

REPORT TO: Policy Performance and Review

MEETING DATE: Committee 19 September 2024

BY: Executive Director for Council Resources

SUBJECT: Customer Feedback Reporting 2023/2024

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To report on the use of the Council's Complaints Handling Procedure for 2023/2024 (1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024).
- 1.2 To raise awareness of implemented and planned improved processes as result of trends seen in the reporting.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 To note the report.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 East Lothian Council complies with the model complaints handling procedure (CHP) for local authorities introduced by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO):

Stage 1 (Frontline Resolution) – Complaint dealt with at point of service within 5 working days

Stage 2 (Investigation) – Complaint investigated; acknowledged within 3 working days and response provided within 20 working days. If complainants remain dissatisfied after completing this process they have a legal right of appeal to the SPSO.

- 3.2 Complaints handled at Stage 1 where customers are not satisfied with the response, escalate to Stage 2. Such complaints continue to be recorded separately. This ensures that the reporting of complaints “escalated to Stage 2” are more accurate.

- 3.3 The Customer Feedback and FOI team have welcomed one new replacement member to the team over the past year. A continuation of cross skilling has enabled the team to provide continued stabilisation within both teams.
- 3.4 The Complaint Handling Completion Form continues to capture valuable data, including resolutions and learnings and it helps develop new practices. The learnings and service improvements are captured within each Service areas Improvement log and shared with Service Managers quarterly. This remains a valuable tool for supporting Services in making continuous improvements and maintaining a Customer First approach.
- 3.5 The Customer Satisfaction Surveys are sent to complainants once a complaint response has been sent and complaints closed. The survey captures the feedback around how the complaint process was handled. We sent 121 survey requests to customers and 16 were returned. The findings are included in our quarterly benchmarking data and shared with our regulator, the SPSO.
- 3.6 The Council continues to record and report on complaints received by the Contact Centre, local area offices and the Customer Feedback Team. Service areas are encouraged to report complaints they receive through these channels to ensure recording is as accurate as possible.
- 3.7 The new OCP (On-line Customer Portal) is working well, allowing a further route for residents to submit Complaints/Compliments/Comments via the online platform. Further adaptations and improved processes continue to ensure improved efficiencies.
- 3.8 This report covers all Council Services.

3.9 Customer Feedback Overview 2023/2024

3.9.1 During 2023/2024, East Lothian Council received **705** complaints, compared with **714** in 2022/2023. Overall, 2023/2024 saw a slight decrease from the previous year in both Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints. This is detailed further below. There has been a slight increase in comments received, particularly in relation to the changes to bin collections and the implementation of the £35 fee for garden waste collection (25%) of all comments received.

2023/2024

Stage	Complaints	Compliments	Comments
1	519	225	465
2	61		

2022/2023

Stage	Complaints	Compliments	Comments
1	569	250	444
2	67		

3.9.2 Complaint **response times** were as follows:

Stage 1: 42% (219 of 519) responded to within 5 working days.

Stage 2: 77% (47 of 61) responded to within 20 working days.

3.9.3 Response times have remained comparable with 2022/2023, at 42% for Stage 1 and increased from 66% to 77% for Stage 2. Greater complexity around the Stage 2 requests have required lengthy investigations by ELC service areas extending the 20 working day timescale in some instances.

Whilst the response time is longer than the SPSO guidelines, customers are advised if their Stage 2 complaint is going to take more than 20 days and provided with regular updates, where required.

3.10 Complaint Analysis 2023/2024

Stage 1 complaints

Outcomes in 2023/2024 were as follows:

519 complaints received

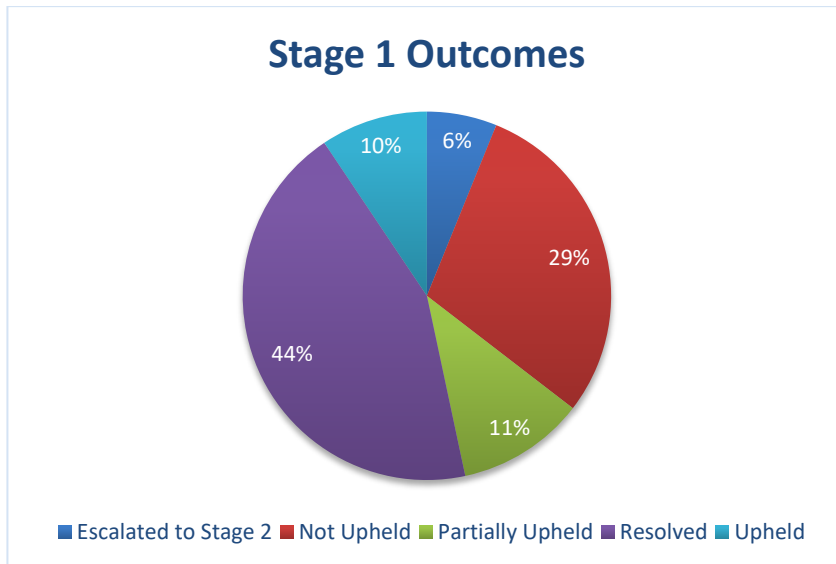
Not Upheld - 162

Partially Upheld - 62

Upheld - 52

Resolved - 243

Escalated to Stage 2 - 34



Please note: Totals may not match as not all complaints are closed in the same quarter they are received.

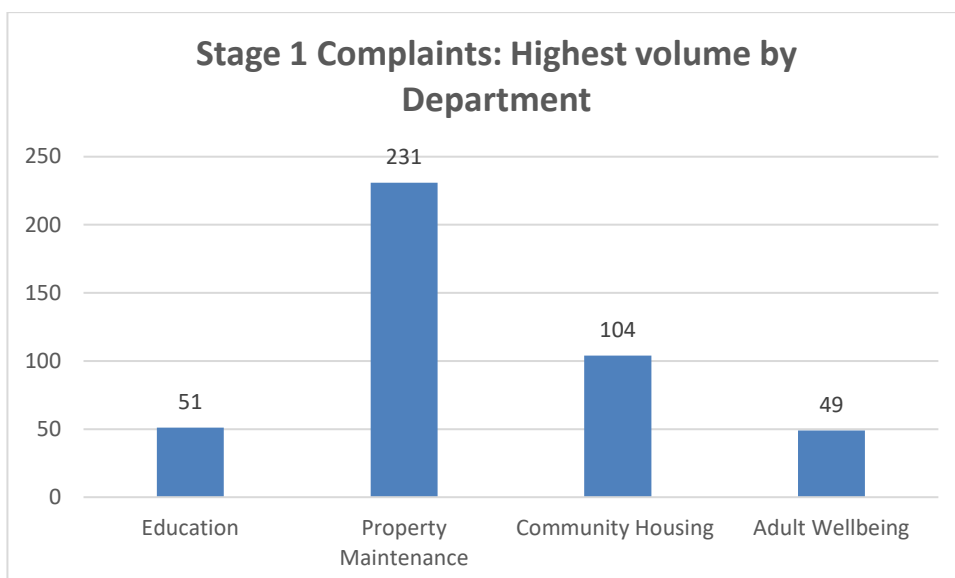
The service areas receiving the highest volume of **Stage 1** complaints in **2023/2024** were:

Education 10% (51)

Property Maintenance 45% (231)

Community Housing 20% (104)

Adult wellbeing 9% (49)



Please note: Totals may not match as not all complaints are closed in the same quarter they are received

Education received 10% (51) of all Stage 1 complaints received in 2023/2024 (519). Of the complaints received, over 29% were resolved.

Adult Wellbeing received 9% (49) of all Stage 1 complaints in 2023/2024 (519). Of the complaints received, over 51% were resolved.

Community Housing received 20% (104) of all Stage 1 complaints (519) and has seen an increase from 79 in 2022/2023. Of the complaints received, over 34% were resolved.

Property Maintenance received 45% (231) of all Stage 1 complaints in 2023/2024 (519). Stage 1 complaints have seen a decrease from 273 in 2022/2023 to 231 this year. Of the complaints received, over 53% were resolved

Stage 2 complaints

Outcomes in 2022/2023 were as follows:

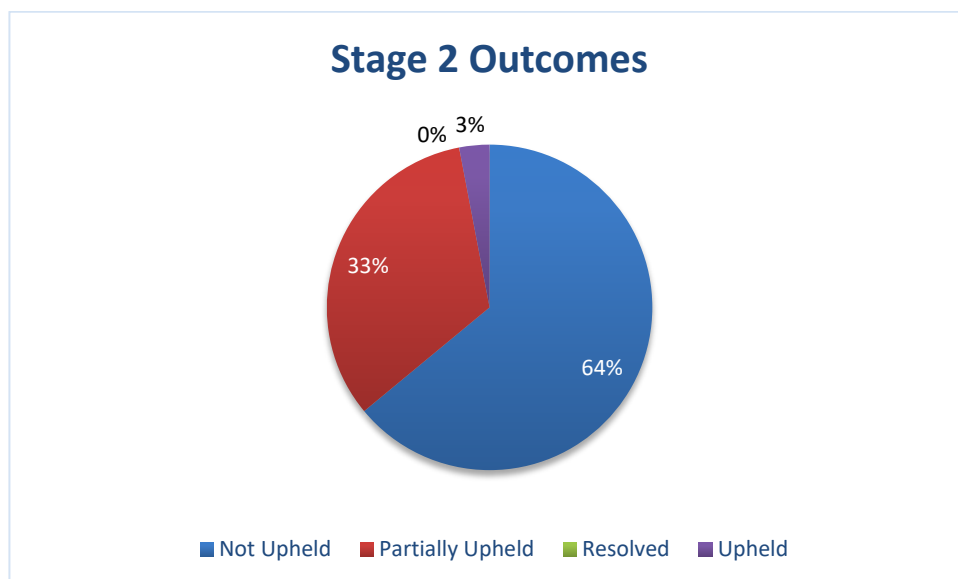
61 complaints received

Not Upheld - 39

Partially Upheld - 20

Upheld - 2

Resolved - 0



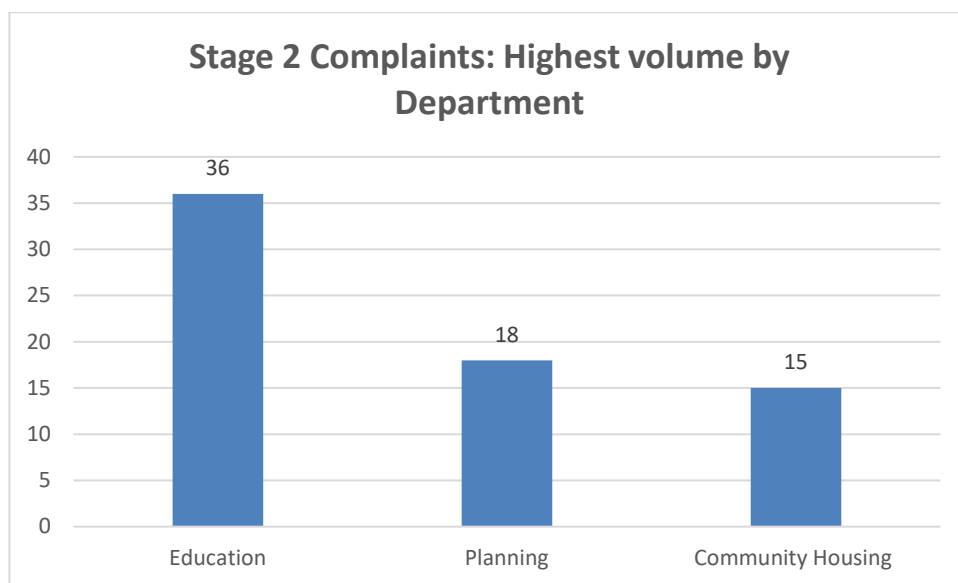
Please note: Totals may not match as not all complaints are closed in the same quarter they are received.

The service areas receiving the highest volume of **Stage 2** complaints in **2023/2024** were:

Education 59% (36)

Planning 30% (18)

Community Housing 25% (15)



Education received 59% (36) of all Stage 2 complaints in 2023/2024 (61). Of the complaints received, over 33% were not upheld. 11% of Education complaints were in relation to allegations of bullying and 16% were in relation to pupils with additional support needs.

Planning received 30% (18) of all Stage 2 complaints in 2023/2024 (61). Of the complaints received, over 72% were not upheld.

Community Housing received 25% (15) of all Stage 2 complaints (61). Of the complaints received, over 40% were not upheld.

3.10.2 A table of all Service Area Complaints in 2023/2024 are shown in [Appendix 1](#). Service Area Response Timescales are shown in [Appendix 2](#).

