



Corporate Committee

Tuesday, 12 October 2021

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that a Meeting of the **Corporate Committee** is to be held at **Remote Locations via Video Conference**, on **Tuesday, 12 October 2021** at **09:30**.

BUSINESS

1. Sederunt

2. Declaration of Group Decisions and Members Interests *

3. Resolution

Consider, and if so decide, adopt the following resolution:
"That under Section 50A (4) and (5) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, as amended, the public and media representatives be excluded from the meeting for Items 11 and 12 of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information of the class described in the relevant Paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act."

4. Written Questions **

5. Plantinum Jubilee Civic Honours Competition City Status Bid 5 - 8

Report by Chief Executive

6. Charging for Services 9 - 12

Report by Depute Chief executive (Economy, Environment and Finance)

7. Flu Vaccination Programme 2021 13 - 16

Report by Depute Chief Executive (Education, Communities and Organisational Development)

8. Complaints Annual Report 2020-21 17 - 58
Report by Chief Executive

9. Test and Protect temporary staff 59 - 62
Report by Depute Chief Executive (Education, Communities and Organisational Development)

10. Question Time ***
Consider any oral question on matters delegated to the Committee in terms of the Council's Scheme of Administration.

Item(s) which the Committee may wish to consider with the Press and Public excluded

11. Customer Contact Arrangements
• Information relating to staffing matters;

12. Moray Leisure Centre Lift Replacement
• Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person(s);

Moray Council Committee meetings are currently being held virtually due to Covid-19. If you wish to watch the webcast of the meeting please go to:

http://www.moray.gov.uk/moray_standard/page_43661.html

to watch the meeting live.

* **Declaration of Group Decisions and Members Interests** - The Chair of the meeting shall seek declarations from any individual or political group at the beginning of a meeting whether any prior decision has been reached on how the individual or members of the group will vote on any item(s) of business on the Agenda, and if so on which item(s). A prior decision shall be one that the individual or the group deems to be mandatory on the individual or the group members such that the individual or the group members will be subject to sanctions should they not vote in accordance with the prior decision. Any such prior decisions will be recorded in the Minute of the meeting.

** **Written Questions** - Any Member can put one written question about any relevant and competent business within the specified remits not already on the agenda, to the Chair provided it is received by the Proper Officer or Committee Services by 12 noon two working days prior to the day of the meeting. A copy of any written answer provided by the Chair will be tabled at the start of the relevant section of the meeting. The Member who has put the question may, after the answer has been given, ask one supplementary question directly related to the subject matter, but no discussion will be allowed.

No supplementary question can be put or answered more than 10 minutes after the Council has started on the relevant item of business, except with the consent of the Chair. If a Member does not have the opportunity to put a supplementary question because no time remains, then he or she can submit it in writing to the Proper Officer who will arrange for a written answer to be provided within 7 working days.

*** **Question Time** - At each ordinary meeting of the Committee ten minutes will be allowed for Members questions when any Member of the Committee can put a question to the Chair on any business within the remit of that Section of the Committee. The Member who has put the question may, after the answer has been given, ask one supplementary question directly related to the subject matter, but no discussion will be allowed.

No supplementary question can be put or answered more than ten minutes after the Committee has started on the relevant item of business, except with the consent of the Chair. If a Member does not have the opportunity to put a supplementary question because no time remains, then he/she can submit it in writing to the proper officer who will arrange for a written answer to be provided within seven working days.

THE MORAY COUNCIL

Corporate Committee

SEDERUNT

Councillor Aaron McLean (Chair)
Councillor Graham Leadbitter (Depute Chair)

Councillor George Alexander (Member)
Councillor James Allan (Member)
Councillor Frank Brown (Member)
Councillor John Cowe (Member)
Councillor John Divers (Member)
Councillor Tim Eagle (Member)
Councillor Claire Feaver (Member)
Councillor Donald Gatt (Member)
Councillor Shona Morrison (Member)
Councillor Amy Taylor (Member)
Councillor Sonya Warren (Member)
Councillor Walter Wilson (Member)

Clerk Name:	Lindsey Robinson
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REPORT TO: CORPORATE COMMITTEE ON 12 OCTOBER 2021

SUBJECT: PLATINUM JUBILEE CIVIC HONOURS COMPETITION: CITY STATUS BID

BY: CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 To invited the Committee to agree to make an application for a grant of city status for Elgin.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section III(B)(6) of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to any new policy matter which does not fall within the terms of reference of any other Committee

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 **To agree to make an application for a grant of city status for Elgin.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Cabinet Office has announced a civic honours competition that will award city status to towns, and Lord Mayor or Lord Provost status to existing cities, to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee in 2022.
- 3.2 The competition will also be open to applications from Crown Dependencies and Overseas Territories, such as Jersey, Guernsey and Gibraltar. Culture Secretary Oliver Dowden commented: "As we look forward to a year of celebration, growth and renewal in 2022, this prestigious competition will inspire civic pride in communities right across the UK. It's a great opportunity for towns and cities in every corner of the country to showcase their heritage and tell us more about the people and places that make their local area so unique - and a fitting tribute to Her Majesty's reign in her Platinum Jubilee year." Constitution minister Chloe Smith said the competition "is an opportunity to promote your hometown and win an honour for it that will last for all time", and encouraged entries "from local authorities in every part of the UK, from vibrant towns and cities with distinct identities, history, and sense of community."
- 3.3 The closing date is Wednesday 8 December 2021.

- 3.4 Elgin has emerged as a worthy application in terms of the criteria and profile envisaged in the application form.

4. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))

No direct implications.

(b) Policy and Legal

Any local authority in any part of the United Kingdom, a Crown Dependency or an Overseas Territory, which considers that its area deserves to be granted the rare honour of city status on this very special occasion is welcome to enter the competition by the closing date of 8 December 2021.

Applications may only be made by an elected local authority for its entire area or a distinct area within its boundary.

Although there are no specific criteria for city status or Lord Mayor or Provost status, the Government is asking local authorities to submit their entries in a standard size and format, as detailed in the application form. This is intended to help local authorities minimise the expense of entering the competitions and to provide the Government with a fair basis for comparison and assessment of the entries received.

Local authorities are strongly advised not to exceed the limits of the standard size and format as described in application form.

The decisions made by Her Majesty, on Ministerial advice, will be final. Local authorities may be assured that each entry will be considered 'in the round', on the merits of its contents rather than on the standard of presentation. Each local authority will be sent brief comments on its entry when the results of the competitions are announced in 2022. These brief comments on entries will not provide specific reasons on why an application is successful or unsuccessful.

Local authorities should not incur any expenditure on lobbyists for the purposes of influencing the competition.

(c) Financial implications

It is anticipated any funding implications will be met from Elgin Common Good Fund.

(d) Risk Implications

None directly.

(e) Staffing Implications

Existing staff would be utilised should there be a need for information held by the council, for example archives, to support the preparation of a submission. Beyond the provision of information where this is readily available, it is not anticipated that further demands will be placed on council staff. It is understood Elgin Community Council will lead on the

preparation supported by other community groups and knowledgeable individuals in the fields highlighted in the application form, such as culture, heritage and history.

The Community Council will also take the lead in the preparation of the required profile and the taking of supporting photographs of permanent features of Elgin.

(f) Property

None.

(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact

None.

(h) Consultations

Group Leaders, Elgin Community Council and CMT

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 The Council is invited to approve the recommendation.

Author of Report:	Roddy Burns, Chief Executive
Background Papers:	
Ref:	SPMAN-1108985784-670



REPORT TO: CORPORATE COMMITTEE ON 12 OCTOBER 2021

SUBJECT: CHARGING FOR SERVICES

BY: DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (ECONOMY, ENVIRONMENT AND FINANCE)

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 To ask the Council to agree the default increase for fees and charges for Council services for 2022/23.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Council in terms of Section III (B) (48) of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to the setting of charges.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that the Committee:

- (i) agrees the default increase for charges for Council services for 2022/23 is 2%;
- (ii) notes that in the aftermath of the pandemic it may be appropriate to freeze charges in some areas and that services should actively consider where charges should be increased;
- (iii) instructs services to be commercially aware and review their charges with a view to preserving or maximising income; and
- (iv) requests that the Moray Integration Joint Board (MIJB) recommend to the Council charges for services delivered under the aegis of MIJB.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The current Charging for Services Policy was approved by Policy and Resources Committee on 28 October 2017 (paragraph 8 of the Minute refers).
- 3.2 Under this policy, an annual revision of charges is required. In order to preserve the Council's financial position, charges within the control of this council are generally increased annually. The default rate of increase for

2020/21 was 5%, as a savings measure. The default rate for 2019/20 and for 2018/19 was 3%, an inflationary increase in both years, based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI) and other inflation measures. Inflation has been very volatile throughout the pandemic period and as for 2021/22 the current rate of CPI is not considered to be a useful measure of inflation. The UK government's target inflation is 2% and that is a more useful measure of what an inflationary increase should be based on. To preserve the Council's real income an increase of 2% should be considered as the default rate.

3.3 An annual uplift cannot be applied to all charges. Some charges levied by the Council for services provided:

- are set by statute, some are limited by statute and some have the method of calculation prescribed by statute.
- are impractical to increase incrementally on a year-on-year basis, typically small charges and those collected by coin-in-the-slot machines where the cost of re-calibrating the machines outweighs any increased income which would be generated.

3.4 In common with most other Councils, one of the approaches which the Council has taken to protect services in a time of decreasing core funding from Scottish Government has been to ensure that the Council maximises its income. A strand to that approach is seeking to ensure that – where possible and appropriate – service users pay for the cost of service delivery. This principle is enshrined in the Council's Charging Policy.

3.5 The ability of the Council to generate income from charges for services has been seriously reduced by restrictions during the pandemic. Ongoing impacts of services are likely as social distancing requirements continue and the impact of the pandemic on the local economy and measures taken to support economic recovery should be key considerations when services review individual charges. In normal times there is an expectation that charges for Council services will be automatically increased by the default rate of increase unless there are strong reasons not to. In the circumstances of the continued pandemic the position is reversed: active consideration needs to be given as to whether an increase in charges is reasonable in the circumstances of restricted service delivery.

3.6 The Council budgets to generate income of £12 million from charges for services, of which £1.8 million is retained by the MIJB. Almost £2 million is budgeted to be generated by charges set by Scottish Government or otherwise outwith the Council's control. Based on a budget of £8 million for charges within the Council's control, as a rule of thumb, income might be expected to increase by £80,000 for every 1% increase in charges. This needs to be caveated however.

3.7 Increasing prices only increases the income to the Council if usage of services remains buoyant. It is known that, generally speaking, increasing prices depresses uptake of services, more so for some services than for others. For example, uptake of school meals is known to be price sensitive, and services where the Council is effectively competing with the private sector need to be aware of the external market place. To preserve or maximise

income generated by charges for services requires a commercial approach to charging for services, and a key part of that is understanding the impact of pricing on uptake of services. This should be taken into account when reviewing individual charges.

- 3.8 Since April 2018 the Council has a socio-economic duty and requires to consider how any of its decisions would impact on poverty and inequality. To fulfil this duty an Equalities Impact Assessment will be prepared prior to recommending any specific amendments to charges for Council services where this is considered to be appropriate.
- 3.9 A comprehensive list of the charges proposed for 2022/23 will be reported to Council in February 2022 for consideration and approval, prior to the budget for 2022/23 being set in late February or early March 2022.
- 3.10 The Council has the statutory duty of setting charges for and contributions towards social care services. The income generated from these charges is included within the MIJB funding envelope. As the level of charges has an impact on the income to the MIJB and a potential impact on the uptake of services it is considered appropriate that the MIJB recommend to the Council what charges / contributions should be set for adult social care services.

4. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))

The levying of charges for Council services is an essential component of delivering Council priorities on a sustainable basis.

(b) Policy and Legal

There are no legal implications arising from this report, which is in accord with the Council's policy for Charging for Services.

(c) Financial implications

Levying charges for services forms an important part of the Council's strategy for balancing its annual budget, by generating an amount of income from service users.

(d) Risk Implications

There are no risk implications arising directly from this report. There is always a risk that service usage drops if charges are increased but this can only be assessed in February when individual charges are proposed

(e) Staffing Implications

There are no staffing implications arising directly from this report. Increasing charges collected by direct debit entails workload for the Payments Section.

(f) Property

There are no property implications arising from this report.

(g) **Equalities/Socio Economic Impact**

There are no equalities implications arising from this report and issues if any will be assessed at the next stage.

(h) **Consultations**

CMT has been consulted in the preparation of this report.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 A default uplift of 2% should protect the Council's real income from charges for services where this is appropriate and contribute towards bridging the budget gap which the Council expects for 2022/23, subject to any impact on demand.**
- 5.2 The MIJB should have a strategic role in setting charges for social care.**

Author of Report:	Lorraine Paisey, Chief Financial Officer
Background Papers:	
Ref:	LP/LJC/



REPORT TO: CORPORATE COMMITTEE 12 OCTOBER 2021

SUBJECT: FLU VACCINATION PROGRAMME 2021

BY: DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (EDUCATION, COMMUNITIES AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT)

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 The Committee is invited to note the content of the report and approve piloting a flu vaccination programme for identified groups of staff.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section III (B) (24) (c) of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to the health, safety and welfare policies and practices of the Council.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- (a) approve the introduction of a flu vaccination programme for 2021 at an anticipated cost of £12,050 to be funded from free general reserves; and
- (b) note that a further report will be brought back that reviews the impact of the pilot on sickness absence figures for the relevant periods with a view to considering the benefits of a longer term programme of flu vaccination.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Seasonal flu is a significant cause of short term illness. It is highly contagious and can affect a large number of working adults of all ages. Offering protection against flu can help to keep employees healthy and reduce sickness absence.
- 3.2 Colds and flu account for 5.46% of all Moray Council staff sickness absence and 17.65% of short term absence (indicative for period November 2019 to October 2020). This figure was lower by 25% compared to November 2018 to October 2019 and is thought to be largely due to more employees working from home and less physical or close interaction amongst the workforce due to the enforced lockdowns.

- 3.3 The cost of all cold and flu absence was £236,340 in 2019-20 which is 5.35% of all absence costs and equates to 2129 days lost over the above period. Scaling this to the 25% of the workforce who might be offered a flu vaccination, this cost equates to roughly £59,000. Colds and flu are currently recorded as one reason for sickness absence so it is not possible to accurately determine what proportion of £59,000 could potentially be saved with a reduction in seasonal flu, however indicative estimates of a quarter, half and three-quarters in Table 1 give an indication of the potential savings per proportion of seasonal flu. Recording colds and flu as separate reasons for absence will enable more comprehensive analysis.

