

## The Highland Council

### Audit and Scrutiny Committee – 20 November 2014

Agenda Item	12
Report No	AS/33/14

#### Corporate Complaint Process Report Report by Head of Digital Transformation

##### Summary

This paper provides an update for members on the Councils Corporate Complaints Process for the period 1 April 2014 to 30 September 2014. Comparative data on our annual performance is also included along with a high level analysis of our complaint handling and how we are using this to better inform our understanding of complaints and improve performance.

## 1. Background

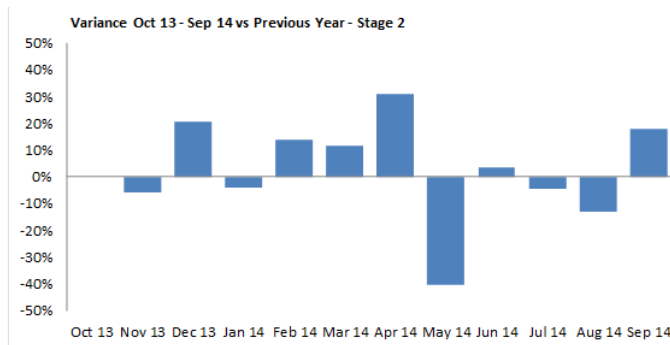
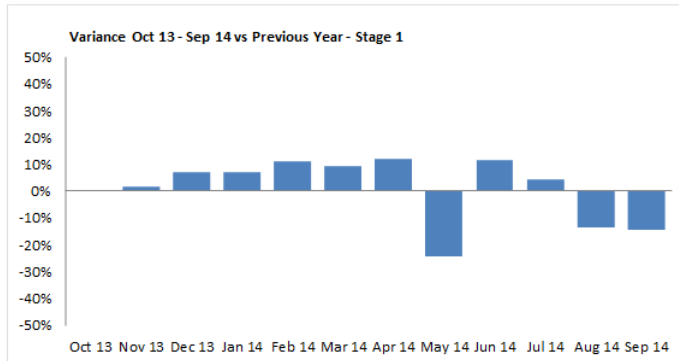
- 1.1 Complaints to the Council provide valuable feedback and the opportunity to put things right for the customer when necessary. Implementation of the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) two stage complaint process has provided the Council with a single view of complaint data and helps to ensure that there is a robust, clear and effective complaints process in place to make sure that any issues raised are dealt with appropriately.

## 2. Performance

- 2.1 The Highland Council has set a target of 80% of complaints to be closed in full at both Stage 1 and Stage 2 as a key performance indicator. The timescales are that complaints must be dealt with, in full, in 5 working days for Stage 1 and 20 working days for Stage 2. As per the policy, complex Stage 1 complaints can be extended with the agreement of the customer.
- 2.2 From 1 April 2014 to 30 September 2014, year to date, there were a total of 714 complaints handled. Of this total volume, 569 were handled as Stage 1 complaints with 46.92% closed within Service Level Agreement. During this period there were 145 Stage 2 complaints with 65.52% closed within SLA. There has been significant work done in quarter 2 to improve performance on Stage 2 complaints. At the June Audit and Scrutiny Committee the improving Stage 2 performance was highlighted. This is a trend that has continued into the first six months performance.
- 2.3 We are now in a position where we can compare performance data on these indicators for the period November 2013 to October 2014 with the previous year.

The following tables demonstrate the annual comparison in performance with our first year of complaint recording used as a baseline. This targeted

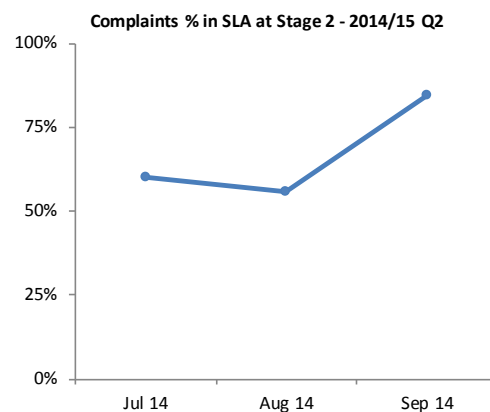
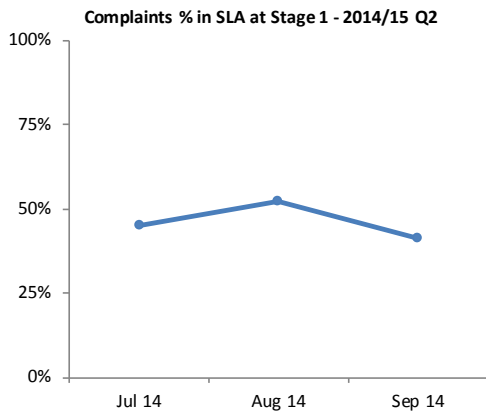
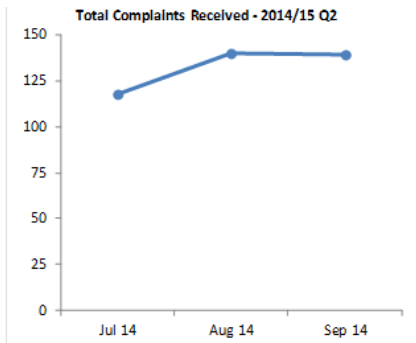
approach helps us to identify and scrutinise peaks and troughs in performance. These tables demonstrate an overall improving trend for both stages of the complaints process and highlights where there has been a dip in performance. The significant dip in performance in May 2014 for both Stage 1 and 2 was due to a combination of service restructure coupled with some seasonal trends around complaints.