3.11 Compliments Overview 2023/2024

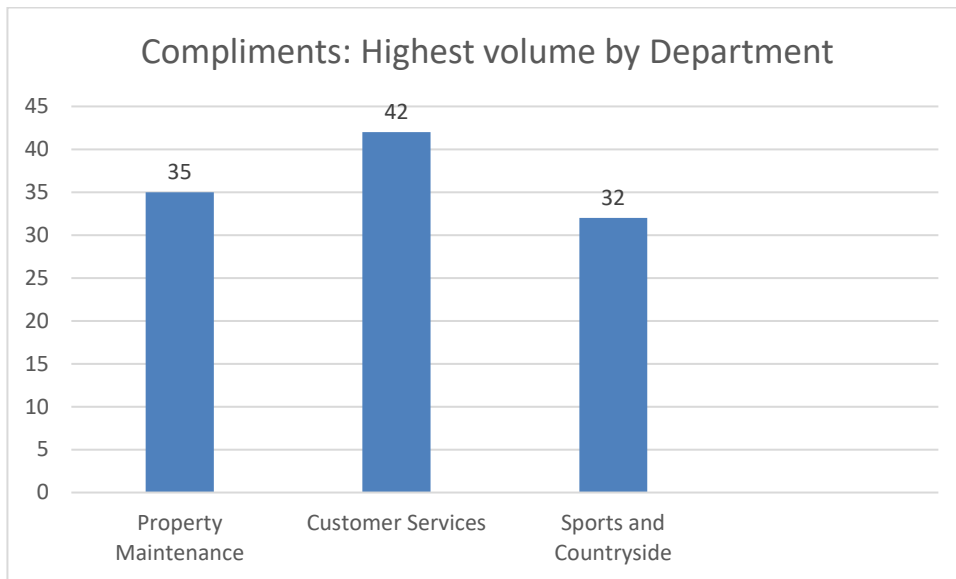
3.11.1 **225** compliments were received in **2023/2024**.

The following Service Areas received a high percentage of compliments:

Property Maintenance 16% (35)

Customer Services 19% (42)

Sport, Countryside and Leisure 14% (32)



This follows the trend seen in previous years as these Service Areas have a high volume of customer facing interactions and as such have more opportunity to receive more feedback; both compliments and complaints.

3.12 Comments Overview 2023/2024

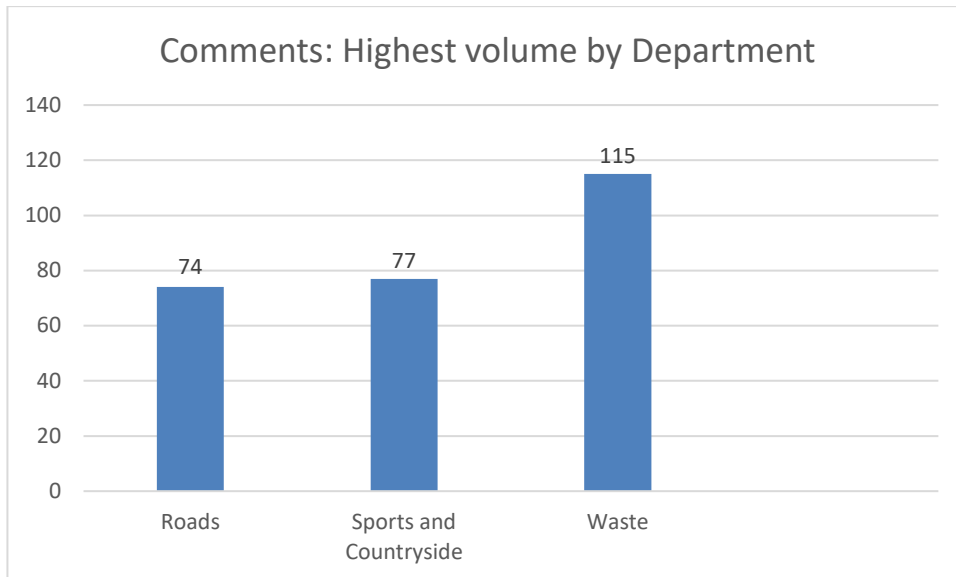
3.12.1 **465** comments were received in 2023/2024.