Table 1

100% Flu	75% Flu	50% Flu	25% Flu
£59,000	£44,250	£29,500	£14,750

- 3.4 Traditionally, Education, Community Care and Environmental and Commercial Services have the highest proportion of people off work with colds and flu as short term absence. Some of these services are already experiencing significant staffing shortages due to a range of reasons, one of those being increased staff absence due to Covid related absence (illness or self-isolation requirements).
- 3.5 Notably, public health forecasting indicates the potential for increased levels of seasonal flu this winter due to lowered community immunity following the reduced mixing and contact between people during the lockdown periods.
- 3.6 To promote wellbeing and support a reduction in absence due to colds and flu, it is therefore proposed that a flu vaccination programme is introduced.
- 3.7 It is important to note that the NHS provides a free flu vaccine for persons over 50 years of age, social care workers who deliver direct personal care, pregnant women, social workers, some medical conditions, healthcare workers, teachers and support staff. The proportion of the workforce who do not currently meet the criteria for a free NHS flu vaccination equates to 25% (approximately 1271 individuals).
- 3.8 This will significantly reduce the cost for the council, however the NHS flu vaccination programme is not mandatory and it is recognised that not everyone who is currently eligible takes up their vaccination. It is therefore proposed that should it be agreed that the Council pays for flu vaccinations that this proportion of staff be referred to the free service and this would be promoted via a communications exercise to encourage and signpost eligible employees to take up their free NHS vaccination.
- 3.9 To support this decision, an options appraisal has been completed to assess the possible service provision and associated costs of providing a vaccination for employees. This assessment identified a cost effective provider where vouchers are ordered online and issued to employees via email or text message to use at an outlet at a variety of local locations. For those staff

who do not have access to a computer or smart phone and potentially for frontline services, it is possible to print vouchers through the online system.

- 3.10 At this stage in the year, due to the logistics and availability of supplies, the best option of being able to offer this service to our employees is to utilise a particular provider as the provider of flu vaccination vouchers.
- 3.11 There is no refund of unused vouchers with this option, however it would be possible to provide additional admin resource to operate a voucher request system which would inform the level of vouchers purchased to limit voucher wastage and value for money. The anticipated costs of the admin resource are included in the costs of the programme in section 4(c).
- 3.12 The last date for ordering vouchers is 3rd December 2021 with vaccinations being completed by 31st January 2022. Generally, flu vaccination programmes start in September at the start of the flu season.
- 3.13 Evaluation of sickness absence figures for the two winter quarters (Q3 and Q4) will be monitored for evidence of positive impact on reducing sickness absence rates due to flu. Should the anticipated positive impact be evidenced, a report will be brought to a future Corporate Committee with a proposal for longer term engagement with a flu vaccination programme and the range of options that might be available for this.
- 3.14 Given the short timescales involved, a request has been authorised by the Head of Financial Services to make a direct contract award to the identified provider for this year to enable this pilot programme of flu vaccination to be undertaken for the reasons noted in this report, with a view to using normal procurement procedures for any longer term provision should that be agreed.

4. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))

This report supports the Corporate Plan in terms of creating a sustainable Council by improving efficiency in reducing sickness absence rates.

(b) Policy and Legal

This report supports the Council's employer responsibilities and commitments with regard to the health, safety and wellbeing of the workforce.

(c) Financial implications

Corporate Management Team Additional Expenditure Warning

When the Council approved the budget for 2021/22 on 3 March 2021 (paragraph 3 of the Minute refers) it balanced only by using one-off financial flexibilities. The indicative 3 year budget showed a likely requirement to continue to make significant savings in future years. All financial decisions must be made in this context and only essential additional expenditure should be agreed in the course of the year. In making this determination the committee should consider whether the

financial risk to the Council of incurring additional expenditure outweighs the risk to the Council of not incurring that expenditure, as set out in the risk section below and whether a decision on funding could reasonably be deferred until the budget for future years is approved.

Cost of flu vaccine for 25% of workforce	£11,500
Cost of admin resource	£ 550
TOTAL	<u>£12,050</u>

(d) Risk Implications

The risks of not approving this additional unbudgeted expenditure are continued employee sickness absence due to colds and flu, at potentially higher levels than previously experienced due to the lower levels of immunity that the recent lockdowns have triggered. This would exacerbate an already challenging staffing situation in several areas across the Council, but particularly in critical front line services such as Adult Social Care and Teaching which have a direct cost in terms of securing cover for absence to ensure continued service delivery to vulnerable groups.

(e) Staffing Implications

There are no direct staffing implications other than those noted in the report.

(f) Property

There are no property implications.

(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact

There are no anticipated equalities or socio-economic impacts.

(h) Consultations

The central and senior management teams and Head of Financial Services have been consulted on the report. The Scottish Joint Council trade unions have been consulted and are supportive and appreciative of the flu vaccination programme proposal.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 The Council normally experiences a significant proportion of employee sickness absence due to seasonal flu. This year it is anticipated to be higher than because of a general lowered immunity within the community due to the reduced levels of people mixing during the last 18 months.

5.2 Piloting a flu vaccination programme will provide a way of reducing the levels of sickness absence due to seasonal flu which will help relieve the pressures noted above.

Author of Report: Frances Garrow
Background Papers: None
Ref:



REPORT TO: CORPORATE COMMITTEE ON 12 OCTOBER 2021

SUBJECT: COMPLAINTS ANNUAL REPORT 2020-21

BY: CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. REASON FOR REPORT

1.1 The Committee is asked to consider the Complaints Annual Report 2020-21.

1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section III(B)(39) of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to developing and monitoring public relations, public reporting, publicity and corporate communications.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- i) consider the contents of the Complaints Annual Report;**
- ii) welcome performance as indicated in the report; and**
- iii) approve the report for submission to the Scottish Public Sector Ombudsman (SPSO).**

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 All councils are required to publish their performance against the national performance indicators set by the SPSO. The attached report presents performance against these performance indicators for the 2020-21 reporting period. **(Appendix 1)**

3.2 Complaints handling is part of the council's performance management framework. Members receive updates on complaints performance through routine reports to service committees.

3.3 Compared to the 2019-20 figures, there has been a decrease of 30.5% in the number of complaints received and a slight decrease of around 0.1% in the

population size. Consequently, the number of complaints per 1,000 population has decreased by 30.4% compared to 2019-20. The decrease in complaints recording reflects the impact of the pandemic which curtailed our ability to deliver our services in the usual manner and generally there was public acceptance of this.

- 3.4 During 2020-21, 74% of complaints were dealt with at frontline resolution stage compared to 26% dealt with at the investigation stage including those escalated to investigation. This maintains the performance of recent years. It is heartening to see that most complaints continue to be dealt with at frontline, as suggested by the SPSO's guidance on the Model Complaints Handling Procedure to "take every opportunity to resolve service users' complaints at the first point of contact if at all possible."
- 3.5 55% of frontline (stage one) complaints were 'upheld', or 'partially upheld' (Figures 5 & 6) in 2020-21, a 3% increase on 2019-20, demonstrating that where an anticipated level of service falls short, it is acknowledged, learning and improvement outcomes are identified and implemented.

For stage two complaints 'upheld' or 'partially upheld' at the investigation stage, the proportion in 2020-21 of 51%, was marginally higher (3%) compared to last year. Over the past 5 years the proportion of stage two complaints (including after escalation) 'upheld' or 'partially upheld' has consistently been between 40% and 50%.

- 3.6 The impact on complaint handling arising from the pandemic cannot be understated. Staff who normally dealt with their service complaints were assigned to other roles. The majority of staff reverted to home working and it took a considerable amount of time for our IT department to set up access to systems, including those systems required to manage complaints. Services were required to deviate from our Complaint Handling Procedure (CHP), with some complaints normally dealt with at front line (stage 1) put to directly to investigation (stage 2) and on occasions authorised extensions had to be applied. This was recognised at a national level and the SPSO issued a statement advising councils that only Covid related complaints should be dealt with expeditiously in accordance with the CHP.
- 3.7 The appointment of an Education complaints officer contributed to a 46% increase in Schools and Curriculum Development recorded complaints in 2019-20. However, possibly due to the many measures schools had to introduce during lockdown to deal with the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, there were just 22 complaints in 2020-21, similar to the 28 in 2018-19, and less than half the 52 complaints recorded in 2019-20. Thirteen of the complaints received in 2020-21 were resolved at stage two (59%), similar to the proportion in 2019-20 (52%).

4. **SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

(a) **Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan - Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP)**

This report supports the Scottish Government's national outcomes, in particular the commitment to be accountable to the community as stated: "Our public services are high quality, continually improving, efficient and responsive to local people's needs."

Effective complaints reporting is used to ensure the efficient and sustainable delivery of services to meet the Council's Corporate Plan priorities.

(b) **Policy and Legal**

The SPSO have made it a statutory requirement to have all local authorities publish a Complaints Annual Report.

(c) **Financial implications**

It is not anticipated that there will be any financial implications.

(d) **Risk Implications**

Failure to adhere to the statutory SPSO requirement may result in SPSO making a declaration of non-compliance against the Council. Non-compliance with the statutory duty relating to national standards being adopted would present risk in terms of reputational damage and a loss of public confidence in reporting complaints.

(e) **Staffing Implications**

There are no staffing implications related to this report.

(f) **Property**

There are no property implications related to this report.

(g) **Equalities/Socio Economic Impact**

The Equal Opportunities Officer has been consulted in the preparation of this report and the equalities impact has been identified as uncertain.

The Equal Opportunities Officer has recommended that where services are experiencing high volumes of complaints, the management of respective services should arrange to identify common complaint issues and any learning arising. This will help to ensure that complaints are not arising from situations where customer diversity needs have not been considered or addressed, e.g. disability or cultural issues.

(h) **Consultations**

The Corporate Management Team have been consulted on the contents of the Complaints Annual Report 2020-21.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 Publishing the Complaints Annual Report 2020-21 complies with the SPSO statutory requirement.

Author of Report:	John Black, Complaints Officer
Background Papers:	Held by Author
Ref:	SPMAN-2045703626-105

Moray Council

Complaints Handling Annual Report



2020/21

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1. Chief Executive's Foreword

Scotland's public sector has a duty to the people it serves, and part of that duty involves responding positively to complaints. This annual report serves three purposes:

- to comply with a national requirement to report against a suite of eight Scottish Public Service Ombudsman (SPSO) Performance Indicators (PIs);
- internally to inform management to help us learn from complaints and improve services; and
- externally to provide information and feedback to the public who engaged with us during the complaints process.

In this report you will find details of how we have performed in dealing with complaints, the outcomes of some investigations and how we have changed our services as a result. I am pleased to see many work practices modified as a result of a complaint, which I feel shows we are listening to the public when they're not happy.

Naturally, not every complaint is upheld, but clearly, they are all addressed at either frontline stage or through a more detailed, thorough investigation within respective timescales including authorised extensions. We take our commitment to the SPSO framework seriously and I am confident that our customer care will continue to improve as we implement the learning outcomes from the complaints we receive.

Covid 19 impacted greatly on how we delivered services and managed complaints throughout this entire reporting period.

Roddy Burns
Chief Executive

2. Introduction

- 2.1 This Complaints Handling Annual Report summarises the council's performance in terms of handling customer complaints received between 01 April 2020 and 31 March 2021.
- 2.2 The 2020-2021 reporting period provides the seventh full year of data under the new model Complaints Handling Procedure. This annual report is presented in accordance with the National Performance Framework, which was published in August 2013. The Complaints Standard Authority developed a suite of eight performance indicators in association with the Local Authority Complaint Handlers Network on which we are represented. These indicators are a valuable source of information about council services as this helps to identify recurring or underlying problems, derive learning from complaints and highlight potential areas for improvement.
- 2.3 The council always aims to provide the highest possible quality of service to our community, but we recognise that there are times when we get things wrong and we fail to meet the expectations of our customers. The council welcomes feedback as it provides information that helps services learn from complaints and to modify and improve the way services are delivered. Complaints are viewed as a positive communication tool and are encouraged.

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

- 2.4 Our complaints procedure has two stages:

- **Stage one** – 'frontline resolution': we will always try to resolve complaints quickly, within five working days, and in exceptional circumstances extend for a further five days.

- **Stage two** – ‘investigation’: if customers remain dissatisfied with our stage one response, they can escalate their complaint to stage two. Complaints that are complex or need detailed investigation from the outset can be looked at immediately at stage two. These complaints will be acknowledged within three working days and a written response provided within twenty working days; this can be extended in exceptional circumstances.

- 2.5 Following completion of our complaints process, if a customer remains dissatisfied, they can ask the SPSO to consider their complaint further and we advise them of this entitlement.
- 2.6 In support of the Complaints Handling Procedure, the council has a Complaints Management System enabling us to record, track and report on complaints information across all services. Within this system, we record how we have dealt with and responded to complaints.
- 2.7 Monitoring complaints information, the preparation and publication of quarterly reports and this annual report helps to provide a clear basis for identifying service failures (‘learning from complaints’) and information on how effectively the council is handling complaints (‘complaints performance’).
- 2.8 Complaints analysis is reported to the Corporate Management Team quarterly and to Service Committees half yearly in accordance with the Council’s Performance Management Framework.
- 2.9 The Performance Indicators covered in this report provide a tool that the council and the public can use to judge objectively how well complaints are being handled and how they inform service improvement activity.
- 2.10 The complaints performance data in this report will also inform our Annual Public Performance Report summarising our performance against the Statutory Performance Indicators.
- 2.11 Compliance with the Complaints Handling Procedure is monitored by Audit Scotland in conjunction with the SPSO and in line with the principles of the Best Value Shared Risk Assessment arrangements.
- 2.12 A new two stage statutory social work complaints process was introduced on 1 April 2017 and social work complaints administered under the new process were incorporated into last year’s annual report and are included again in this one.

3 Executive Summary

- 3.1 This report is written against the backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic and its associated lockdown measures required to be implemented by Moray Council. These have impacted significantly on some Service areas during the reporting period requiring the way services have been delivered to be amended or curtailed to meet the guidelines. However, it would appear the public have accepted these changes as a necessary factor in protecting the work-force and reducing the risk of catching and spreading Covid-19 as the number of complaints was 30% lower than the previous year.
- 3.2 The impact on complaint handling arising from the pandemic cannot be understated. Staff who normally dealt with their service complaints were assigned to other roles. The majority of staff reverted to home working and it took a considerable amount of time for our IT department to set up access to systems, including those systems required to manage complaints. Services were required to deviate from our CHP, with complaints normally dealt with at front line (stage 1) put to investigation (stage 2) and on occasions authorised extensions had to be applied. This was

recognised at a national level and the SPSO issued a statement advising councils that only Covid related complaints should be dealt with expeditiously in accordance with the CHP.

- 3.3 The breakdown of services referred to in the Appendix tables and narrative in this report relate to our organisational structure prior to October 2019 as work to our complaint database remains outstanding. Categorised as a lower priority for our IT department due to the impact of Covid on their service, the new organisational structure will be updated on the complaints database by 1 April 2022.
- 3.4 The number of complaints received this year reduced from last year, in contrast to the increasing trend of the previous three years. The rate reduced to 5.36 per 1,000 population compared to 7.7 in 2019-20 and 6.4 in 2018-19. The rate across Scotland in 2020-21 was 9.87.
- 3.5 Perhaps due to the problems faced, there has been slight slippage to complaints performance in relation to some areas of stage one complaints :
- 74% of complaints received are being closed off at stage one, just short of the 80% proportion in the previous 2 years.
 - 44% of stage one complaints were upheld, an increase from 38.2% and 26.4% in 2019/20 and 2018/19 respectively.
 - 71% of stage one complaints were closed off within the five working day target, a result unchanged from last year but a decrease from 77% in 2018/19.
 - 34% of the 109 overdue stage one complaints had authorised extensions, in-line with 33% last year.