2.4 For our most recent quarter (Q2 1 July to 30 September 2014) there were a total of 397 complaints handled. Of this total volume, 322 Stage 1 complaints, 150 (46.58%) were closed in full within the set timescales. This number increases to 181 (56.21%) when we include where extensions were agreed with customers.

Of the 75 Stage 2 complaints, 52 (69.33%) were closed within the set timescales. The datasets below detail how the Council is performing corporately with further detail giving a breakdown by service in section 2.5.

2.4 **Dataset 1: Corporate Complaints Handling Performance**



## Dataset 2: Service Complaints Handling Performance

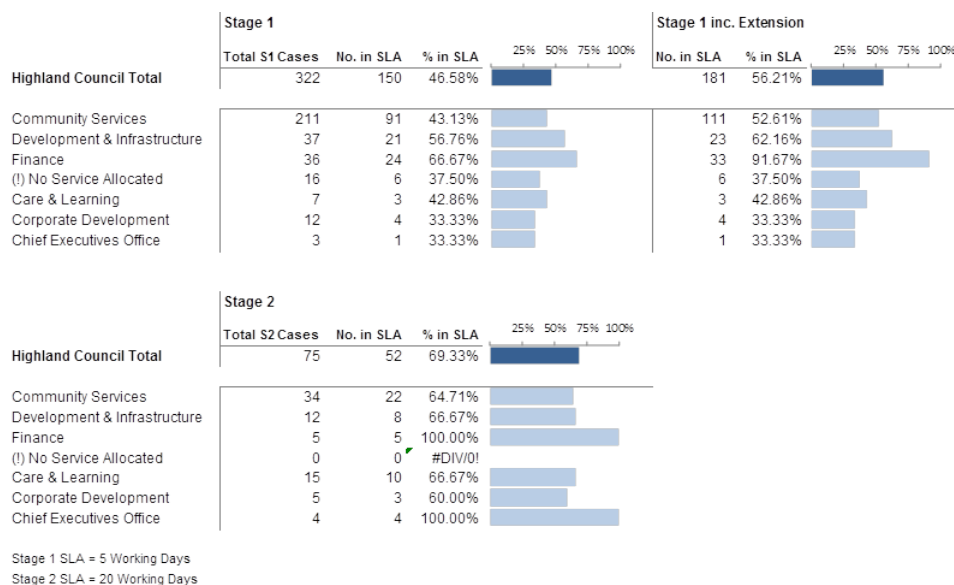
2.5 Reporting has been updated to reflect our new services structure. Detailed information is available for each individual service around compliance with set timescales at Stage 1 and Stage 2. This is illustrated in the tables below. A significant factor here has been the amalgamation of services and the bedding in of the supporting team structure.

The Community Service Management Team has engaged with Customer Service to improve resolution at first point of contact across all queries with particular emphasis on complaint handling.

It should also be noted that:

- Complaints which are allocated as 'no service allocated' is because these complaints relate to a number of services, and in these cases corporate customer services will work with the services concerned to achieve a joint resolution.
- Social Work complaints continue to require to follow a statutory procedure, following a slightly different process.
- During Quarter 2 there has been a significant improvement on our handling of Stage 2 complaints. Compliance with timescales has improved from 61.43% for Quarter 1 to 69.33% for Quarter 2.
- Further analysis demonstrates that for the month of September this figure has increased to 84.38% - within target.

## Dataset 2: Complaints Handling Performance By Service (Quarter 2)



### 3. Progress to Date

- 3.1 Community Service continues to receive the highest volume of complaints. With this in mind, Community Services are working in partnership with Customer Service to enhance complaint responses. This will ensure more resolution at the first point of contact, improved response timeframes and the implementation of proactive measures around recurring complaint themes.
- 3.2 The Audit and Scrutiny Committee had requested sight of the types of complaints that customers were making. The table below presents this information with a view of the top 10 types of complaints for Quarter 2.

#### Top 10 Complaints - Q2 2014

Type	Cases
Grounds Maintenance	46
Housing Repairs	30
Anti-Social Behaviour	29
Political Signage	18
Grass Cutting	16
Waste Management	16
Council Tax	16
Road Maintenance	15
Member of Staff	14
Schools	13

- 3.3 Significant progress has also been made on key elements of the Action Plan reported at the last Audit and Scrutiny Committee. The Action Plan (Appendix 1) highlights some of the work done to date; including the actions taken to improve accessibility for customers by re-design of our online complaints form

and the improved training materials and support for officers.