The following Service Areas received a high percentage of comments:

Roads 16% (74)

Sport, Countryside and Leisure 17% (77)

Waste 25% (115)



This follows the trend seen in previous years as these Service Areas have a high volume of customer facing interactions and as such have more opportunity to receive more feedback; both compliments and comments.

3.13 Service Improvements as a result of feedback

- **Community Housing**

The Community Housing service continues to carefully consider customer feedback through both complaints and positive comments, as well as satisfaction survey data, in order to continuously review its processes. Through analysis of survey data, we are satisfied that customer satisfaction remains relatively high. However, where complaints are upheld, further analysis is undertaken to understand the reasons and where appropriate actions are factored into ongoing service development activity.

- **Planning**

In the last year the Planning Service have

- a) reviewed and amended our discretionary charging system for pre-application enquires,
- b) attended all meetings of the Association of East Lothian Community Councils to discuss relevant planning matters,
- c) reviewed and re-published our Enforcement Charter,
- d) prepared a Tree and Woodland Strategy,
- e) appointed a Chief Planning Officer, and
- f) amended our system for generating planning decisions in order to reduce the risk of an incorrect decision being made.

- **Education**

The Education Service is committed to reviewing complaint themes on a regular basis to ensure that improvements are made where possible.

They are working proactively with the Feedback Team to discuss complaints handling and investigation training for schools to ensure a robust approach.

4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 None

5 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

5.1 The subject of this report does not affect the wellbeing of the community or have a significant impact on equality, the environment or economy.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Financial - None

6.2 Personnel - None

6.3 Other – None

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 None

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Appendix 1 Customer Feedback Breakdown by Service 2023/2024

Service Area	Stage 1 Received	Not Upheld	Partially Upheld	Upheld	Resolved	Escalated to stage 2	Stage 2 Received	Not Upheld	Partially Upheld	Upheld	Resolved	Compliments	Comments
Adult Wellbeing													
Total	49	9	4	3	25	4	8	3	3	1	0	28	4
Building Standards													
Total	3	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2
Children's Services													
Total	16	5	6	1	6	0	2	1	1	0	0	1	3
Community Housing													
Total	104	22	15	12	35	5	15	8	6	1	0	10	40
Community Partnerships													
Total	3	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	2
Web & Corporate Communications													
Total	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Customer Services													
Total	6	3	0	0	1	2	2	2	0	0	0	42	24
Education													
Total	51	17	9	0	15	6	36	18	14	1	0	5	7
Engineering Services													
Total	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	2

Service areas which have not received any complaints or comments/compliments in 2023/2024 have not been included in this overall report

Service Area	Stage 1 Received	Not Upheld	Partially Upheld	Upheld	Resolved	Escalated to stage 2	Stage 2 Received	Not Upheld	Partially Upheld	Upheld	Resolved	Compliments	Comments
Environmental Services													
Total	25	10	3	1	5	2	2	1	1	0	0	2	16
Planning													
Total	11	6	2	1	0	0	18	13	1	0	0	0	16
Facilities													
Total	4	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	6
Property Maintenance													
Total	231	53	16	29	123	5	11	5	3	2	0	35	36
Roads													
Total	21	6	2	1	9	5	2	1	1	0	0	10	74
Transportation													
Total	3	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
Sports & Countryside													
Total	19	2	3	0	14	1	1	1	0	0	0	32	77
Waste													
Total	21	11	0	1	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	31	115
Revenues Services													
Total	9	6	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	17	5
Governance													
Total	7	4	0	0	0	3	6	3	2	0	0	6	25
Strategic Asset & Estates													
Total	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Service areas which have not received any complaints or comments/compliments in 2023/2024 have not been included in this overall report

Appendix 2 Customer Feedback Response Times by Service 2023/2024

Service Area	Stage 1 % responded to within 5 Working days	Stage 2 % responded to within 20 Working days
Adult Wellbeing	41%	66%
Building Standards	33%	*
Children's Services	37%	0%
Community Housing	32%	80%
Community Partnerships	33%	0%
Customer Services	17%	50%
Education	35%	83%
Engineering Services	*	100%
Environment Services	28%	75%
Facilities	75%	*
Strategic Asset & Estates	0%	*
Governance	14%	100%
Planning	73%	39%
Property Maintenance	36%	82%
Revenues Services	67%	*
Roads	33%	100%
Sports Countryside & Leisure	26%	100%
Transportation	67%	*
Waste	67%	*
** no complaints recorded		