This shows that we are still dealing with complaints at the point closest to service delivery in most cases. However, it also may be an indicator of increasing workload, with fewer staff to respond to complaints, it suggests that it will not be easy to maintain the culture that has gradually been built up in recent years. Another factor during the reporting period is staff, who normally dealt with their service complaints, may have been assigned to other roles to manage responses to the pandemic.

- 3.6 Schools and Curriculum Development continue to close the majority of their complaints through stage one (53%), albeit a slight decrease compared to 60% in 2019-20.

The appointment of an Education complaints officer contributed to a 46% increase in Schools and Curriculum Development recorded complaints in 2019-20. However, possibly due to the many measures schools had to introduce to deal with the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, there were just 22 complaints in 2020-21, similar to the 28 in 2018-19, and less than half the 52 complaints recorded in 2019-20. Thirteen of the complaints received in 2020-21 were resolved at stage two (59%), similar to the proportion in 2019-20 (52%).

The complaints officer continues to provide guidance and specific training sessions to social work and education staff involved in complaint handling, with the aim of increasing their recording of minor complaints.

- 3.7 Performance in resolving stage two complaints within the 20-working day timescale shows a slight improvement to 57% compared to 53% last year. However, of those complaints being closed off beyond 20 working days, 35% had authorised extensions, down from 46% in 2019-20.
- 3.8 Gaining approval to extend our response times is an ongoing area of improvement. The Complaint Officer, through meetings with department complaint administrators and weekly complaint report

monitoring, aims of further improve performance on authorised extensions of stage 1 and stage 2 complaints.

- 3.9 Whilst upheld or partially upheld complaints demonstrate that there is recognition and acknowledgement where service delivery falls short, with 55% frontline and 51% investigation complaints falling within this category, organisational change where there commonalities exist presents an opportunity that will receive increased scrutiny in monitoring processes over the coming year.
- 3.10 We continue to provide quarterly data to the Local Authority Complaint Handlers Network along with 30 other councils (one council does not submit data) for benchmarking purposes. The network is working to further refine council recording practices to improve data robustness..
- 3.11 Feedback received through the complaints survey was similar to previous years with high levels of dissatisfaction expressed in a high percentage of survey responses. This may reflect a misconception that the survey is seeking views on the complaints process and not complaint outcomes.

4 Complaints Performance Indicators

The aim of the model Complaints Handling Procedure is for as many complaints as possible to be resolved at the frontline (i.e. at stage one) with as few as possible requiring progression to investigation (i.e. stage two) in order to improve both the customer's experience and the council's service provision.

The SPSO Performance Indicators provide the minimum requirement for a local authority to self-assess, report on performance and to undertake benchmarking activities. These indicators are:

- Indicator 1 – complaints received per 1,000 of population
- Indicator 2 – closed complaints
- Indicator 3 – complaints upheld, partially upheld and not upheld
- Indicator 4 – average times
- Indicator 5 – performance against timescales
- Indicator 6 – number of cases where an extension is authorised
- Indicator 7 – customer satisfaction
- Indicator 8 – learning from complaints

A breakdown of 2020-21 figures for relevant indicators will be explained in this section together with 2019-20 figures and some data from previous years to allow for benchmark comparisons. A breakdown of indicator figures for services is included as an appendix.

4.1 Indicator 1

This indicator records the total number of complaints received by the council. This is the sum of the number of complaints received at stage one (frontline resolution) and the number of complaints received directly at stage two (investigation). To allow for a fair comparison across all 32 councils in Scotland, the figure of complaints per 1,000 of population is used.

Table 1: Number of complaints received by Moray Council (per 1,000 population)

Complaints received by Moray Council	2019-20	2020-21
Total number of received	738	513
Population (mid-year population estimate)	95,820	95,710
Number of complaints per 1,000 population	7.70	5.36

*Some of the complaints dealt with during the period relate to complaints raised before April 2020, and some raised in March 2021 would be unresolved before the end of March 2021. Thus there will not be a direct correlation between numbers received and numbers responded to.

Compared to the 2019-20 figures, there has been a decrease of 30.5% in the number of complaints received and a slight decrease of around 0.1% in the population size. Consequently, the number of complaints per 1,000 population has decreased by 30.4% compared to 2019-20 (Table 1).¹

Most complaints continue to be received by Environmental Services (77%), to be expected given areas of responsibility include roads, waste management and planning. Education and Social Care were the next highest – 91 (18%); the former Corporate Services – 24 (5%) received the remaining complaints. (See Table A: Indicator 2 – Appendix).

The proportion of complaints to Direct Services, one of the services that has most direct contact with Moray residents, has shown a 5% decrease from 2019-20. Whereas, Housing & Property Services has recorded a 2% increase in the proportion of complaints compared to 2019-20.

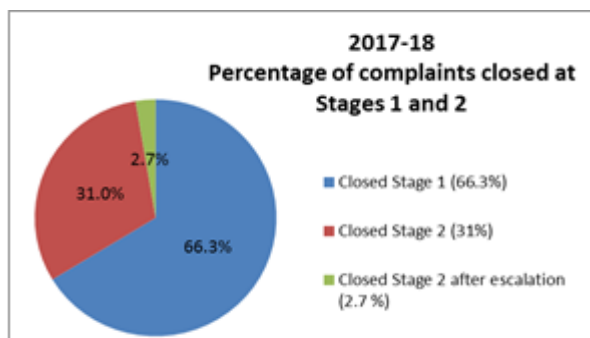
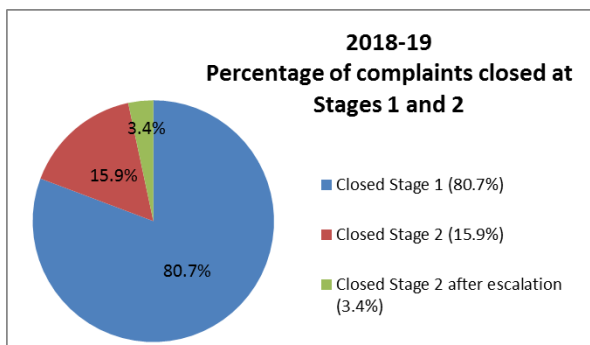
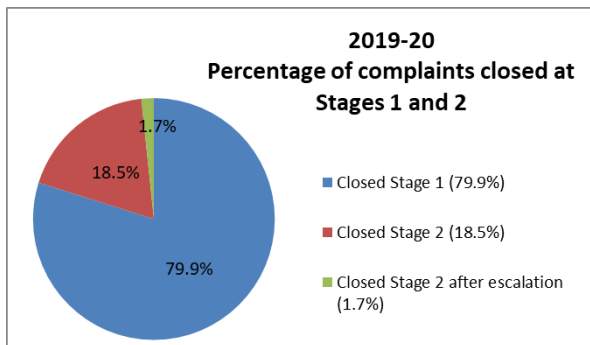
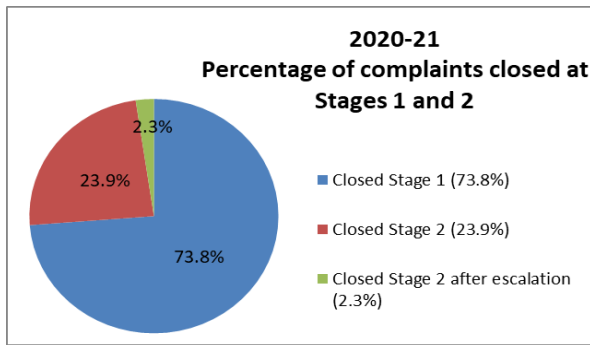
4.2 Indicator 2

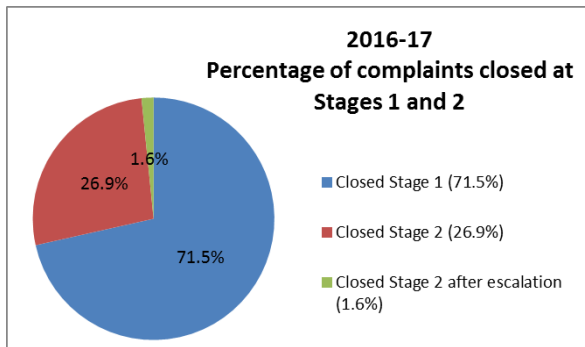
This indicator provides information on the number of complaints closed at stage one and stage two as a percentage of the 511 closed complaints (note that there were 513 complaints received with 2 not closed during the reporting period). The term 'closed' refers to a complaint that has had a response sent to the customer and at the time no further action is required.

This indicator will report:

- the number of complaints closed at stage one as % of all complaints,
- the number of complaints closed at stage two as % of all complaints, and
- the number of complaints closed at stage two after escalation as % of all complaints

Figure 1: Percentage of complaints closed at Stages One and Two (2016-17 through to 2020-21)





During 2020-21, 74% of complaints were dealt with at frontline resolution stage compared to 24% dealt with at the investigation stage. This maintains the performance of recent years. It is heartening to see that most complaints continue to be dealt with at frontline, as suggested by the SPSO's guidance on the Model Complaints Handling Procedure to "take every opportunity to resolve service users' complaints at the first point of contact if at all possible." Continued emphasis is placed on highlighting the complaints model to individual services at the Complaints Administration Group meetings and providing complaints handling inputs to department staff, including the sharing of best practice.

Notably, Direct Services continue to lead the way in resolving the majority of complaints at frontline – 184 (94%). Although there has been slight decreases in some service areas, generally services continue to resolve the majority of complaints at the first point of contact.

Figure 2: Complaints closed at Stage One as a % of all complaints closed (2018-19 through to 2020-21)

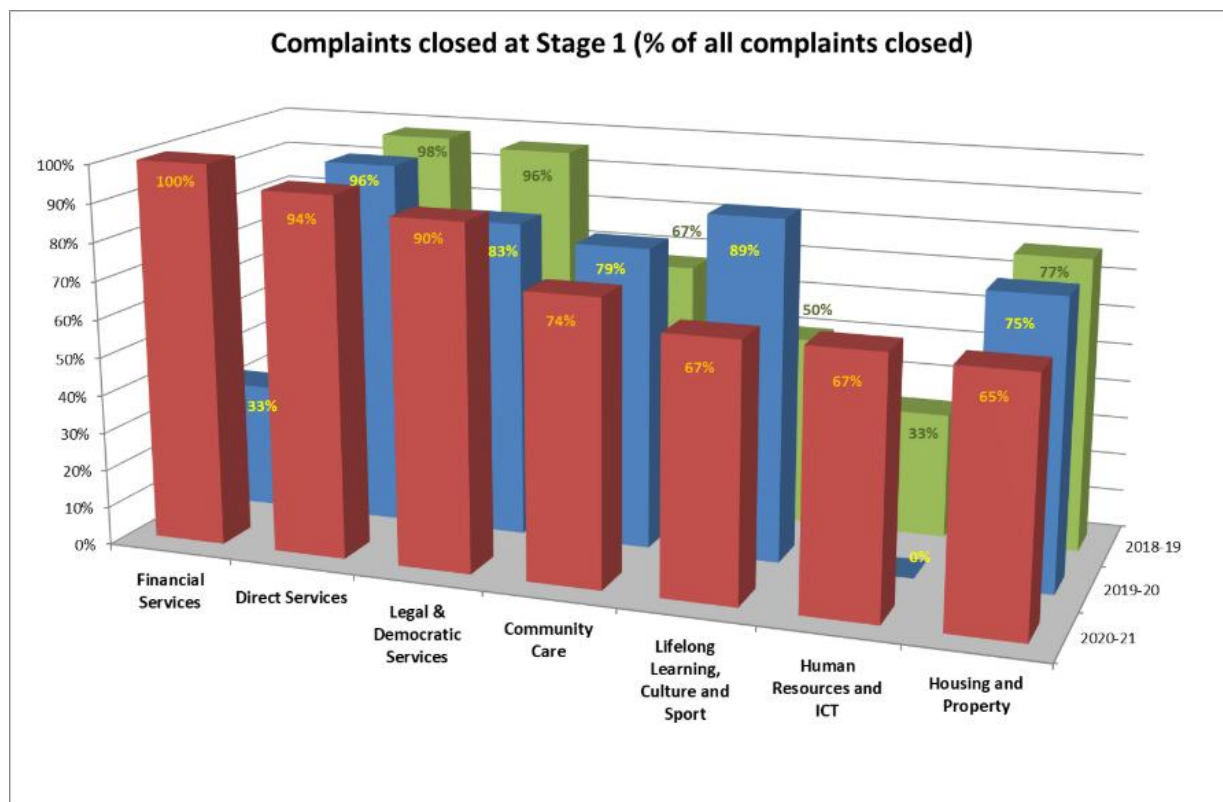
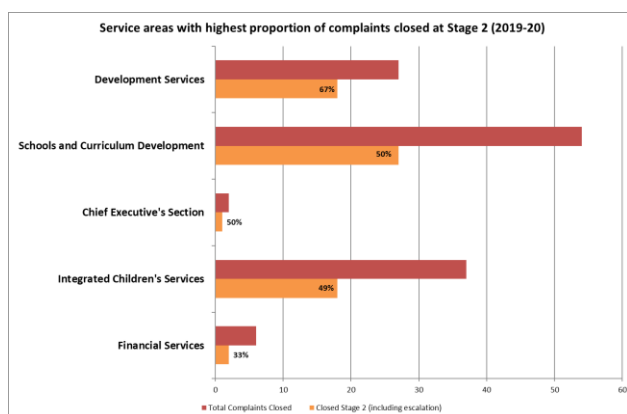
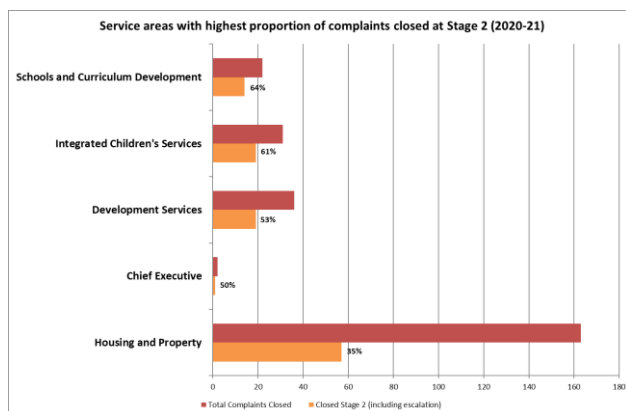


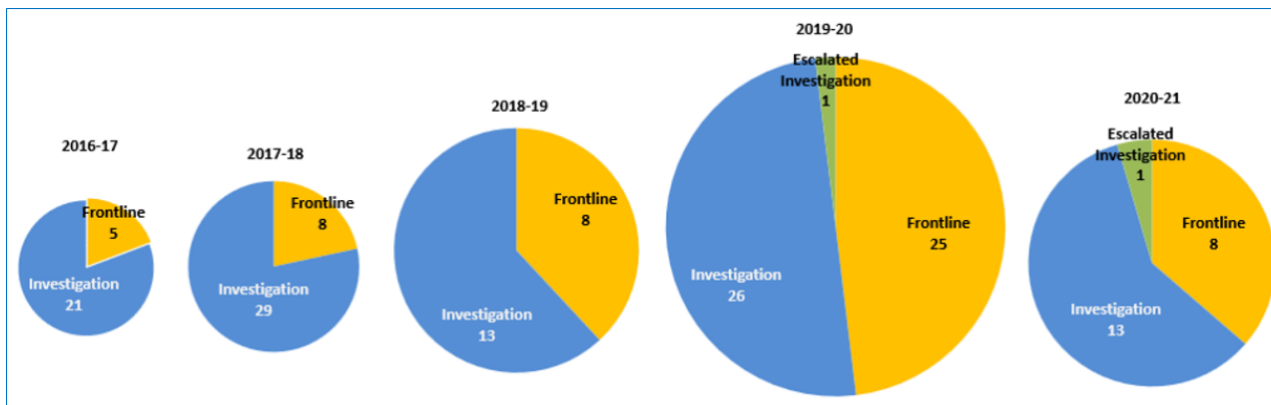
Figure 3: Complaints closed at Stage Two as a % of all complaints closed (2020-21 compared to 2019-20))



Stage two complaints often involve speaking with several witnesses, meeting with complainants and liaising with partner agencies. In such circumstances, concluding these enquiries and providing a written response to a complainant normally exceeds five working days.