- 3.4 An assessment of our Corporate Complaints process using the Public Sector Improvement Framework (PSIF) is to be undertaken. This self-assessment tool encourages organizations to conduct a systematic and comprehensive review of activities and results. This will help us to identify our strengths and areas for improvement and inform annual planning and define improvement initiatives that are monitored and measured through the Performance and Risk Management System (PMRS). A summary of findings will be reported to Audit and Scrutiny in 2015.

#### **4. Ombudsman Update**

- 4.1 As previously reported the Ombudsman intends to implement quality assurance and benchmarking protocols across all local authorities. This is still in the initial stages, once these measures are in place the Highland Council will apply and adhere to their recommendations. Actions around recommendations will be carried out as appropriate by any necessary system changes, management briefings and training. Timescales for this work will be confirmed in the near future.
- 4.2 The Ombudsman continues to work with the Local Authority Complaints Handlers Network to provide support and to help to ensure core principles are being adhered to; with good practice mentored and shared. As such it is important that Customer Services continue to contribute to this network.

#### **5. Implications.**

##### **5.1 Resource Implications**

There are resource implications against the Action Plan, including partnership working with Services to improve complaint resolution at first point of contact and the PSIF self-assessment work. All services have been requested to ensure that the necessary resources are in place and to continue to prioritise the improvement of complaints handling in order to meet the corporate performance targets.

##### **5.2 Risks/Equality/Legal/Climate Change/ Gaelic Implications**

**Equality Implications:** An initial screening of Equal Impact Assessment (EQIA) was completed during process design. There was no evidence of, or the possibility of, negative impact, and no requirement for immediate remedial or mitigating action be taken without therefore there was no need to undertake a full EQIA.

**Risk Implications:** Complaints handling performance is a critical area of the Council in how it handles its customer contact. Should the Council fail to meet the performance targets it could impact negatively on the overall performance

of the Council.

**Legal/Climate Change/Gaelic implications** – no known implications

**Recommendation**

Members are requested to note:

- i. The Council six month performance results and the improving direction of travel indicated for Stage 2 complaints.
- ii. The actions underway to support the improvement of the Complaint Handling Process as demonstrated in the Action Plan.
- iii. Note the Council commitment to use the PSIF as a tool to improve and drive performance

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Date: 11.11.14

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## Appendix 1

### Corporate Complaints Process – Action Plan for Improvement - Update November 2014

As a result of our ongoing continuous improvement plan we have taken the opportunity to maximise and prioritise complaints logging and handling. The Action Plan below demonstrates some of the key actions with progress to date.

	<b>Key Actions</b>	<b>Progress to Date</b>
1	Review process (including forms) to simplify and continue to apply mandatory standardised approach, including drop down menus and mandatory fields.	<p>All Customer Service Officers within Services have been fully involved in the re-design of forms and processes.</p> <p>Changes made to Complaints E Forms and online forms and Internal forms - Easy customer use (significant reduction in the number of fields to complete).</p> <p>Workflow Improvements - now mirrors SPSO complaints process (more intuitive layout for all complaint handling staff).</p> <p><i>To Go Live – Monday 10<sup>th</sup> Nov (TBC)</i></p>
2	Review of complaints process to improve and continue to promote a positive complaints management culture ensuring full compliance with processes and procedures.	<p>Review of complaints process is planned and will take place shortly.</p> <p>Briefing packs are currently being developed with the aid of Customer Service Officers – this will include new training documents and online material.</p> <p>Re-issue of complaints process as outlined by SPSO.</p> <p>Re-issue of complaints</p>

		<p>handling guidance.</p> <p>Customer Service Officers have been fully briefed on revised forms and process as above and are on hand to support their service.</p> <p>It is envisaged that a communication to re-launch be sent from Senior Management to assist with improving and promoting the corporate complaints handling process.</p> <p><i>Re-launch by end Nov 2014</i></p>
3	Review and improve training materials and delivery.	<p>Improved Training documentation which supports our process re-design and forms to be available from mid November.</p> <p>Customer Services are currently working with key staff to update existing online training and develop new materials and delivery – combination of lunchtime briefings, “bite size” training videos and targeted contact.</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
4	Processes to be put in place for the full scope of the Ombudsman’s KPIs to meet public reporting requirements.	Ongoing
5	Focus reporting via PRMS and remove current manual reports; this requires further investigation to understand CRM outputs and level of data manipulation necessary to generate KPIs. (Underway)	<p>As of 3<sup>rd</sup> November the PRMS load data from Lagan extract and PRMS input aligned to new service structure.</p> <p>From mid November all services will receive complaints data via the</p>



		<p>PRMS briefing book.</p> <p>Continue to monitored and review as necessary.</p>
6	<p>Service Management Teams to ensure that Complaint Co-ordinators continue to be supported to prioritise complaint handling and resolution.</p>	<p>Re-launch of complaints process to support this action.</p>
7	<p>Strengthen quality assurance process by applying sampling (establish random sampling process).</p>	<p>Post re-launch as more robust information will be available to support quality assurance process.</p>