is taken from the SPSO's own statistics

- The SPSO received 1,053 complaints about Scottish Local Authorities during 2022/23. For the Council this equates to a referral rate of less than 2% and is consistent with previous years (typically around 2%).
- The highest number of North Ayrshire referrals made to the SPSO related to Housing but this was expected given a quarter of all Local Authority referrals made to the SPSO during the year related to Housing or housing services.

The outcomes of North Ayrshire Council complaints determined by the SPSO during the year are noted below.

| Stage | Outcome | Volume |
|------------------|---|--------|
| Advice | Mature | 2 |
| | Premature | 1 |
| | Enquiries | 4 |
| Early Resolution | Discretion – Insufficient benefit achieved by investigation | 1 |
| | Discretion - Good complaint handling | 8 |
| | Right to appeal | 1 |
| | Subject matter not in jurisdiction | 1 |
| Investigation | Not Upheld | 1 |

- The majority of referrals made by North Ayrshire complainants were considered by the SPSO at the Advice and Early Resolution stages. One complaint was taken to investigation but this was upheld in favour of the Council.

- A referral at Advice stage was premature i.e. the complainant approached the SPSO before exhausting the Council's Two Stage process. Several enquires were also received where the SPSO provided complainants with appropriate advice.
- The majority of complaint referrals handled at Early Resolution were discretionary in nature and it is pleasing to note many were considered 'good complaint handling' complaints, meaning the SPSO was satisfied with the way the Council handled them.

For more information on the stage types listed in the table on page 21, please see the SPSO's [Explanation of Terms](#).

More details regarding complaint referrals for North Ayrshire Council can be found on the SPSO website at [Decision Reports | SPSO](#).

12 Glossary

| Term | Explanation |
|------------------|--|
| Stage One | Stage One (aka <i>Frontline Resolution</i>) aims to resolve straightforward customer complaints that require little or no investigation. Any employee may deal with complaints at this stage and they can be resolved via any channel. The main principle is to seek resolution at the earliest opportunity and as close to the point of service delivery as possible. Stage One complaints must be responded to within 5 working days unless an extension (a maximum of 5 additional working days or 10 if the complaint relates to Social Work) is requested and approved by a senior manager. The Council should, however, always aim to resolve these types of complaints within 5 working days. |
| Stage Two | Not all complaints are suitable for Frontline Resolution and not all complaints will be satisfactorily resolved at that stage. Complaints therefore handled at Stage Two (aka <i>Investigation</i>) typically require a detailed examination before the Council can state its position. These complaints may already have been considered at Stage One, or they may have been identified from the outset as being complex, serious or high risk and needing immediate investigation. The investigation under a Stage Two should establish all the facts relevant to the points made in the complaint and give the customer a full, objective and proportionate response that represents our final position. Stage Two complaints must be responded to within 20 working days unless an extension is approved by senior manager in conjunction with the customer. Stage Two complaints require a written response, signed by a senior manager. |

Complaint criteria

When an expression of dissatisfaction is received the Council determines if the issue falls into one of six complaint categories:

- A service the Council should be providing is not being provided (or is not available)
- A request for a service was provided but not to an appropriate standard
- A request for service has not been answered or actioned within the agreed timescale
- A Council employee was rude, unhelpful or unprofessional
- A Council employee did not attend an appointment or call-out on a date/time agreed
- The complaint relates to a policy (internal or external)

If the issue being raised relates to one or more of the above, the matter is considered a complaint and will be recorded and handled as such. If not, the matter will be handled as a request for a service, observation or enquiry and actioned accordingly.

END OF REPORT