There were 58% fewer complaints against Schools and Curriculum Development compared to 2019-20, perhaps due to the impact of home-schooling and the additional support measures put in place. However, despite the work to emphasise the importance of resolving complaints at Stage 1 frontline, the percentage being closed at Stage 1 decreased this year from 48% to 36%.

Figure 4: Schools and Curriculum Development complaints resolved (2016-17 through to 2020-21)



4.3 Indicator 3

There is a requirement for a formal outcome (upheld, partially upheld or not upheld) to be recorded for each complaint.

This indicator will report:

- the number of complaints upheld at stage one as % of all complaints closed at stage one
- the number of complaints not upheld at stage one as % of all complaints closed at stage one
- the number of complaints partially upheld at stage one as % of all complaints closed at stage one
- the number of complaints upheld at stage two as % of all complaints closed at stage two
- the number of complaints not upheld at stage two as % of all complaints closed at stage two
- the number of complaints partially upheld at stage two as % of all complaints closed at stage two
- the number of escalated complaints upheld at stage two as % of all escalated complaints closed at stage two
- the number of escalated complaints not upheld at stage two as % of all escalated complaints closed at stage two
- the number of escalated complaints partially upheld at stage two as % of all escalated complaints closed at stage two

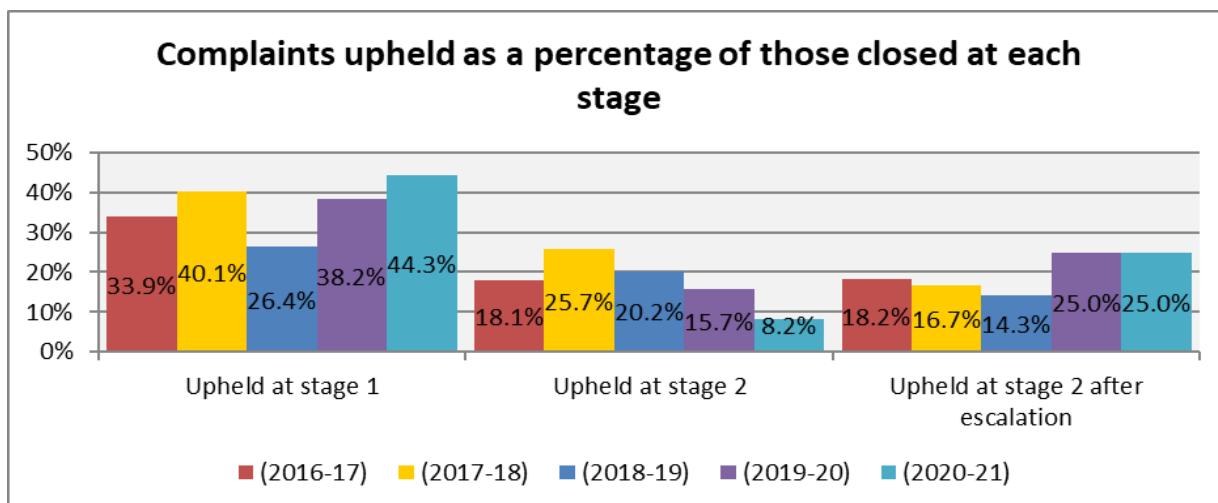
A complaint is defined as 'upheld' when it is found to be true or confirmed. A 'partially upheld' complaint results when there are several complaint issues raised and some, but not all, of them are upheld. Complaints are 'not upheld' when they are found to be untrue or that the service provided was of a reasonable standard in line with typical expectations. The council reviews all complaints and each customer is contacted to confirm to them whether their complaint has been 'upheld', 'partially upheld' or 'not upheld' together with an explanation of the findings.

55% of frontline (stage one) complaints were 'upheld', or 'partially upheld' (Figures 5 & 6) in 2020-21, a 3% increase on 2019-20, demonstrating that where an anticipated level of service falls short, it is acknowledged, learning and improvement outcomes are identified and implemented.

For stage two complaints 'upheld' or 'partially upheld' at the investigation stage, the proportion in 2020-21 of 51%, was marginally higher (3%) compared to last year. Over the past 5 years the proportion of stage two complaints (including after escalation) 'upheld' or 'partially upheld' has consistently been between 40% and 50%.

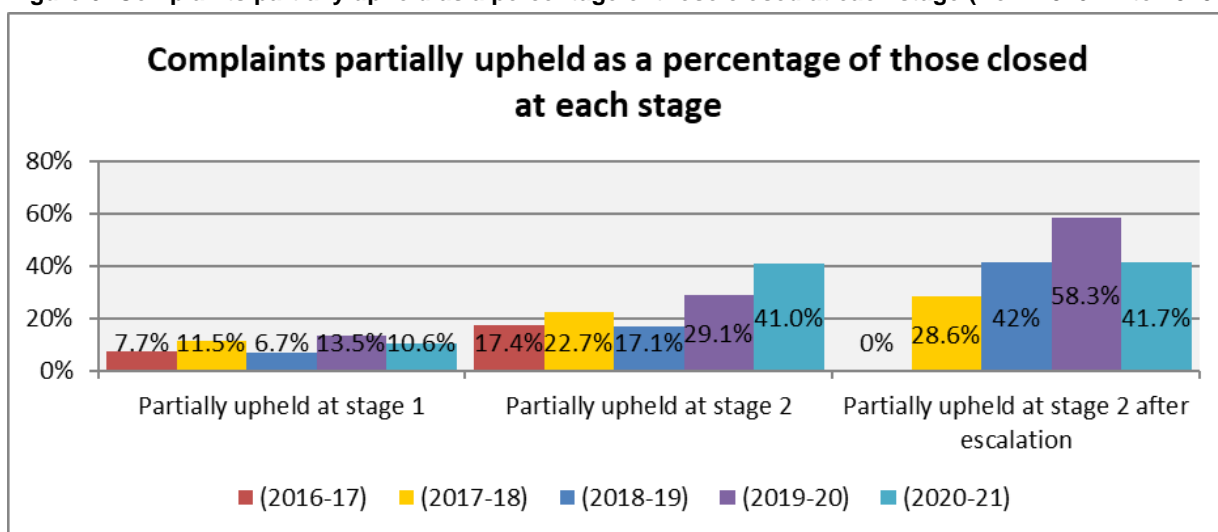
Upheld Complaints

Figure 5: Complaints upheld as a percentage of those closed at each stage (2016-17 through to 2020-21)



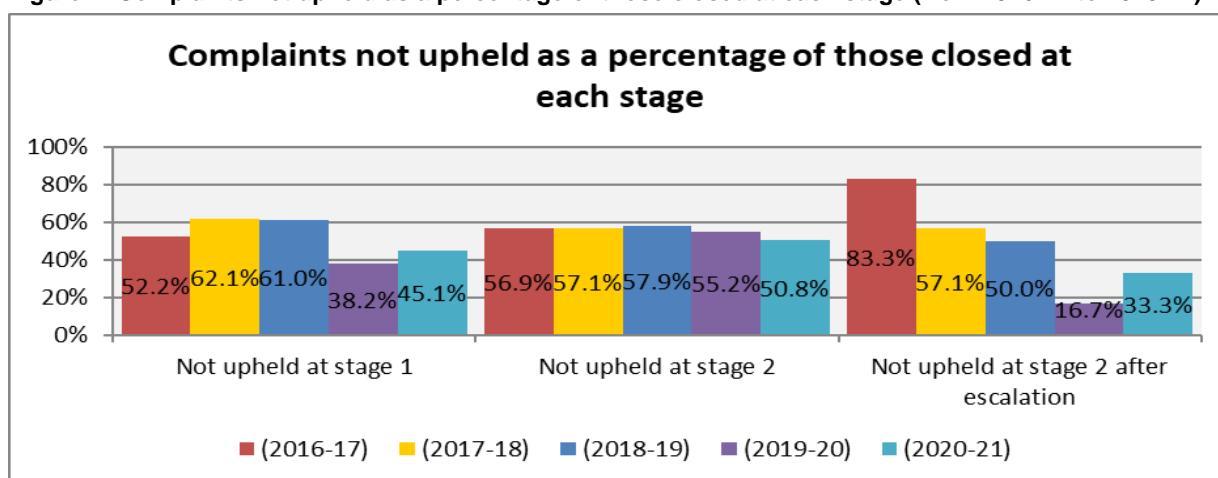
Partially Upheld Complaints

Figure 6: Complaints partially upheld as a percentage of those closed at each stage (from 2016-17 to 2020-21)



Not Upheld Complaints

Figure 7: Complaints not upheld as a percentage of those closed at each stage (from 2016-17 to 2020-21)



For all the complaints closed during 2020-21, at both stages one and two, 54% were fully 'upheld' or 'partially upheld' overall, slightly higher than in 2019-20 (51%). This shows that a significant

proportion of complaints require the council to review and improve the way services are being delivered.

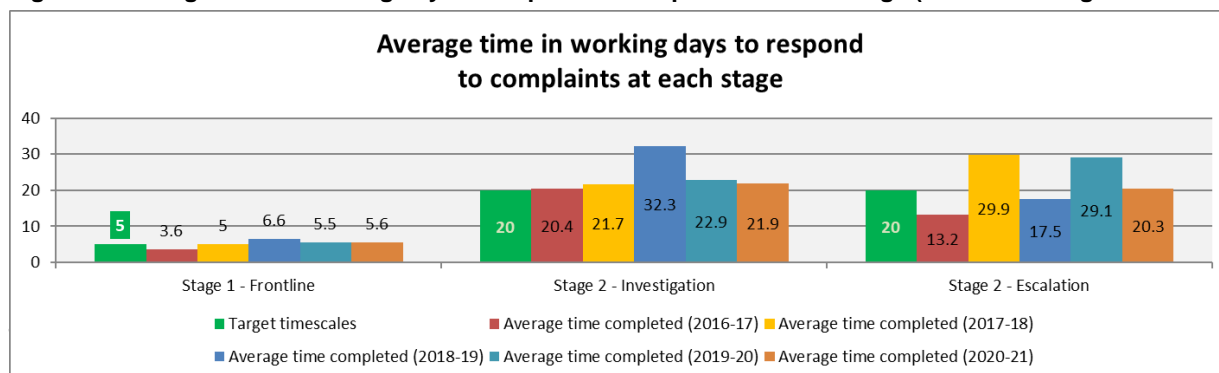
4.4 Indicator 4

This represents the average time in working days to close complaints at stages one and two of the model CHP.

This indicator will report:

- the average time in working days to respond to complaints at stage one
- the average time in working days to respond to complaints at stage two
- the average time in working days to respond to complaints after escalation

Figure 8: Average time in working days to respond to complaints at each stage (2016-17 through to 2020-21)



target's working day timescale (5.6 days). 200 (71.6%) frontline complaints closed on time compared to 410 (71.2%) in 2019-20 (Figure 9).

The average time for resolving stage two investigation complaints was lower in 2020-21 at 21.9 days, compared to 22.9 days in 2019-20; slightly outside the Model Complaint Handling Procedures' guidelines of 20 working days. The time taken on average to resolve the escalated stage two investigations improved to 20.3 days from 29.1 days in 2019-20. 78 (58%) investigation complaints closed on time compared to 77 (53%) in 2019-20.

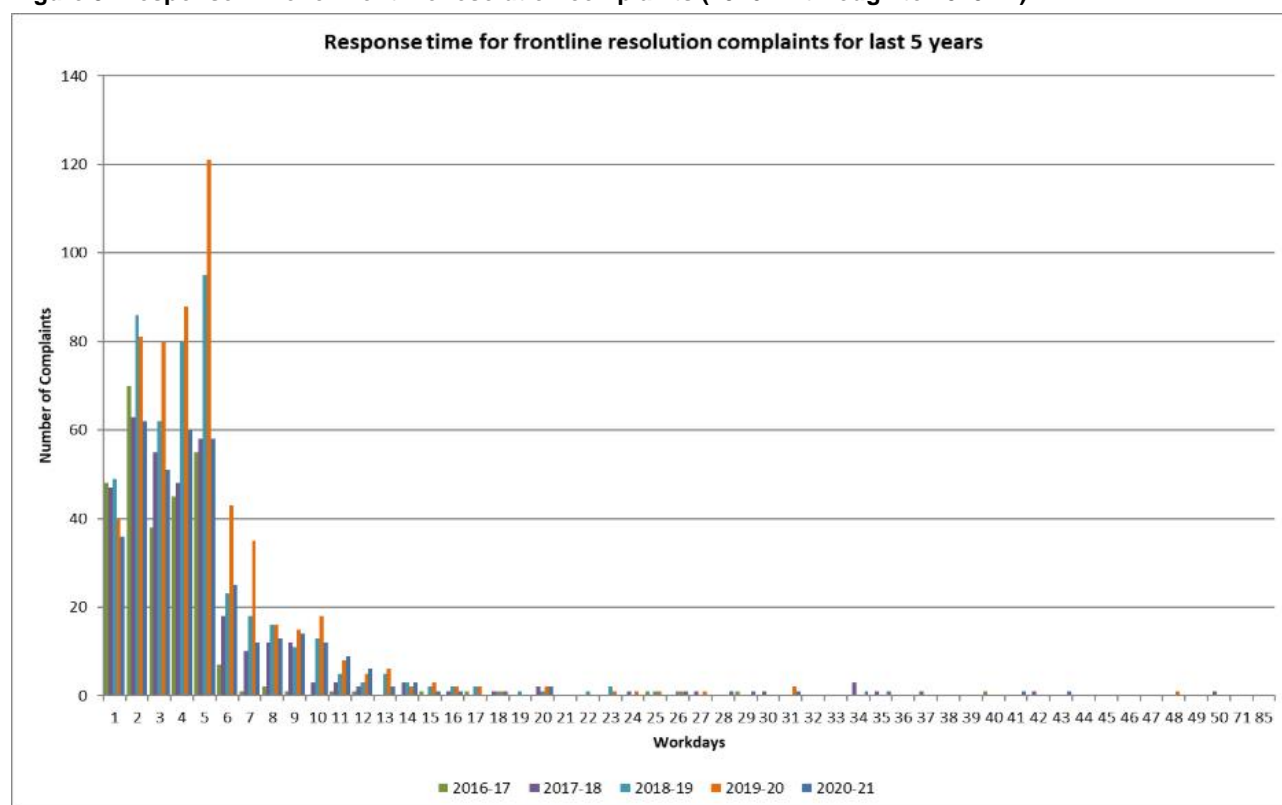
Although the majority of frontline complaints are dealt with within 5 working days, the proportion exceeding the maximum extension period of a further 5 working days rose to 9% from 7%. Complaints extended should be closed as a frontline complaint (stage one) and escalated to investigation (stage two) in line with Handling Procedures.

In the past 3 years the number of frontline complaints that take longer than 5 working days to close has been much higher than in previous years, and the indication was the trend was increasing. In 2016-17 there were 18 complaints that took longer than 5 days to resolve, 23 in 2015-16 and 30 in 2014-15. However, in 2017-18 there were 77 overdue frontline complaints, in 2018-19 the number rose significantly to 111, and in 2019-20 this figure rose again to 169. However, although the proportion of frontline cases taking longer in 2020-21 compared to 2019-20 remained the same (29%) the number of late frontline complaints reduced to 109. The trend may be indicative of the increasing workload on staff and the continuing pressures on services.

Five services account for the majority taking longer than the SPSO requirement of 5 working days to resolve: 37 complaints relating to Direct Services, 28 for Housing & Property Services, 16 for Community Care, 8 for Legal & Democratic Services and 7 for Integrated Children's Services. The frontline complaint that took the longest time to resolve (66 working days) was raised against Financial Services.

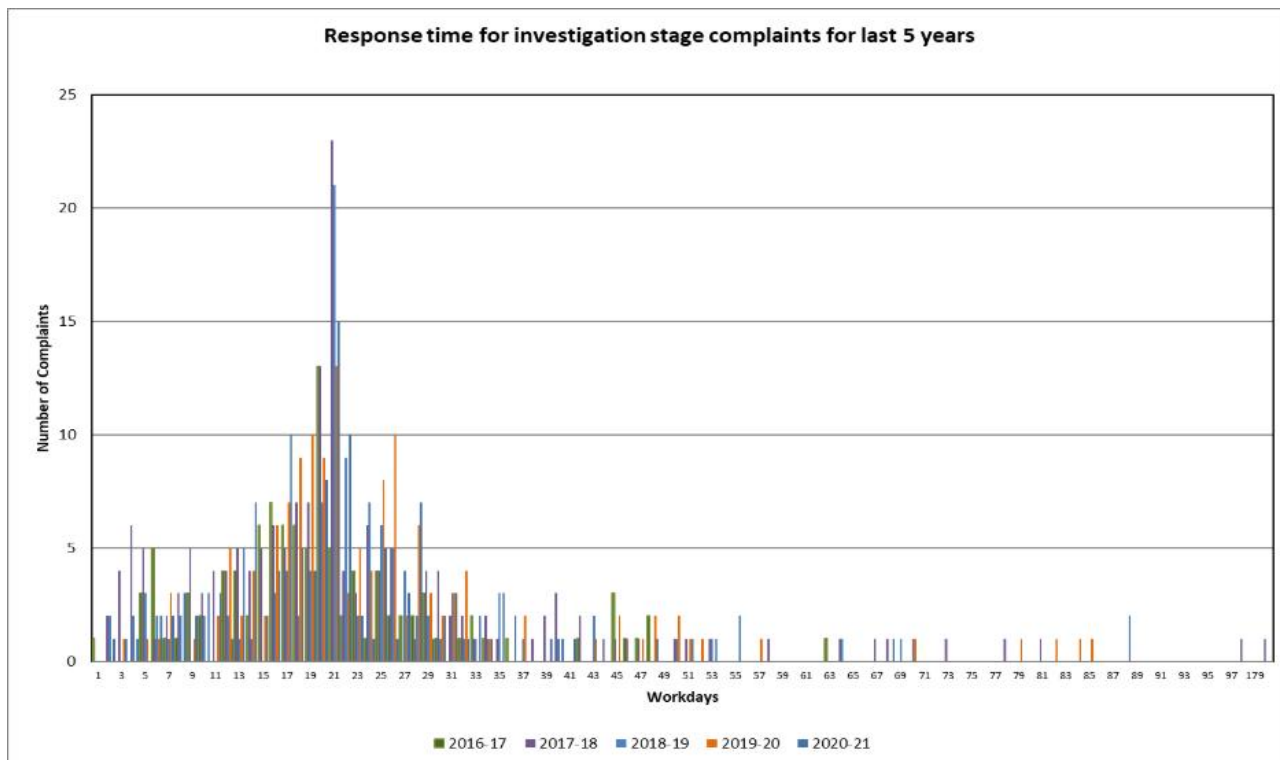
Weekly monitoring continues to take place with complaint administrators for relevant departments being reminded to ensure they follow the correct database timeline process for stages.

Figure 9: Response Time for frontline resolution complaints (2016-17 through to 2020-21)



Most investigations (59%) were responded to within the 20-day timescale or within agreed extension periods (Figure 10). Of the 134 complaints closed at stage two (investigation and escalated), 56 (42%) took longer than the target response time. Integrated Children's Services complaints often require investigation of lengthy and complicated issues, accounting for 12 of their 19 investigations taking more than 20 days to complete. In addition, 14 of Housing and Property Services' complaints took longer than 20 days. The longest resolution time in 2020-21 was 87 days. This applied to 2 investigations: one relating to a complaint against Community Care and another for a complaint against Human Resources.

Figure 10: Response time for Investigation Stage Complaints (including Escalated Investigations) (2016-17 through to 2020-21)



4.5 Indicator 5

The number and percentage of complaints at each stage which were closed in full within the set timescales of five and 20 working days.

The model Complaints Handling Procedure requires complaints to be closed within five working days at stage one and 20 working days at stage two. This indicator will report:

- the number of complaints closed at stage one within five working days as % of total number of stage one complaints
- the number of complaints closed at stage two within 20 working days as % of total number of stage two complaints
- the number of escalated complaints closed within 20 working days as a % of total number of escalated stage two complaints

The analysis provided for Indicator 4 is equally applicable for this indicator.

Table 2: Indicator 5 - Closure timescales (2016-17 through to 2020-21)

Performance Against Timescales		Number of complaints closed at stage one within 5 working days as a %	Number of complaints closed at stage two within 20 working days as a %	Number of escalated complaints closed at stage two within 20 working days as a %
2020-21	Total no. of complaints	377	122	12
	No. of complaints within timescales	268	70	8
	Meeting target times	71%	57%	67%
2019-20	Total no. of complaints	579	134	12
	No. of complaints within timescales	410	71	6
	Meeting target times	71%	53%	50%
2018-19	Total no. of complaints	482	95	20
	No. of complaints within timescales	372	50	9
	Meeting target times	77%	53%	45%
2017-18	Total no. of complaints	482	177	20
	No. of complaints within timescales	271	114	4
	Meeting target times	56%	64%	20%
2016-17	Total no. of complaints	274	103	6
	No. of complaints within timescales	271	63	5
	Meeting target times	99%	61%	83%

In the past 2 years the Council has maintained its performance (71%) for closing frontline complaints within target timescales. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic cannot be discounted as a reason for complaints taking longer to close, especially in the early part of 2020-21 while home-working measures were still being developed. There has been a slight improvement in performance in closing stage two complaints within 20 working days (57%) compared to last year (53%). Similarly, performance for escalated complaints has improved slightly (50% to 67%) albeit numbers for this are low.. Performance issues continue to be discussed with complaint administrators and highlighted through quarterly management reporting. Closer monitoring and reinforcement continues to encourage further improvement.

4.6 **Indicator 6**

The number and percentage of complaints at each stage where an extension to the five or 20 working day timeline has been authorised.

The model Complaints Handling Procedure allows for an extension to the timescales to be authorised in certain circumstances. This indicator will report:

- the number of complaints closed at stage one where extension was authorised, as a % of all complaints at stage one

- number of complaints closed at stage two where extension was authorised, as a % of all complaints at stage two

Table 3: Indicator 6 – Extensions (2016-17 through to 2020-21)

Number of cases where an extension is authorised		% of complaints at stage one where the extension was authorised	% of complaints at stage two where the extension was authorised
2020-21	Total no. of overdue complaints	109	55
	No. of complaints with authorised extensions	37	19
	Percentage with extensions	34%	35%
2019-20	Total no. of overdue complaints	158	68
	No. of complaints with authorised extensions	52	31
	Percentage with extensions	33%	46%
2018-19	Total no. of overdue complaints	111	56
	No. of complaints with authorised extensions	24	9
	Percentage with extensions	22%	16%
2017-18	Total no. of overdue complaints	77	63
	No. of complaints with authorised extensions	4	11
	Percentage with extensions	5%	17%
2016-17	Total no. of overdue complaints	42	37
	No. of complaints with authorised extensions	4	11
	Percentage with extensions	10%	30%

The council always aims to respond to complaints as quickly as possible. There are, however, times when a complaint is particularly complex, and it is identified that a thorough investigation of the issues will require time out with the prescribed timescales. In these situations, the council agrees with a complainant to extend the timescale for closing the complaint and will detail the reasons such as having to interview several potential witnesses and for a need to gather reports from a variety of sources. A senior manager must always approve such an extension before it is granted, and this is recorded with revised time limits on our complaints database.

However, as the data in Table 3 testifies, in 2020-21, there were 108 (66%) complaints taking longer than the stipulated timescales where complainants received no notification of an authorised extension.

Figure 11 gives a breakdown by service where frontline complaints were extended without authorisation. As can be seen 37 overdue frontline complaints (34%) had authorised extensions mainly by the Housing and Property team, and Direct Services. None of the complaints resolved in

more than 5 days at frontline by Community Care, Integrated Children's Services or Development Services received an authorised extension. Human Resources and Financial Services each had a frontline complaint that took longer than 5 days to resolve; neither had an authorised extension.

Similarly, figure 12 gives a breakdown by service where complaints were extended without authorisation for investigations. For the third consecutive year Housing and Property Services had the highest proportion of authorised extensions for investigations that took longer than 20 working days to resolve with 12 out of 17 (70%). Schools and Curriculum Development had the next highest number with 5 out of 6 (83%).

Despite the revised complaints database, which was introduced in April 2017, the expectation that this would allow for closer monitoring to identify complaints that have extended beyond 20 days without authorisation continues to prove challenging. Senior management are still being notified of such cases and administrators reminded weekly to update the database and raised quarterly at administrator meetings, but there remains scope for significant improvement.

Figure 11: Frontline complaints not responded to in stipulated timescales, without authorised extensions (2020-21)

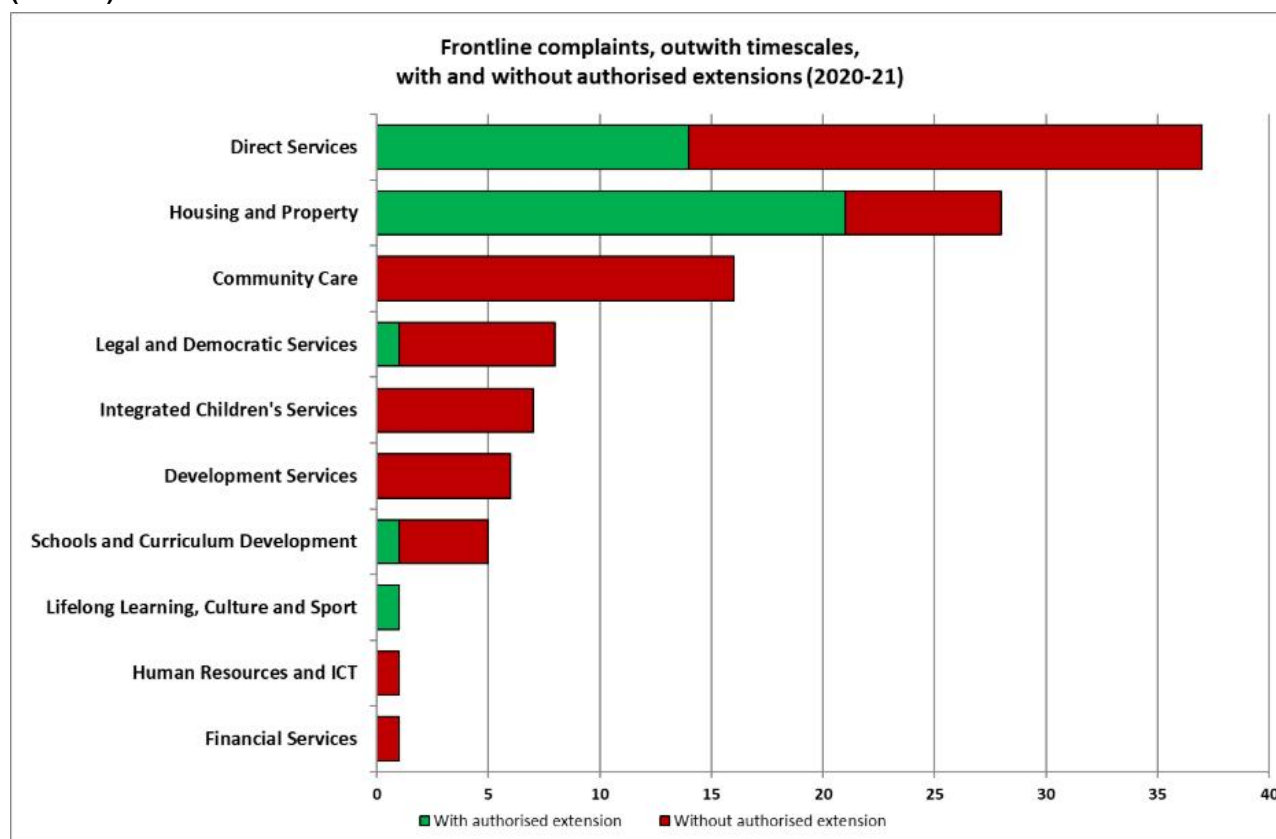
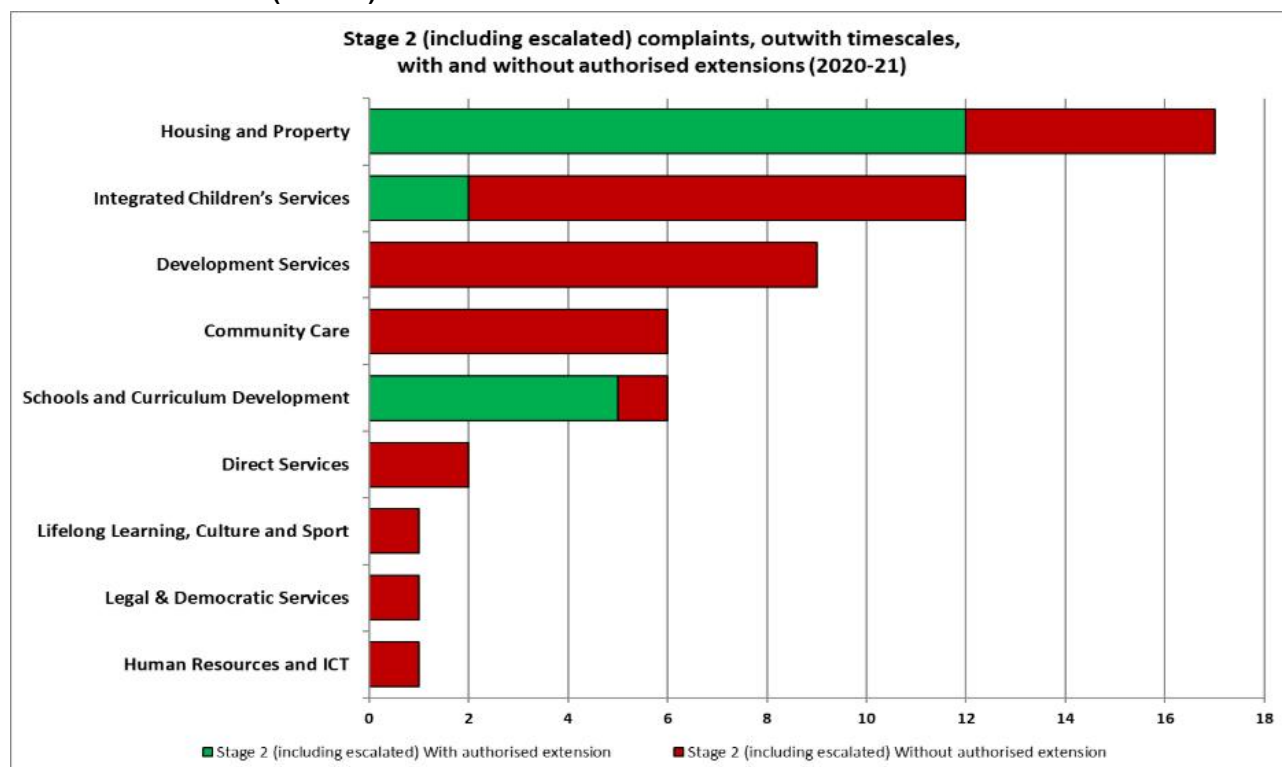


Figure 12: Stage two (including escalated) complaints not responded to in stipulated timescales, without authorised extensions (2020-21)



4.7 Indicator 7

The SPSO requires a statement to report on customer satisfaction with the complaints service provided.

A customer satisfaction survey was sent out to customers with the aim of helping the council focus on areas where improvements or change could be made to our complaints handling procedure and service provision.

In assessing customer satisfaction within the complaints service, complainants are asked to consider:

- how satisfied they were with the way their complaint was handled
- how easy the complaints process was to follow
- how well we complied with the CHP
- how well we provided service delivery, timeliness and information
- how professional the attitude of staff was

The SPSO currently requires a statement to report on customer satisfaction with the complaints service provided although this is currently being reviewed as part of the SPSO revision of the Model Complaint Handling Procedure. A brief report is included on customer satisfaction.

Customer Satisfaction Feedback Survey.

Complaints Handling Customer Feedback Surveys were sent to complainants when they were informed of the outcome of their complaint. Due to Covid, no surveys were sent out during the first six months of this reporting period as staff did not have access to the necessary IT applications to facilitate this.

In 2020-21, 249 surveys were sent out, 187 by email and 62 by post. We received 11 postal responses and 28 online responses, giving an overall poor survey response of 39. This was a 41% decrease from 2019-20.

Arising from the survey, the main dissatisfactions are:

- not contacting customers to confirm complaints and outcomes sought;
- not updating customers;
- not adhering to policy timescales;
- not taking the issues seriously;
- not apologising for poor service provision;
- having to chase up a response;
- only receiving a single sentence response;
- staff rudeness;
- poor work by contracted service providers

In 2020 -21, some positive feedback comments were received. These included:

- several customers expressed their satisfaction on how customer service staff dealt with them;
- one customer praised the very thoughtful reply to their reported concern;
- one customer expressed their satisfaction that following making their complaint, a good service was quickly provided;

4.8 **Indicator 8 – Lessons learned: a statement outlining changes or improvements to services or procedures as a result of the consideration of complaints.**

The council has a clear commitment to listen to our customers and act on their feedback. Learning from complaints is a continuous process that helps the council to resolve common issues and further improve the services that are provided. The council is continually working on learning from complaints and implementing changes to working practices as a direct result of investigating complaints.

During this reporting year, SPSO made a number of recommendations regarding two public reports about our social work practices. This led to a lengthy review by our social work department who changed their practices to the satisfaction of both the customers and SPSO.

4.8.1. **Learning Outcomes**

Managers review complaints that are upheld or partially upheld to determine if change or improvement would prevent re-occurrence. When a complaint is upheld or partially upheld, the remedies offered will generally fall into one or more of the following four categories:

- **Redress** – Putting things right where they have gone wrong, admitting where mistakes have been made.
- **Reimbursement** – Covering vouched actual costs incurred as a direct result of mistakes made by the council.
- **Reinforcement** – Recognising that a correct council policy/procedure has not been followed or we have fallen short of what could be expected. Training and instructing staff to prevent re-occurrence.
- **Revision** – Reviewing current practice to amend and improve working practices.

The Complaints Management System has a specific learning outcome section for managers to complete when complaints are closed. Where they have been upheld or partially upheld, any learning outcomes and service improvements are recorded.

Complaints Officer monitoring and database processing by Complaint administrators have ensured that more detailed closures are being recorded. The below information provides a quarterly breakdown of completion of the learning outcomes section in the complaints database.

Quarter 1	<i>Upheld</i>	<i>Partially Upheld</i>	<i>Not Upheld</i>
Number of Complaints Closed	20	15	42
Learning Outcomes Completed	20 <i>100%</i>	13 <i>87%</i>	<i>Nil</i>

Quarter 2	<i>Upheld</i>	<i>Partially Upheld</i>	<i>Not Upheld</i>
Number of Complaints Closed	58	25	73
Learning Outcomes	57 <i>98%</i>	23 <i>92%</i>	<i>Nil</i>

Quarter 3	<i>Upheld</i>	<i>Partially Upheld</i>	<i>Not Upheld</i>
Number of Complaints Closed	53	24	65
Learning Outcomes	50 <i>94%</i>	24 <i>100%</i>	<i>Nil</i>

Quarter 4	<i>Upheld</i>	<i>Partially Upheld</i>	<i>Not Upheld</i>
Number of Complaints Closed	49	31	56
Learning Outcomes	48 <i>98%</i>	29 <i>94%</i>	<i>Nil</i>

2020/21	<i>Upheld</i>	<i>Partially Upheld</i>	<i>Not Upheld</i>
Number of Complaints Closed	180	95	236
Learning Outcomes	175 <i>97%</i>	89 <i>94%</i>	<i>Nil</i>

The following is a summary of some learning outcome actions taken to resolve complaints that were upheld or partially upheld in 2020-21:

Table 4: Actions taken in response to complaints upheld (2020-21)

Department	You said...	We listened and took action on the following upheld complaints...
Revenues	Staff placed your enquiry into the incorrect IT process leading to unnecessary delay.	In upholding your complaint, we apologised, resolved your complaint issue and revised our process to prevent re-occurrence.
Lifelong Learning, Culture and Sport	Staff did not respond timely to an enquiry.	In upholding your complaint, we apologised and reminded all department staff of the importance of responding in a timely manner.
Housing and Property	A staff member didn't follow Covid protocols during a house call to discuss maintenance repairs.	In upholding your complaint, we apologised and briefed the staff member on protocols to be followed. This was also brought to the attention of other department staff.
Community Care	Staff poorly consulted with the family when moving a family member to an alternative care setting.	In upholding your complaint, we apologised and introduced staff training with the aim of improving the quality of engagement with families during the assessment process and pre-discharge care planning.
Integrated Children's Services	Staff didn't provide the appropriate level of planning and support when returning a child home from a care placement.	In upholding your complaint, we apologised and revised and improved our process regarding and planning and support when returning young people home from a care setting.

5. Scottish Public Services Ombudsman/Benchmarking

National benchmarking statistics for 2020-21 are:

Complaints Received	2019-20	2020-21
Moray Council	738	511 (1%)
Nationally	56,119	53,534

Complaints Received Per 1000 Population	2019-20	2020-21
Moray Council	7.7	5.36
Nationally	10.34	9.87

Complaints Closed	2019-20	2020-21
Moray Council	725	511
Nationally	54,562	50,742

Nationally there was a 5% reduction in the number of complaints recorded in 2020-21. In contrast, Moray Council had a 31% decrease in complaint recording. This is reflective of the impact of pandemic where there was a public acceptance that service delivery would be affected.

Average Time in Working Days – Stage one	2019-20	2020-21
Moray Council	5.5	5.6
Nationally	10.2	6.5
Average Time in Working Days – Stage two	2019-20	2020-21
Moray Council	22.9	21.9
Nationally	23.9	22.9

In 2020-21, there was a significant improvement nationally by Councils with a 36% reduction in resolving stage one complaints within 5 working days. Moray Council marginally increased the time taken by 2% and fell just short of the target time.

Both nationally and locally the stage two complaints target times of 20 working days were not met although the 4% decrease by both demonstrates that they are striving to achieve the 20 working day target.

6. Summary

The council is committed to customer service and values feedback from our service users. Customer views and experiences are important to us as they help us to understand what we do well and identify where we need to improve. We want our customers to feel that their feedback is valued, that we will listen and act on lessons learned in order to improve service provision. Use of digital technology complements written survey requests providing additional opportunity to receive public feedback. A higher percentage continues to be received online.

By utilising the Complaint Handling Procedure and adhering to the robust performance management framework, will we learn from complaints, improve services and increase customer confidence in our service provision. Staff are making good use of the new database to demonstrate learning from complaints. Our Complaints Officer continues to highlight the importance of this to services through complaint administrator meetings and staff training.

It is important that we aim to deal with complaints quickly, keep complainants informed and advise them what to do if they remain dissatisfied. Staff training, intranet guidance and Complaints Officer monitoring is used to help achieve this aim. The complaints section in the Moray Council website provides the public with policies, reports and general information on how a complaint can be reported and dealt with.

The results of the complaints survey were the lowest yet with a 16% return rate some however some useful feedback was given. It remains the case that satisfaction with the complaints handling process appears to be influenced by how satisfied the customer was with the outcome of their complaint. We used the easy-to-use online option and sent paper copies; however, this produced a similarly low number of survey responses meaning we were restricted in assessing the effectiveness of it as a learning tool. We will continue to use both online and hard copy methods for our survey.

Recording of customer satisfaction varies greatly across Councils making it difficult to benchmark. The Local Authority Complaints Handlers Network in consultation with the SPSO Complaints Standard Authority have recognised this and agreed a consistent set of national survey questions that should allow meaningful benchmarking in the future. Our survey has been amended to reflect this, the results of which will be seen in reporting period 2021-22.

Welcoming, recording, managing and resolving complaints in an effective manner will increase public confidence in our application of the Complaint Handling Procedure and afford us opportunity to learn and improve our service provision.

APPENDIX

Please note that due to rounding, some totals may add up to slightly more or less than 100%.

Table A: Indicator 2 – Complaints closed at stage one and stage two as a percentage of all complaints closed

Indicator 2 by service	2019-20				2020-21			
	Stage 1 – Front line resolution	Stage 2 – Investigation	Stage 2 – Escalated Investigation	Total	Stage 1 – Front line resolution	Stage 2 – Investigation	Stage 2 – Escalated Investigation	Total
All Council	578 80%	134 19%	12 2%	724	377 74%	122 24%	12 2%	511
Chief Executive's Office	0 0%	1 100%	0 0%	1	1 50%	0 0%	1 50%	2
Chief Executive's Section	0 0%	1 100%	0 0%	1	1 50%	0 0%	1 50%	2
Corporate Policy Unit	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0	0 n/a	0 n/a	0 n/a	0
Community Planning & Development	0 n/a	0 n/a	0 n/a	0	0 n/a	0 n/a	0 n/a	0
Corporate Services	38 81%	8 17%	1 2%	47	21 88%	3 13%	0 0%	24
Financial Services	4 67%	2 33%	0 0%	6	1 100%	0 0%	0 0%	1
Human Resources and ICT	0 n/a	0 n/a	0 n/a	0	2 67%	1 33%	0 0%	3
Legal and Democratic Services	34 83%	6 15%	1 2%	41	18 90%	2 10%	0 0%	20
Environmental Services	468 85%	76 14%	9 2%	553	307 78%	77 20%	10 3%	394
Development Services	9 33%	18 67%	0 0%	27	17 47%	18 50%	1 3%	36
Direct Services	298 96%	11 4%	2 1%	311	184 94%	11 6%	0 0%	195
Housing and Property	161 75%	47 22%	7 3%	215	106 65%	48 29%	9 6%	163
Education and Social Care	72 59%	49 40%	2 2%	123	48 53%	42 46%	1 1%	91
Community Care	20 80%	5 20%	0 0%	25	22 76%	7 24%	0 0%	29
Integrated Children's Services	19 51%	17 46%	1 3%	37	12 39%	19 61%	0 0%	31
Lifelong Learning, Culture and Sport	8 89%	1 11%	0 0%	9	6 67%	3 33%	0 0%	9
Schools and Curriculum Development	25 48%	26 50%	1 2%	52	8 36%	13 59%	1 5%	22

Table B: Indicator 3 by service – The number of complaints upheld/partially upheld/not upheld at each stage as a percentage of complaints closed in full at stage one

Indicator 3 by service – Stage 1	2019-20				2020-21			
	Upheld	Partially Upheld	Not Upheld	Total	Upheld	Partially Upheld	Not Upheld	Total
All Council	221 38%	78 13%	279 48%	578	167 44%	40 11%	170 45%	377
Chief Executive's Office	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0	0 0%	0 0%	1 100%	1
Chief Executive's Section	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0	0 0%	0 0%	1 100%	1
Corporate Policy Unit	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0
Community Planning & Development	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0
Corporate Services	14 37%	5 13%	19 50%	38	6 29%	2 10%	13 62%	21
Financial Services	1 25%	0 0%	3 75%	4	1 100%	0 0%	0 0%	1
Human Resources and ICT	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0	0 0%	1 50%	1 50%	2
Legal and Democratic Services	13 38%	5 15%	16 47%	34	5 28%	1 6%	12 67%	18
Environmental Services	190 41%	59 13%	219 47%	468	149 49%	24 8%	134 44%	307
Development Services	0 0%	2 22%	7 78%	9	2 12%	1 6%	14 82%	17
Direct Services	98 33%	42 14%	158 53%	298	87 47%	13 7%	84 46%	184
Housing and Property	92 57%	15 9%	54 34%	161	60 57%	10 9%	36 34%	106
Education and Social Care	17 24%	14 19%	41 57%	72	12 25%	14 29%	22 46%	48
Community Care	3 15%	10 50%	7 35%	20	1 5%	5 23%	16 73%	22
Integrated Children's Services	7 37%	1 5%	11 58%	19	2 17%	6 50%	4 33%	12
Lifelong Learning, Culture and Sport	1 13%	1 13%	6 75%	8	4 67%	2 33%	0 0%	6
Schools and Curriculum Development	6 24%	2 8%	17 68%	25	5 63%	1 13%	2 25%	8

Figure 20: Stage one – % of Complaints Upheld, Partially Upheld, and Not Upheld (2016-17 through to 2020-21)

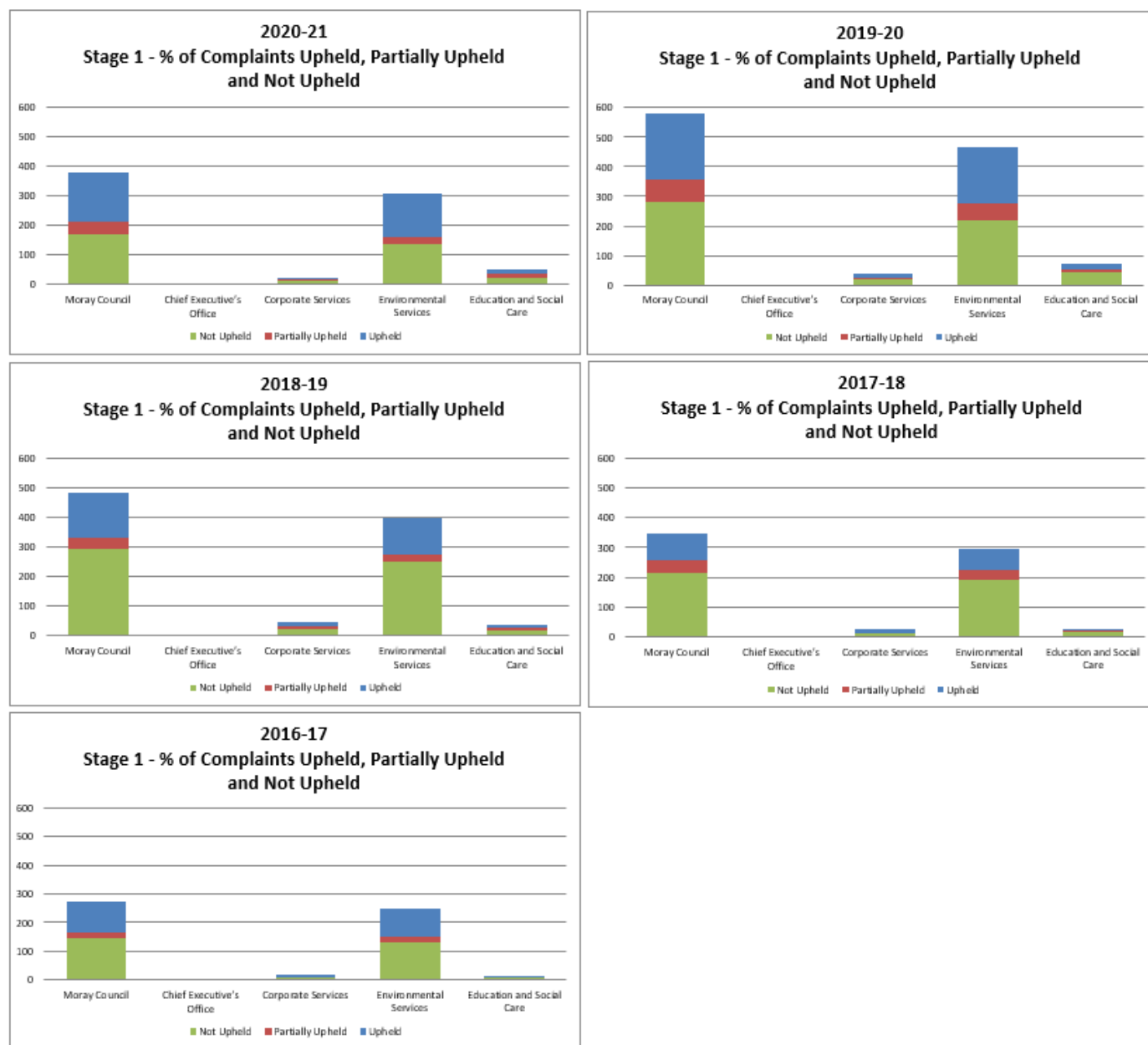


Table C: Indicator 3 by service – The number of complaints upheld/partially upheld/not upheld at each stage as a percentage of complaints closed in full at stage two (including escalated complaints)

Indicator 3 by service – Stage 2 (including escalated)	2019-20				2020-21			
	Upheld	Partially Upheld	Not Upheld	Total	Upheld	Partially Upheld	Not Upheld	Total
All Council	24 16%	46 32%	76 52%	146	13 10%	55 41%	66 49%	134
Chief Executive's Office	0 0%	0 0%	1 100%	1	0 0%	0 0%	1 100%	1
Chief Executive's Section	0 0%	0 0%	1 100%	1	0 0%	0 0%	1 100%	1
Corporate Policy Unit	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0
Community Planning & Development	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0
Corporate Services	2 22%	4 44%	3 33%	9	1 33%	1 33%	1 33%	3
Financial Services	1 50%	1 50%	0 0%	2	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0
Human Resources and ICT	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0	0 0%	0 0%	1 100%	1
Legal and Democratic Services	1 14%	3 43%	3 43%	7	1 50%	1 50%	0 0%	2
Environmental Services	13 15%	29 34%	43 51%	85	6 7%	33 38%	48 55%	87
Development Services	2 11%	3 17%	13 72%	18	0 0%	1 5%	18 95%	19
Direct Services	6 46%	2 15%	5 38%	13	1 9%	3 27%	7 64%	11
Housing and Property	5 9%	24 44%	25 46%	54	5 9%	29 51%	23 40%	57
Education and Social Care	9 18%	13 25%	29 57%	51	6 14%	21 49%	16 37%	43
Community Care	2 40%	3 60%	0 0%	5	1 14%	6 86%	0 0%	7
Integrated Children's Services	0 0%	6 33%	12 67%	18	2 11%	12 63%	5 26%	19
Lifelong Learning, Culture and Sport	0 0%	1 100%	0 0%	1	0 0%	0 0%	3 100%	3
Schools and Curriculum Development	7 26%	3 11%	17 63%	27	3 21%	3 21%	8 57%	14

Figure 21: Stage two – % of Complaints Upheld, Partially Upheld, and Not Upheld (2016-17 through to 2020-21)

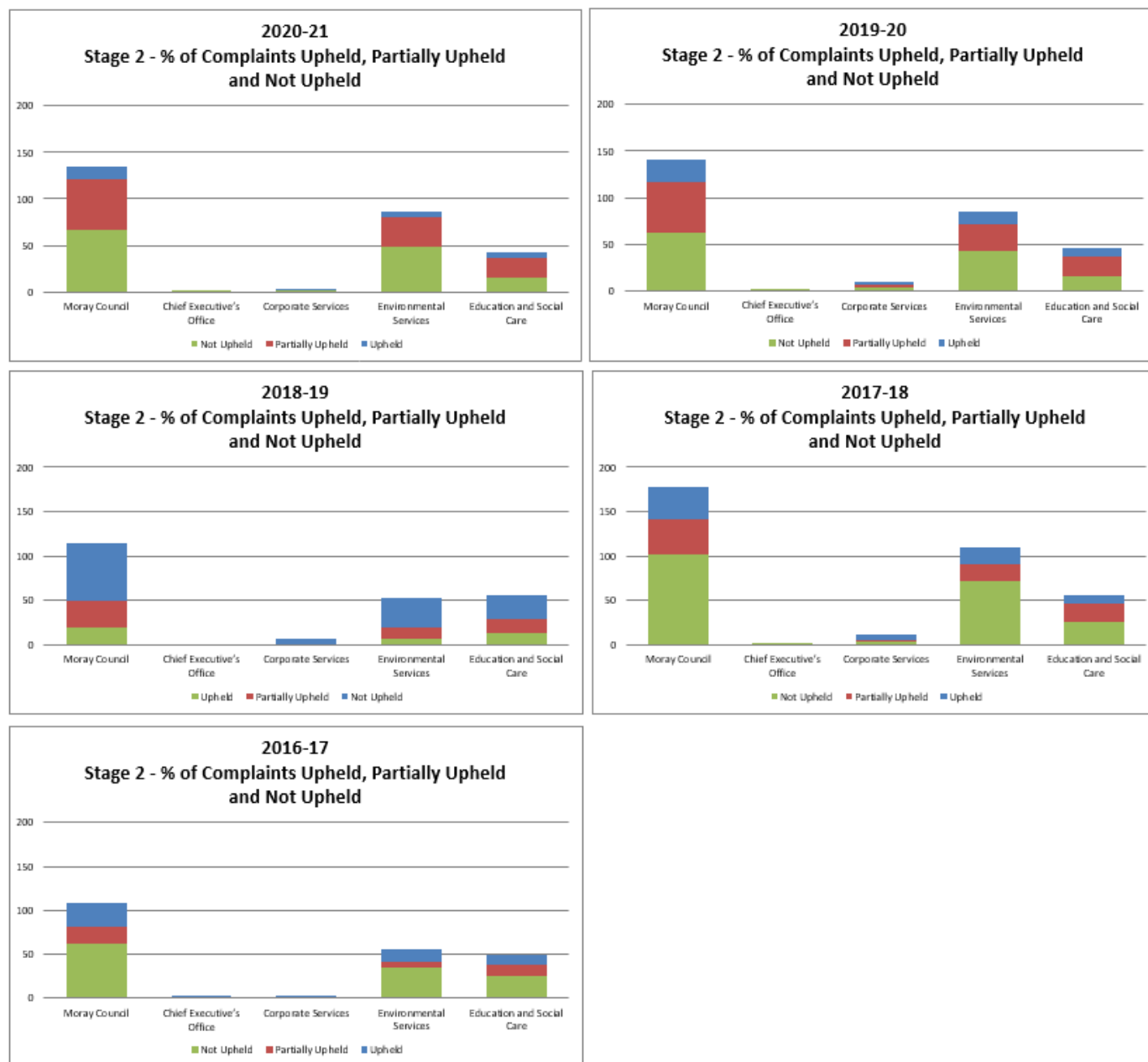


Table D: Indicator 4 by service – The average time in working days for a full response to complaints at each stage

Indicator 4 by service	2019-20			2020-21		
	Stage 1 – Front line Resolution	Stage 2 – Investigation	Stage 2 – Escalated Investigation	Stage 1 – Front line Resolution	Stage 2 – Investigation	Stage 2 – Escalated Investigation
Target timescales (number of working days)	5	20	20	5	20	20
All Council	5.5	22.9	29.1	5.6	21.9	20.3
Chief Executive's Office	2.0	0.0	n/a	4.0	n/a	7.0
Chief Executive's Section	2.0	0.0	n/a	4.0	n/a	7.0
Corporate Policy Unit	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Community Planning & Development	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Corporate Services	5.2	18.3	81.0	9.2	40.3	n/a
Financial Services	5.0	13.0	n/a	71.0	n/a	n/a
Human Resources and ICT	n/a	n/a	n/a	9.5	87.0	n/a
Legal and Democratic Services	5.3	20.0	81.0	5.7	17.0	n/a
Environmental Services	5.0	22.1	26.0	4.5	19.3	22.0
Development Services	11.4	23.4	n/a	5.0	20.9	19.0
Direct Services	4.9	20.6	25.5	4.0	12.8	n/a
Housing and Property	4.7	21.9	26.1	5.2	20.1	22.3
Education and Social Care	9.1	25.2	17.0	11.0	25.5	17.0
Community Care	12.0	38.0	n/a	17.1	36.4	n/a
Integrated Children's Services	14.3	22.1	13.0	6.7	23.7	n/a
Lifelong Learning, Culture and Sport	3.9	17.0	n/a	3.8	20.7	n/a
Schools and Curriculum Development	4.6	25.2	21.0	6.3	23.5	17.0

Figure 22: Average time in working days for a full response to complaints at each stage (2016-17 through to 2020-21)

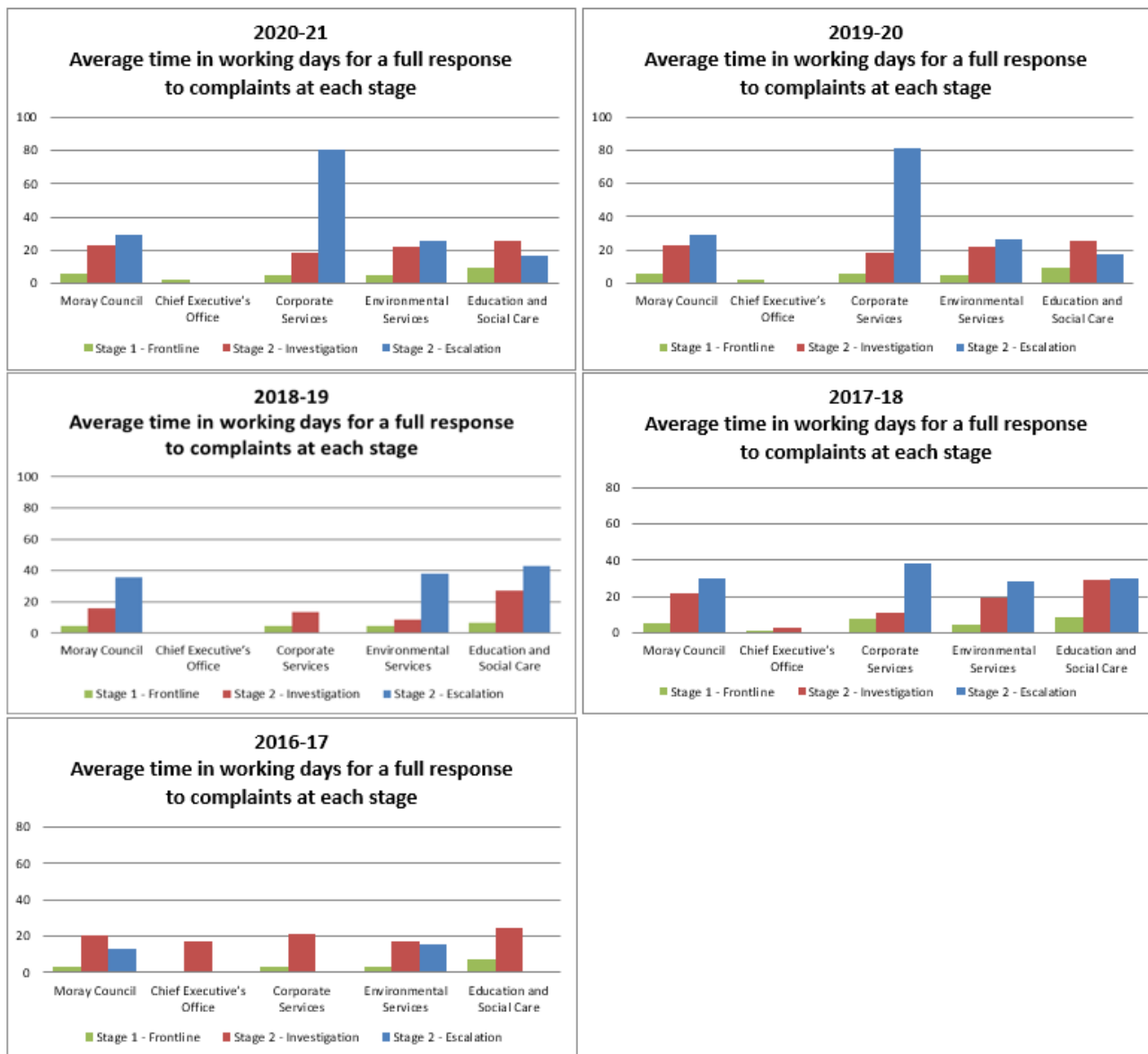


Table E: Average Time in working days to respond to complaints at each stage

Average Time in working days to respond to complaints at each stage	2019-20			2020-21		
	No. of complaints	Total time (workdays)	Average time (workdays)	No. of complaints	Total time (workdays)	Average time (workdays)
Average time in working days to respond to complaints at stage one	578	3185	5.5	377	2093	5.6
Average time in working days to respond to complaints at stage two	134	3062	22.9	122	2677	21.9
Average time in working days to respond to complaints after escalation	12	349	29.1	12	244	20.3

Table F: Indicator 5 by service – The number and percentage of complaints at each stage which were closed in full within the set timescales of five and 20 working days

Indicator 5 by service (Refer to Table A for Totals)	2019-20			2020-21		
	Stage 1 – Front line Resolution	Stage 2 – Investigation	Stage 2 – Escalated Investigation	Stage 1 – Front line Resolution	Stage 2 – Investigation	Stage 2 – Escalated Investigation
Target timescales (number of working days)	5	20	20	5	20	20
All Council	410 71%	71 53%	6 50%	268 71%	70 57%	8 67%
Chief Executive's Office	1 100%	1 100%	0 n/a	1 100%	0 n/a	1 100%
Chief Executive	1 100%	1 100%	0 n/a	1 100%	0 n/a	1 100%
Corporate Policy Unit	0 n/a	0 n/a	0 n/a	0 n/a	0 n/a	0 n/a
Community Planning & Development	0 n/a	0 n/a	0 n/a	0 n/a	0 n/a	0 n/a
Corporate Services	23 110%	4 50%	0 0%	11 52%	1 33%	0 n/a
Financial Services	1 100%	2 100%	0 n/a	0 0%	0 n/a	0 n/a
Human Resources and ICT	0 0%	0 0%	0 n/a	1 50%	0 0%	0 n/a
Legal and Democratic Services	22 65%	2 33%	0 0%	10 56%	1 50%	0 n/a
Environmental Services	344 74%	43 57%	5 56%	237 77%	52 68%	7 70%
Development Services	4 44%	8 44%	0 n/a	12 71%	9 50%	1 100%
Direct Services	214 72%	6 55%	1 50%	147 80%	9 82%	0 n/a
Housing and Property	126 78%	29 62%	4 57%	78 74%	34 71%	6 67%
Education and Social Care	42 58%	23 47%	1 50%	19 40%	17 40%	0 0%
Community Care	6 30%	2 40%	0 n/a	6 27%	1 14%	0 n/a
Integrated Children's Services	9 47%	7 41%	1 100%	5 42%	7 37%	0 n/a
Lifelong Learning, Culture and Sport	7 88%	1 100%	0 n/a	5 83%	2 67%	0 n/a
Schools and Curriculum Development	20 80%	13 50%	0 0%	3 38%	7 54%	0 0%

Table G: Overdue complaints with formal extensions or holding letters issued

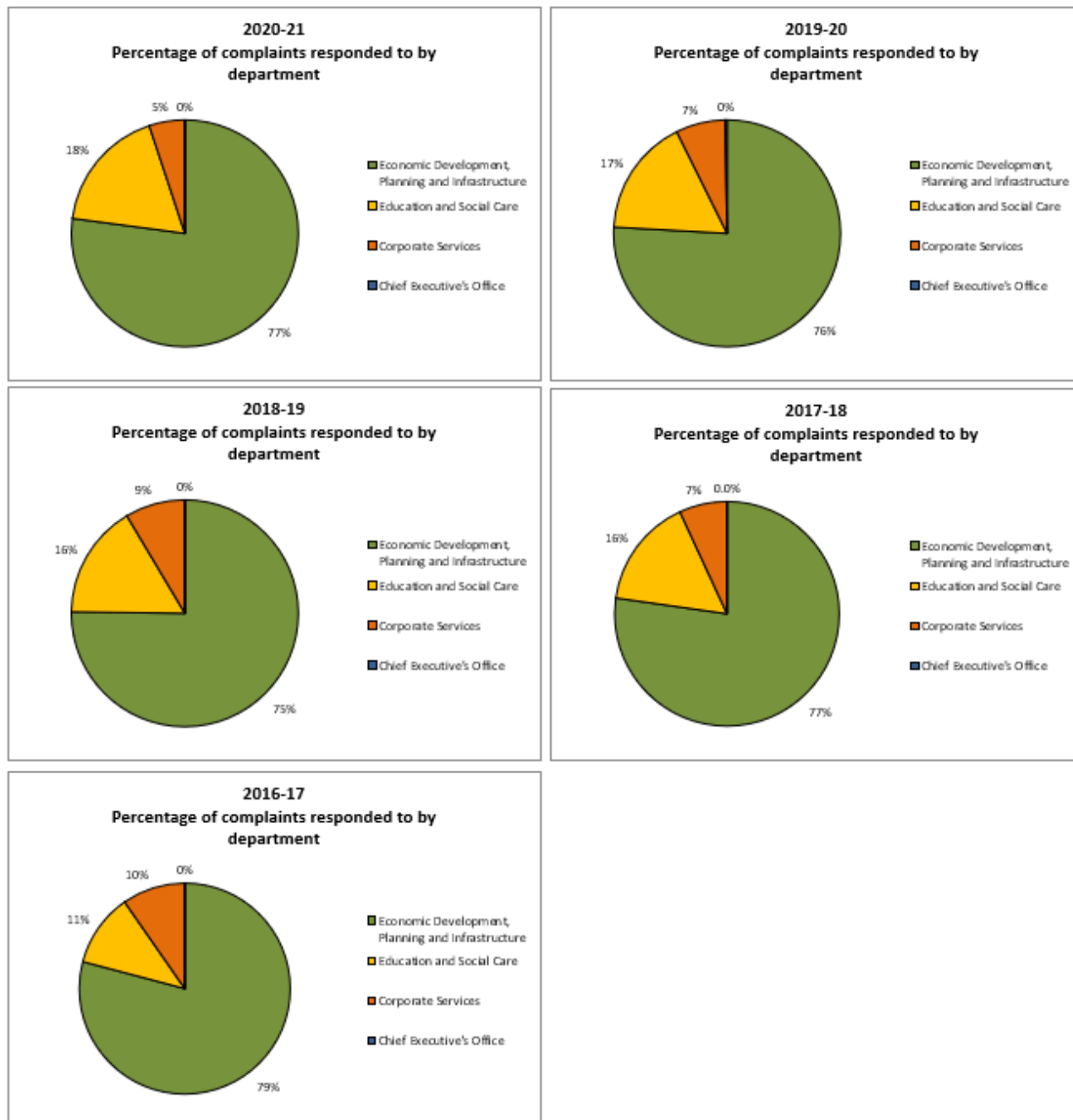
Overdue complaints that have holding letters issued, or been granted a formal extension – by service (Refer to Table A for totals)	2019-20			2020-21		
	Stage 1 – Frontline Resolution	Stage 2 - Investigation	Stage 2 - Escalated Investigation	Stage 1 – Frontline Resolution	Stage 2 - Investigation	Stage 2 - Escalated Investigation
Total number of complaints investigated	579	134	12	377	122	12
Total number of late responses	158	62	6	109	52	3
All Council	52 33%	27 44%	4 67%	37 34%	16 31%	3 100%
Chief Executive's Office	- <i>n/a</i>	- <i>n/a</i>	- <i>n/a</i>	- <i>n/a</i>	- <i>n/a</i>	- <i>n/a</i>
Chief Executive	- <i>n/a</i>	- <i>n/a</i>	- <i>n/a</i>	- <i>n/a</i>	- <i>n/a</i>	- <i>n/a</i>
Corporate Policy Unit	- <i>n/a</i>	- <i>n/a</i>	- <i>n/a</i>	- <i>n/a</i>	- <i>n/a</i>	- <i>n/a</i>
Community, Planning & Development	- <i>n/a</i>	- <i>n/a</i>	- <i>n/a</i>	- <i>n/a</i>	- <i>n/a</i>	- <i>n/a</i>
Corporate Services	2 <i>n/a</i>	0 0%	0 <i>n/a</i>	1 <i>n/a</i>	0 0%	0 <i>n/a</i>
Financial Services	1 33%	0 <i>n/a</i>	- <i>n/a</i>	0 0%	0 <i>n/a</i>	- <i>n/a</i>
Human Resources and ICT	- <i>n/a</i>	0% 0%	- <i>n/a</i>	0 0%	0 0%	- <i>n/a</i>
Legal and Democratic Services	1 8%	0 0%	- <i>n/a</i>	1 13%	0 0%	- <i>n/a</i>
Environmental Services	46 40%	17 51.5%	4 100%	35 50%	9 36%	3 100%
Development Services	1 20%	2 20%	- <i>n/a</i>	0 0%	0 0%	- <i>n/a</i>
Direct Services	17 23%	3 60%	1 100%	14 38%	0 0%	- <i>n/a</i>
Housing and Property	28 82%	12 66.7%	3 100%	21 75%	9 64%	3 100%
Education and Social Care	4 14%	10 40%	0 0%	1 3%	7 29%	- <i>n/a</i>
Community Care	0 0%	0 0%	- <i>n/a</i>	0 0%	0 0%	- <i>n/a</i>
Integrated Children's Services	0 0	2 20%	- <i>n/a</i>	0 0%	2 17%	- <i>n/a</i>
Lifelong Learning, Culture and Sport	0 0%	0 1	- <i>n/a</i>	0 100%	0 0%	- <i>n/a</i>
Schools and Curriculum Development	4 80%	8 67%	- <i>n/a</i>	1 20%	5 83%	- <i>n/a</i>

Note: N/A indicates that a service had no overdue complaints at that particular stage

Table H: Percentage of complaints by department (2016-17 to 2020-21)

Given the types of service provided by each department, it is not surprising that the proportion of complaints dealt with by each department in 2020-21 is broadly similar to previous years. Environmental Services has the most direct contact with users of council services and receives the largest share of complaints.

Figure 23: Percentage of complaints by department (2016-17 to 2020-21)





REPORT TO: CORPORATE COMMITTEE ON 12 OCTOBER 2021

SUBJECT: TEST AND PROTECT TEMPORARY STAFF

**BY: DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE, EDUCATION, COMMUNITIES
AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 The Committee is asked to authorise the use of Covid-19 funds to appoint a temporary member of staff to meet demand for Test and Protect calls in the contact centre.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section III (B) (43) of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to all matters relating to developing and monitoring customer access and information

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 The committee is asked to :
 - i. **Authorise the allocation of Scottish Government pandemic funding to recruit one temporary post of Customer Service Advisor on Grade 3 for a period of 5 months to support the on-going requirements in the contact centre to support Scottish Government Test and Protect to be funded from state grant funding in support of covid-related expenditure; and**
 - ii. **Note the work that continues as a result of Test and Protect and the impact on other customer service day to day activities.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Scottish Government Test and Protect scheme offers assistance to all those that need to self-isolate due to them being infected with Covid-19 or have been identified as a close contact of someone that has had a positive diagnosis and are not fully vaccinated. People who are contacted by Test and Protect as needing to self-isolate can choose to allow their contact details to be shared with their local authority for support during the isolation period.

- 3.2 The council receives a daily report from NHS Scotland of Moray residents that have been informed to self-isolate and have provided consent to be contacted by the local authority. The contact centre staff make contact with each contact to identify if they require any assistance during their period of self-isolation, plus direct them towards support that is available through the Self-isolation support grant (SISG) which is administered by the Moray Council Benefits team.
- 3.3 The contact centre also provide an in-bound facility for telephone, e-mail and e-form to Moray residents to request assistance advice and support during Covid-19 pandemic.
- 3.4 The Grampian Coronavirus Assistance Hub was set-up to co-ordinate both volunteers and requests for assistance, initially staffed by Aberdeenshire Council. In October 2020 responsibility for staffing was transferred to each of the three local authorities. In Moray all requests for assistance or those volunteering were directed to the Contact Centre and dealt with by the support team.
- 3.5 In January 2021 some library staff were redeployed to supplement the support team to deal with the number of enquiries being received. When libraries re-opened the redeployed library staff returned to their normal duties, leaving only the contact centre support team to deal with requests for assistance.
- 3.6 As services have adapted to new ways to serve the residents of Moray, the contact centre are seeing a shift in the types of customer contact, with a higher percentage of contact by e-mail increasing the demand to support these changes.
- 3.7 Over the last 4 weeks we are averaging 55 out bound calls and 20 inbound calls a week. Calls on average last around 10 minutes for inbound and 20 minutes for outbound with follow up work required on around half of the calls.

4. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))

Supporting the Scottish Government Test and Protect system supports the 10 year LOIP aim of Improving well-being of our population. It is consistent with the corporate plan to ensure that Moray offers caring and healthy communities for all our citizens and to support day to day service delivery.

(b) Policy and Legal

Test and Protect, Scotland's approach to implementing the 'test, trace, isolate, support strategy', is a public health measure designed to break chains of transmission of COVID-19 in the community

(c) Financial implications

The post will be accommodated by funding from the Scottish Government provided for Covid-19. The cost for 5 months at top of G3 would be £10,145

(d) Risk Implications

The risks of not approving the additional temporary post are:

- I. Reduced ability to support Moray residents requiring assistance as part of Test and Protect.
- II. Reduced ability to provide support and develop existing customer contact will be negatively impacted as staff diverted to Test and Protect duties.

(e) Staffing Implications

One temporary new post of Customer Service Advisor at G3 (£17,890 to £19,208) for a period of up to 5 months

(f) Property

There are no property implications as a result of this report.

(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact

Whilst there is no direct impact the Test and Protect calls can signpost more vulnerable people to sources of help and funding.

(h) Consultations

The Chief Financial officer, Head of Governance Strategy and Performance, Equal Opportunities Officer have been consulted,

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 Test and Protect is a key Scottish Government public health strategy to break chains of transmission of COVID-19. Though the contact centre support staff have been providing this service for Moray residents since October 2020, the impact is now being felt on the work provided by this team to support other customer contact.

5.2 The funding made available by the Scottish Government for Test and Protect should be utilised to ensure that Moray can deliver the assistance required to our residents without impacting on other customer contact.

Author of Report: Andy Donegan Customer Services Development Manager
Background Papers:
Ref:

