
Report To:	Policy & Resources Committee	Date:	16 November 2021
Report By:	Interim Head of Legal Services	Report No:	LPS090/21
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Subject:	Inverclyde Council Annual Complaint Handling Report 1 April 2020 – 31 March 2021		

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise the Policy & Resources Committee of the annual performance of all complaints received and handled by Inverclyde Council, Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP), and both Arms-Length Organisations (ALEOs), Inverclyde Leisure and Riverside Inverclyde for the period from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021.

2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 The annual Complaint Handling Statistical report for the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021 in Appendix 1 has been prepared by the Council's Information Governance Team. The annual report provides the following information:
- i. Performance Information;
 - ii. Analysis of complaint activity; and an
 - iii. Update on learning from complaints.
- 2.2 The performance of the Council, HSCP, both ALEOs, Inverclyde Leisure and Riverside Inverclyde has been summarised within the report on key performance indicators that have been monitored over the relevant period.
- 2.3 The SPSO has provided statistical information on the Council's complaint handling during the above period and there have been no cases involving the Council investigated this year.
- 2.4 The Council remains committed to investigating, learning from and taking appropriate action where it is found that standards have fallen below the level expected or where it is recognised that services could be improved.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Committee:
- (1) Notes the annual performance of Inverclyde Council's complaint procedure.
 - (2) Approves the publication of the Annual Complaint Handling Report on the Council's website.

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The local authority complaint handler network (LACHN) is a national forum for local authority complaint handlers to meet quarterly to assist in the development of professional practice in relation to complaint handling. Inverclyde Council are represented at this forum by the Complaint Officer alongside representatives from 32 Scottish Local Authorities. The Scottish Public Service Ombudsman (SPSO) attend these meetings to support the ongoing development of complaint handling within local authorities and to achieve consistency in approach.
- 4.2 There is a requirement for Councils to report complaint handling performance for ALEOs. Inverclyde Council have two ALEO's, Inverclyde Leisure and Riverside Inverclyde, and they both require to adhere to reporting on complaints handled although they were not included at the time of the implementation of the model complaint procedure. Inverclyde Council is adhering to the reporting requirements for ALEOs set out by the SPSO.
- 4.3 The SPSO has confirmed that they would be moving to a quarterly submission of complaint handling statistical data from all Councils. This was intended to ease the collation of management information on an annual basis. Inverclyde Council agreed to supply this statistical data each quarter, as it is currently prepared on a quarterly and annual basis. The draft report is issued to LACHN for discussion at the network meeting and any inconsistencies in data interpretation and analysis is resolved before the formal annual submission to the SPSO each year.
- 4.4 Inverclyde Council, the HSCP and both ALEOs implemented revised model complaint handling procedures on 1 April 2021.

5.0 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE

- 5.1 Inverclyde Council, Inverclyde Leisure, Riverside Inverclyde and the HSCP received and handled 269 complaints and closed 250 complaints within the relevant period. The statistics show a decrease in the number of complaints received in Inverclyde Council, the HSCP and Inverclyde Leisure. This has been attributable to a lower number of complaints being received in the first two quarters of the year due to the COVID 19 pandemic.
- 5.2 The performance of complaints handled at stage one of the complaint handling procedure has been summarised in the table below.

Stage 1 Complaints	Indicators 2020/21		Trend when comparing to 2019/20
No of complaints closed	172		a decrease of 117 complaints
% of complaints closed on time within 5 days (inc time extn cases)	86%		an improvement by 3%
Average number of days taken to close complaint	5 days		an increase in time by 1.3 days
No of complaints upheld & as % of all complaints	55 cases	27%	a reduction by 26 complaints
No of complaints partially upheld & as % of all complaints	38 cases	19%	a reduction by 12 complaints

5.3 The performance of complaints handled at stage two of the complaint handling procedure has been summarised in the table below.

Stage 2 Complaints	Indicators 2020/21		Trend when comparing to 2019/20
No of complaints closed	26		A decrease of 21 complaints
% of complaints closed on time within 20 days & where we applied time extension	74.3%		A decrease by by 2.3%
Average number of days taken to close complaint	16.2 days		Improved by 2 days
No of complaints upheld & as % of all complaints	13 cases	37.1%	An increase of 3 complaints
No of complaints partially upheld & as % of all complaints	11 cases	31.4%	a reduction of 1 complaints

5.4 The performance of complaints handled at escalated stage two of the complaint handling procedure has been summarised in the table below.

Escalated Stage 2 Complaints	Indicators 2020/21		Trend when comparing to 2019/20
No of complaints closed	15		a reduction of 9 complaints
% of complaints closed on time within 20 days & where we applied time extension	80.0%		a positive increase of 2%
Average number of days taken to close complaint	15.1 days		an decrease of 3 days
No of complaints upheld & as % of all complaints	3 cases	20%	7 an reduction of 4 cases
No of complaints partially upheld & as % of all complaints	3 cases	20%	No change

5.5 The breakdown of complaint volumes per service remains relatively low within some services however, they are proportionately higher in those services that have historically received higher complaint volumes based on the nature of work undertaken Riverside Inverclyde did not receive any complaints over the year.

5.6 Service improvement recording commenced in November 2016 and has been embedded within services and is reported quarterly to DMTs. The HSCP requires to implement this process within their complaint handling process.

5.7 The SPSO has recommended that all Local Authorities should be completing customer satisfaction surveys regularly to gain true insight regarding how well they are handling complaints. A model satisfaction survey was recommended by the SPSO for implementation at the same time changes to the Model Complaint Handling Procedure were introduced in April 2021. Implementation has been postponed by the Council due to challenges with resourcing and developing the technical process for implementing the survey. This will be revisited in 2022.

5.8 The SPSO received 7 complaints for Inverclyde Council which were dealt with at early resolution stage and no complaints were investigated. The SPSO received 3 complaints for the HSCP. One complaint was dealt with at the early resolution stage. Two complaints were reviewed, with one upheld and one not upheld. This reflects a reduction in the complaints received by the SPSO for both Inverclyde Council and the HSCP.

5.9 The Council has received a letter dated 21 September 2021 from the SPSO, with guidance about customer service complaints, application of model complaints handling principles and procedures and service recovery. Whilst recognising that there are significant ongoing pressures on public bodies the SPSO has emphasised the importance of communication with service users and advised that the Council plan for recovery to “ normal service “. The Information Governance and Complaints officer will undertake a review of the Councils complaint handling and report to back to the CMT.

6.0 COMPLAINTS HANDLING BY ALEOS

6.1 The Council is responsible for ensuring the services provided by Inverclyde Leisure and Riverside Inverclyde meet the required standards and adhere to the complaint handling procedure. In doing this the Council must establish mechanisms to identify and act on complaint handling performance issues found.

6.2 Inverclyde Leisure implemented the complaint handling procedure in March 2017 and has provided their management information for inclusion into the Council’s quarterly and annual reporting requirements to the SPSO.

6.3 Riverside Inverclyde implemented the complaint handling procedure from 1 April 2018 and provide quarterly statistical information for inclusion in the reporting for Inverclyde Council. The volume of complaints from this ALEO continue to be extremely low with an entire year noted where no complaints were received.

7.0 IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Finance

Financial Implications

None

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Years	Proposed Spend this Report	Virement From	Other Comments
N/A					

Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings)

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	With Effect from	Annual Net Impact	Virement From (If Applicable)	Other Comments
N/A					

7.2 Legal Implications

The legal implications are set out in this report.

7.3 Human Resources

None

7.4 Equalities

(a) Has an Equality Impact Assessment been carried out?

	YES
X	NO – This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a substantive change to an existing policy, function or strategy. Therefore, no Equality Impact Assessment is required

(b) Fairer Scotland Duty

If this report affects or proposes any major strategic decision:-

Has there been active consideration of how this report's recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome?

	YES – A written statement showing how this report's recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage has been completed.
X	NO

(c) Data Protection

Has a Data Protection Impact Assessment been carried out?

	YES – This report involves data processing which may result in a high risk to the rights and freedoms of individuals.
X	NO

7.5 Repopulation

None.

8.0 CONSULTATIONS

8.1 The Corporate Management Team have reviewed the contents of the Annual Report.

9.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

9.1 None.

**Inverclyde Council
Annual Complaints Report
1 April 2020 – 31 March 2021**

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1.0 Background

- 1.1 In April 2013 the Council introduced a revised complaints handling procedure moving from a three stage to a two stage process in line with the guidance by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO). At the same time a new corporate wide system for recording complaints through LAGAN was rolled out across the Council.
- 1.2 In 2015 an audit was undertaken to provide management and the Audit Committee with an assessment of the adequacy and effectiveness of the governance, risk management and controls surrounding a number of key risks faced by both the Council and Inverclyde HSCP regarding complaints. There was a requirement to improve on a number of areas.
- 1.3 A corporate working group was established following the audit with representation across all services and chaired by a Corporate Director to address areas in the Council's complaint handling.
- 1.4 The Council's objective was to address issues that had been identified during historic complaint handling were agreed to ensure that the Council has a robust approach to complaint handling. The Complaint Officer post has strengthened the robustness of the Council's complaint handling approach in the following areas;
 - Increased awareness of the Council's complaint handling procedures.
 - Ensuring training needs of staff with responsibility for complaint handling are identified and addressed.
 - Improved corporate oversight of the complaints process.
 - Improved monitoring of complaints.
 - Regular review of the Council's complaint handling procedures for effectiveness.
- 1.5 The local authority complaint handler network (LACHN) is a national forum for local authority complaint handlers to meet quarterly to assist in the development of professional practice in relation to complaint handling. Inverclyde Council are represented at this forum by the complaint officer alongside representatives from 32 Scottish Local Authorities. The SPSO attend these meetings to support the ongoing development of complaint handling within local authorities and to achieve consistency in approach.
- 1.6 Inverclyde Leisure operates sports and community facilities throughout Inverclyde for the Council and Riverside Inverclyde promotes urban regeneration within the area. While these organisations are separate to the Council they are subject to its control and the Council is responsible for ensuring the services provided meet the required standards and adhere to the complaint handling procedure. In doing this the Council must establish mechanisms to identify and act on complaint handling performance issues identified.
- 1.7 The SPSO through LACHN network issued a survey to all local authorities to complete regarding complaint handling reporting being submitted to the network to review prior to formal reporting being issued to SPSO. The survey questions highlighted the requirements for Council's to report complaint handling performance for ALEOs. Inverclyde Council have two ALEO's they are Inverclyde Leisure and Riverside

Inverclyde and they are required to adhere to reporting on complaints handled although they were not included at the time of the implementing the model complaint procedure. Actions have been taken to address this and Inverclyde Council are now adhering to the reporting requirements set out by the SPSO.

- 1.8 Following the results of the survey that was completed by all of the local authorities, the SPSO confirmed that they would be moving to a quarterly submission of complaint handling statistical data from all Councils. This was intended to ease the collation of management information on annual basis. Inverclyde Council agreed to supply this statistical data each quarter, as it is currently prepared for the CMT on a quarterly and annual basis. The draft report is issued to the LACHN for discussion at the network meeting and any inconsistencies in data interpretation and analysis is resolved before the formal annual submission to the SPSO each year.

2.0 Current Procedures

- 2.1 Inverclyde Council co-ordinates the reporting of complaints to the SPSO and this includes the HSCP, ALEOs, Inverclyde Leisure and Riverside Inverclyde. Each area is responsible for recording their own complaints and providing their management information to Inverclyde Council to enable the consolidated statistical report to be produced quarterly and annually.
- 2.2 On 1 April 2021 Inverclyde Council, the HSCP and both ALEOs, Inverclyde Leisure and Riverside Inverclyde adopted the new Model Complaint Handling Procedure which was updated by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman. This change aligns the procedure followed in each of these areas. The procedure provides a quick, simple, streamlined process with a strong focus on local, early resolution. This enables issues or concerns dealt with close to the event which gave rise to the complainant making the complaint.
- 2.3 As far as possible the complainant should be actively and positively engaged with the process from the outset.
- 2.4 **Frontline resolution stage one:** Frontline resolution should be attempted where there are straightforward issues potentially easily resolved with little or no investigation. This should be completed within 5 working days
- 2.5 **Investigation stage two:** Where complaints cannot be resolved at the frontline stage or those which are complex, serious or high risk, a thorough investigation will be undertaken. This typically requires more thorough examination in order to establish facts prior to reaching conclusion. The complaint points and resolution outcome sought is agreed with the complainant. This should be completed within 20 working days.
- 2.6 **Escalated investigation stage two:** Where the complainant remains dissatisfied with the way the Council dealt with their complaint at frontline resolution, the complainant can request a detailed investigation under stage two of our complaints handling procedure. This must be undertaken before the complainant can take their complaint to the SPSO to review.
- 2.7 **Scottish Public Service Ombudsman:** Appeals of complaint outcomes are reviewed by the SPSO.

3.0 Governance Arrangements

3.1 Governance arrangements are in place to report and analyse complaints within Inverclyde Council as follows:

Heads of Service Meetings
Service Review Meetings
Director Management Team meetings
Corporate Management Team meetings annually

3.2 Inverclyde Council log their complaints into the Verint system. The Health and Social Care Partnership complaints are logged in two ways a complaint log spreadsheet for all complaints and complaints relating to NHS GG&C are also recorded on their Datix system. Inverclyde Leisure and Riverside Inverclyde record their complaints on a complaint log spreadsheet.

3.3 This is supported by the Information Governance and Complaint Officer who promotes the complaint handling procedure and provides strategic direction for complaint handling to ensure a responsive, efficient and improved complaint handling service which meets the regulatory standards. Oversight and monitoring of complaint handling performance is undertaken to ensure the feedback mechanism is delivering continuous improvement. Quarterly recommendations on improvement areas are discussed with the Corporate Management Team. The Health and Social Care Partnership have created a temporary NHS funded role of Complaints Manager who is responsible for overseeing the processing of all complaints relating to the HSCP including NHS GG&C. The HSCP Complaints Manager ensures that all complaints are responded to in a professional manner, providing performance management and analysis (financial, planning and business management) and achieving national and local targets.

4.0 Summary of Performance

4.1 Number of complaint received and closed

4.2 In the reporting period 1 April 2020 – 31 March 2021 Inverclyde Council, Inverclyde Leisure and the HSCP received and handled **269** complaints and closed **250** complaints. The complaints received per 1000 of population is 3.5 complaints which is a reduction when comparing to the same period last year.

4.2 The SPSO requires Inverclyde Council to include ALEOs and HSCP complaints statistical information in the quarterly and annual reports. It should be noted that oversight and day to day matters relating to complaints are supported separately

4.3 This is the third year that the Council have reported a collective report on complaint handling performance that includes Inverclyde Council, HSCP, Inverclyde Leisure and Riverside Inverclyde.

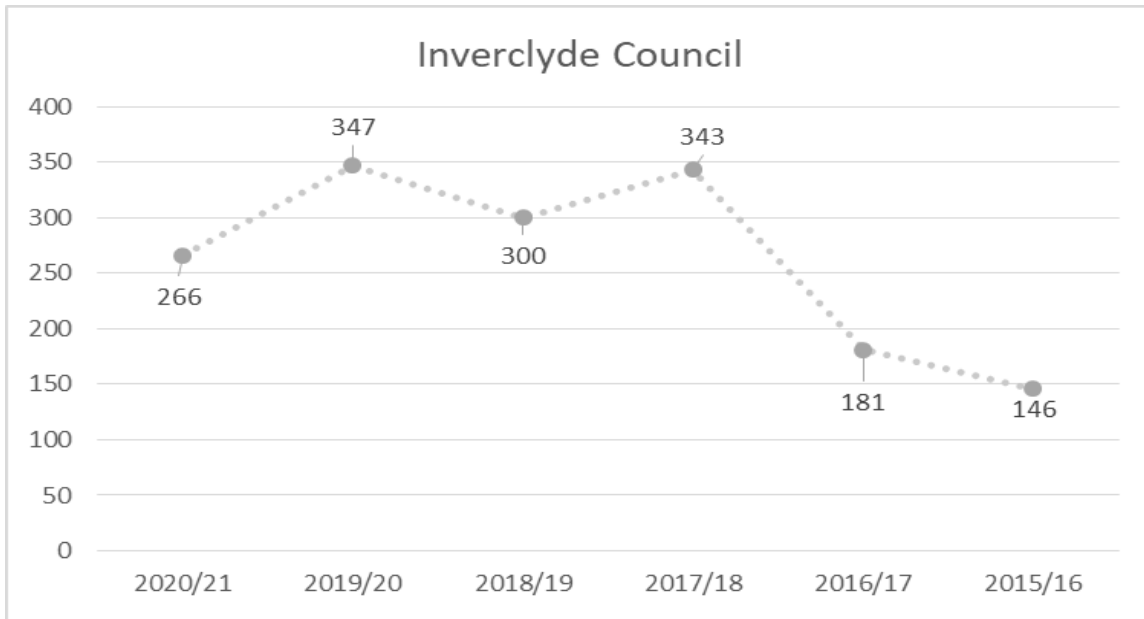
- 4.4 The statistics show a decrease in the number of complaints received in Inverclyde Council, the HSCP and Inverclyde Leisure. No complaints were received in Riverside Inverclyde. The reduction in complaints received is largely attributable to the period when the UK went into national lockdown and the focus of residents moved towards matters of greater importance the Council evidenced lower complaint volumes received in the first 6 months of the year.
- 4.5 The Council actively published information on the Council's website and on social media for residents to understand the implications of potential delays which could be encountered with the impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19). In particular specific messages were shared on the Council's complaint handling website pages to manage the expectations of service users and to explain that the Council may have to apply timescales for complaint handling. In addition to this the Council also encouraged service users to refrain from submitting complaints where it was about the following matters:
- Delays with processing complaints,
 - Delays with complaint responses,
 - Matters which are likely to resolve themselves within the next few weeks/months,
 - Delays in service delivery which are the result of organisations having to cope with COVID-19 and which are non-essential.
- 4.6 The key emphasis was placed on the Council's appreciation of service user's patience whilst the Council worked through these unprecedented circumstances and in particular if the service that was received from the Council had fallen below expectations or if our response to a complaint had taken the Council longer than the stated timescale. The Council also signposted service users to the additional information published on the SPSO's website on the impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) on complaints.
- 4.7 This is the second full year of accurate reporting which can be used to benchmark future years performance. The tables summarise the complaints received.

Number complaints received						
	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18	2016/17	2015/16
Inverclyde Council	213	274	256	288	181*	146
HSCP	39	73	44	55		
Inverclyde Leisure	14	40	29**	8		
Riverside Inverclyde	0	2	13			

*Members are reminded that essential changes were made to the LAGAN in order to improve the complaint management system in preparation for it to be adopted as the universal complaint recording system for the Council. During this process closed complaint data was lost which impacts on the extent of complaints finally recorded in 2016.

** Inverclyde Leisure had a loss of data for the data covering the period 1 January 2018 to 31 March 2018 which will have impacted the extent of complaints finally recorded in 2018/19 the collective reporting of complaints

4.8 The chart below shows Inverclyde Council's volumes only over time the last six years.



4.9 The tables below outlines closed complaint breakdown by investigation stage and comparable data volumes for the periods in 2019/18 to 2016/17 inclusive.

	No of frontline resolution stage 1				
	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18	2016/17
Inverclyde Council	162	220	214	225	121
HSCP	25	39	17	33	31
Inverclyde Leisure	13	40	29	7	
Riverside Inverclyde	0	2	12		

	No of complaint investigations stage 2				
	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18	2016/17
Inverclyde Council	24	20	8	17	23
HSCP	10	27	22	26	25
Inverclyde Leisure	0	0	0	0	
Riverside Inverclyde	0	0	1		

	No of complaint investigations escalated stage 2				
	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18	2016/17
Inverclyde Council	12	21	13	21	7
HSCP	1	3	0	0	0
Inverclyde Leisure	1	0	0	0	
Riverside Inverclyde	0	0	0		

4.10 In respect of the complaints received there are occasions where the complaint is partially investigated and either withdrawn or is found not to be appropriate for the complaint handling procedure which is removed from the overall numbers. These are noted in the table below which is largely evidential in the Council's handling of complaints.

	Withdrawn				
	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18	2016/17
Inverclyde Council	15	15	19	25	8
HSCP	0	0	0	0	0
Inverclyde Leisure	0	0	0	0	
Riverside Inverclyde	0	0	0		

	Service requests				
	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18	2016/17
Inverclyde Council	0	3	7	6	8
HSCP	0	0	0	0	0
Inverclyde Leisure	0	0	0	0	
Riverside Inverclyde	0	0	0		

	Not Council related / Invalid				
	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18	2016/17
Inverclyde Council	2	3	10	4	13
HSCP	0	0	0	0	0
Inverclyde Leisure	0	0	0	0	
Riverside Inverclyde	0	0	0		

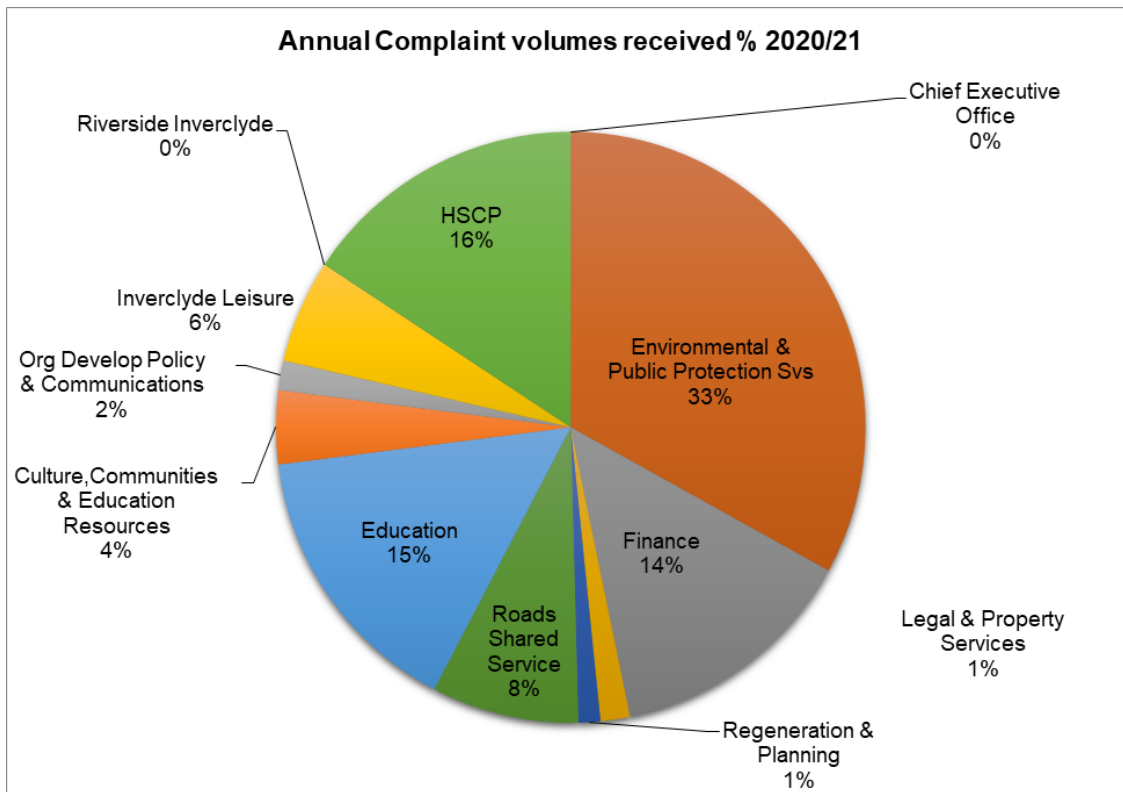
4.11 Complaint Trends

4.12 The table below provides a monthly breakdown of complaints received within each service during 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021. For Inverclyde Leisure, Riverside Inverclyde and HSCP the breakdown is only provided for the annualised volumes.

	Apr-20	May-20	Jun-20	Jul-20	Aug-20	Sep-20	Oct-20	Nov-20	Dec-20	Jan-21	Feb-21	Mar-21	Totals
Chief Executive Office	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Environmental & Public Protection Svs	11	2	13	0	8	0	12	9	5	2	8	12	82
Finance	4	1	2	1	2	3	2	1	3	10	3	2	34
Legal & Property Services	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
Regeneration & Planning	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Roads Shared Service	0	1	2	0	4	1	1	1	1	1	6	2	20
Education	3	1	1	2	4	5	2	4	7	1	2	6	38
Culture, Communities & Education Resources	0	0	0	0	8	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	10
Org Develop Policy & Communications	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	4
Inverclyde Leisure													14
Riverside Inverclyde													0
HSCP													39

4.13 An interim management restructure was implemented early in 2021 to assist with the Council's recovery from COVID 19. Future reporting will be reflective of this new structure however could not be reflected in the statistics produced for this annual report as this would affect the comparable data for the report

4.14 Outlined in the chart overleaf is the percentage of complaints received by each service compared against the total number of complaints received. The Chief Executives' office and Riverside Inverclyde was the only area that that did not receive any complaints over the course of the year.



4.15 Timescales

4.16 The Council aim to resolve complaints quickly. Where appropriate this could mean an on-spot-apology and explanation if something has clearly gone wrong and immediate action to resolve a problem. The Council have 5 working days to respond to a complaint within the stage one process.

4.17 In some circumstances the investigating officer will have to make some enquiries before the Council can respond to a complaint. If the Council are unable to resolve the complaint at this stage, the investigating officer will explain why. The Council may decide it is appropriate to extend the time to deal with the complaint by a further five days or in complex cases they may move the complaint to a stage two investigation. In either scenario the Council will keep complainants informed and manage their expectations in respect of timescales.

4.18 A Stage two complaint deals with two types of complaint: those that have not been resolved at stage one and those that are complex and require a more detailed investigation.

4.19 Where a complainant has escalated a complaint to stage two because they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of the Council's handling a complaint, this is known as an Escalated Stage 2 Investigation.

4.20 When handling a complaint using stage two the Council will;

- Acknowledge receipt of the complaint within three working days;
- Where appropriate, discuss the complaint with the complainant to understand why they remain dissatisfied and seek clarification on the outcome sought; and
- a full written response is provided to the complainant as soon as possible and within 20 working days.

4.21 If the Council's investigation is likely to take longer than 20 working days, the Council will agree revised timescales with the complainant and keep them updated until complaint is resolved.

4.22 Investigating officers are advised of the required dates for timescales on receipt of the complaint. Additional reminders are in place to support timely completion.

4.23 The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman, Rosemary Agnew wrote to the Chief Executive highlighting concerns around complaint handling timescales within local authorities. The Council will ensure officers are reminded of the importance of managing complaints effectively and keeping complainants updated when the Council are likely to exceed the standard timescales expected.

4.24 The table below outlines the Inverclyde Council's collective performance measures on timescales management across all stages of the complaint procedure.

Performance measures	Collective Inverclyde Council 2020/21
No of complaints – closed at stage 1 within 5 days	169
No of complaints – closed at stage 1 within 10 days (time extended)	3
% Complaints Meeting timescale incl those time extended within timescale	84.5%
Ave working days taken stage 1 complaints	5 days
Stage 2	
No of complaints – closed at stage 2 within 20 days	26
No of complaints – closed at stage 2 within 25 days (time extended)	0
% Complaints Meeting timescale inc those time extended within timescale	74.3%
Ave working days taken stage 2 complaints	16.2 days
Escalated Stage 2	
No of complaints – closed at escalated stage 2 within 20 days	12
No of complaints – closed at stage 2 within 25 days (time extended)	0
% Complaints Meeting timescale includes those time extended within timescale	80%
Ave working days taken escalated stage 2 complaints	15.1 days

4.25 The tables below outlines the management of complaints within the prescribed timescale broken down by each areas complaint. The comparable data is not available for Inverclyde Leisure as they have adopted the reporting of complaints within the period 2017/18.

Inverclyde Council's Consolidated Performance						
Stage Frontline resolution	1	Performance Area	2020 /21	2019 /20	2018 /19	2017 /18
		No of complaints – closed at stage 1 within 5 days	138	229	222	214
		% Complaints Meeting timescale including those time extended	85.2%	83.6%	82%	81%
		Ave working days taken stage 1	4.6	3.7	4.1	4.4
Stage Investigation	2	No of complaints – closed at stage 2 within 20 days	19	34	21	31
		% Complaints Meeting timescale including those time extended	79.2%	76.7%	68%	76.6%
		Ave working days taken stage 2	15.2	18 days	18.1	15.5
Stage Escalated Investigation	2	No of complaints – closed at esc stage 2 within 20 days	11	14	13	18
		% Complaints Meeting timescale including those time extended	91.7%	75%	100%	85.7%
		Ave working days taken esc stage 2	16.6	18.3	14.0	13.8

Inverclyde Council Only							
Stage Frontline resolution	1	Performance Area	2020 /21	2019 /20	2018 /19	2017 /18	2016 /17
		No of complaints – closed at stage 1 within 5 days	138	172	171	182*	104
		% Complaints Meeting timescale inc those time extended	85.2 %	87%	80%	78%	86%
		Ave working days taken stage 1	4.6	3.9	4.4	3.8	3
Stage Investigation	2	No of complaints – closed at stage 2 within 20 days	19	14	7	9**	20
		% Complaints Meeting timescale inc those time extended	79.2 %	80%	88%	90%	86%
		Ave working days taken stage 2	15.2	16.1	18.4	16.3	11.7
Stage Escalated Investigation	2	No of complaints – closed at esc stage 2 within 20 days	11	14	13	18	0
		% Complaints Meeting timescale inc those time extended	91.7 %	81.8 %	100%	86%	0
		Ave working days taken esc stage 2	16.6	15.7	14	13.8	0

HSCP							
Stage Frontline resolution	1	Performance Area	2020 /21	2019 /20	2018 /19	2017 /18	2016 /17
		No of complaints – closed at stage 1 within 5 days	14	39	12	22	30
		% Complaints Meeting timescale inc those time extended	56%	72%	71%	88%	96%
		Ave working days taken stage 1	9.3	5.3	7.5	4.1	N/A
Stage Investigation	2	No of complaints – closed at stage 2 within 20 days	6	27	13	18	15
		% Complaints Meeting timescale inc those time extended	60%	74%	59%	79%	60%
		Ave working days taken stage 2	22.3	19.5	18.2	18.2	N/A
Stage Escalated Investigation	2	No of complaints – closed at esc stage 2 within 20 days	1	3	0	0	0
		% Complaints Meeting timescale inc those time extended	0%	0%	0	N/A	0
		Ave working days taken esc stage 2	27	31	0	0	N/A

		Inverclyde Leisure***				Riverside Inverclyde****		
Stage	Performance Area	2020 /21	2019 /20	2018 /19	2017 /18	2020 /21	2019 /20	2018 /19
1 Stage Frontline resolution	No of complaints – closed at stage 1 within 5 days	13	40	29	5	0	2	12
	% Complaints Meeting timescale	100%	100%	100%	83%	N/A	2	100%
	Ave working days taken stage 1	1	1	1	3	N/A		1.6
2 Stage Investigation	No of complaints – closed at stage 2 within 20 days	1	0	0	2	0	0	1
	% Complaints Meeting timescale	100%	0	0	67%	N/A	0	100%
	Ave working days taken stage 2	10	0	0	13.3	N/A	0	14
2 Stage Escalated Investigation	No of complaints – closed at esc stage 2 within 20 days	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	% Complaints Meeting timescale	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	0	0
	Ave working days taken esc stage 2	0	0	0	0	N/A	0	0

*One complaint has been included within stage one resolution as time extension was granted allowing 10 days for the complaint to be resolved and reported within timescales.

** Two complaints have been included in the stage two resolutions as time extension was granted allowing 25 days for the complaint to be resolved and reported within timescale

*** Inverclyde Leisure data only available from the period 2017/18

****Riverside Inverclyde data only available from the period 2018/19

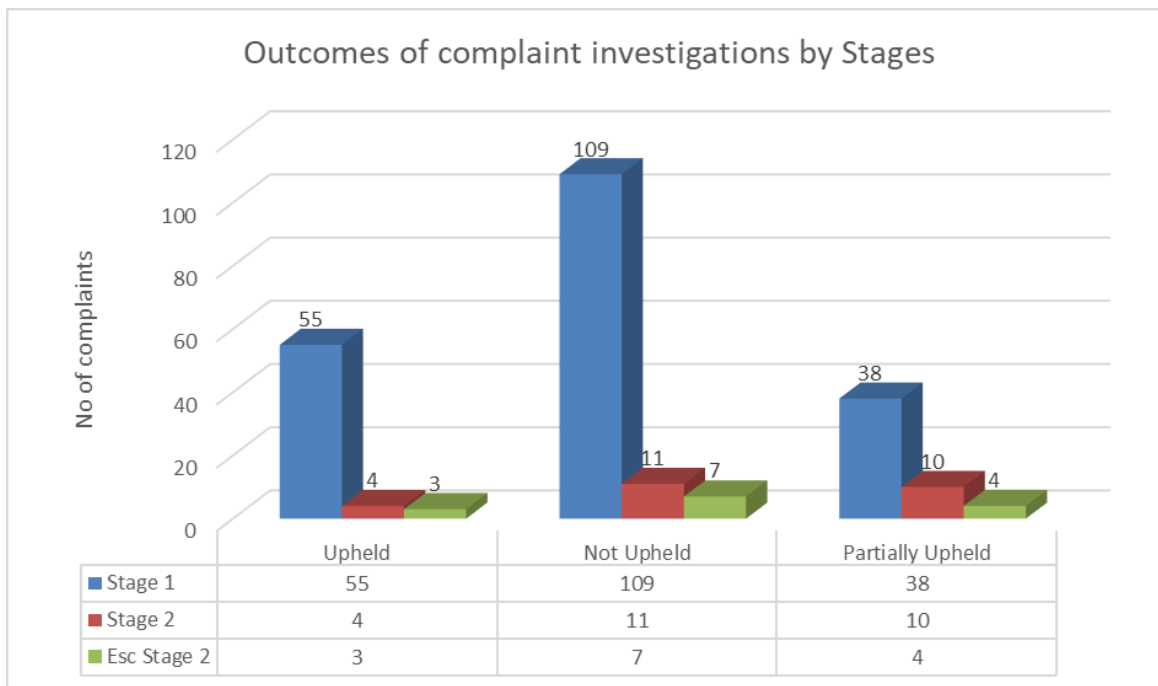
4.26 Services must maintain focus on ensuring complaints received are recorded and that the complaint handling procedure is followed by officers, in particular with regards to timescales to resolve complaints at stage one and stage two. When comparing in isolation Inverclyde Council's complaint handling performance the Council have noted timescales to resolve complaints have increase in all stages which impacts the average days reported. Most of the delays have been affected during periods when Services were under considerable pressure responding to the COVID19 pandemic.

4.27 The average days to resolve complaints in all stages of the complaint procedure has increased in HSCP's complaints. Most of the delays have been affected during periods when Services were under considerable pressure responding to the COVID19 pandemic and by management resources available which will be an area for focus in the coming year.

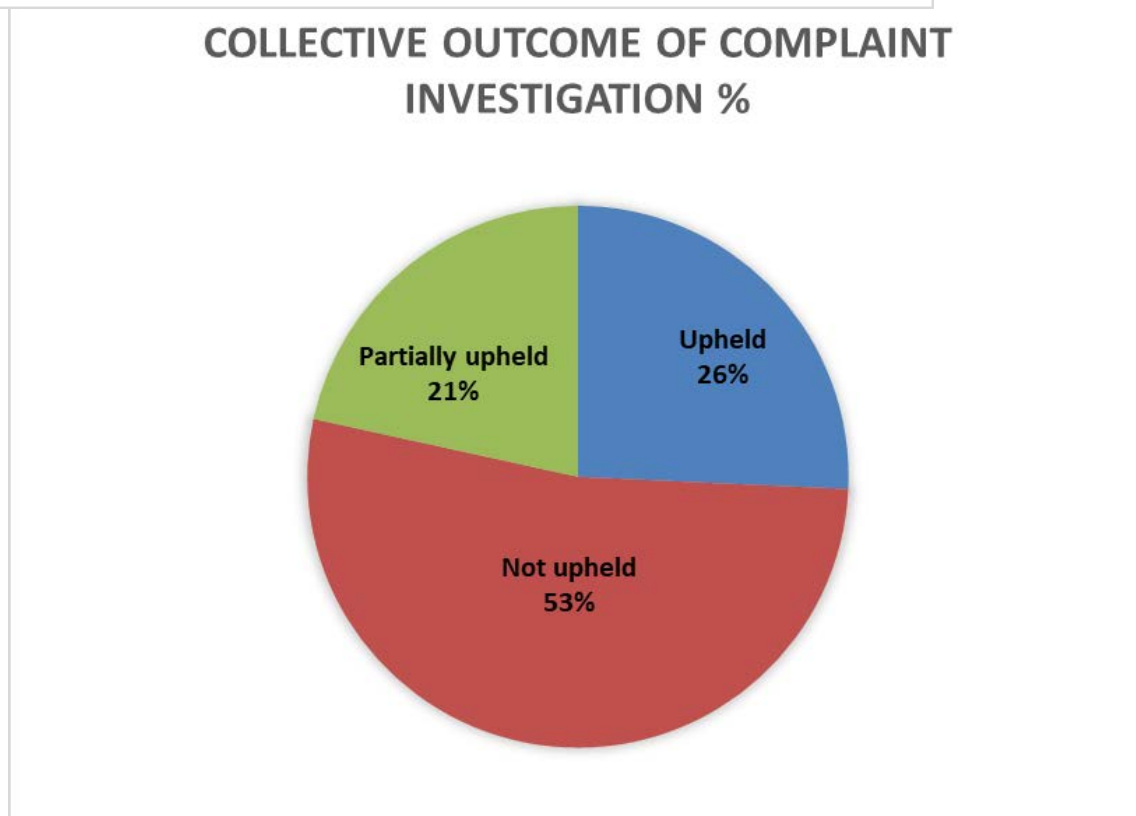
4.28 Complaint Outcomes

4.29 The graph below outlines the outcomes of investigations of all collective complaints following complaint investigation at each of the 3 stages a complaint may be taken through.

4.30



as

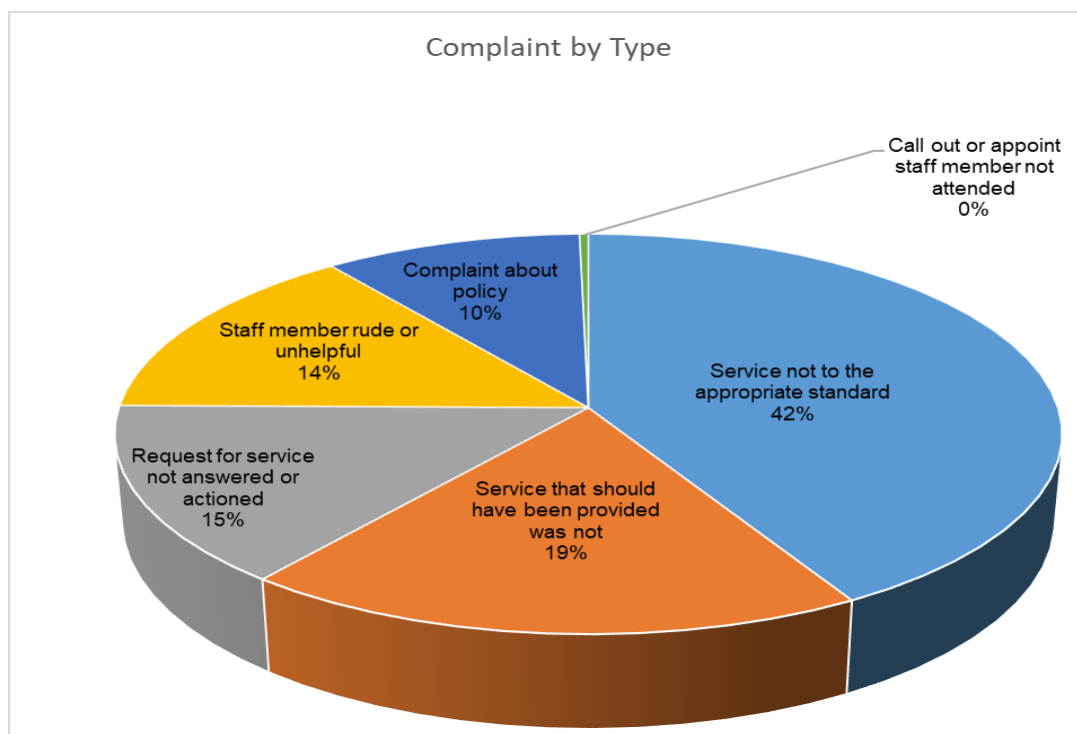


4.31 Complaint themes

4.32 Of the complaints which were upheld or partially upheld, they were examined for key themes. In some situations the complexity of some complaints were multi faceted although the true root cause was used to define this into a single theme. In doing this the Council have only included the complaints from Inverclyde Council only, as this level of information is recorded in the complaint handling system.

4.33 The top complaint theme was for these complaints was where the service delivered was below the expected standards at 42% of all complaints received. This has

increased when comparing the complaint themes against the following year.



4.34 Learning from complaints

4.35 Inverclyde Council is committed to reflecting on occasions when the Council may not get it right in order to highlight opportunities for improvement. As such, where a complaint has been upheld or partially upheld, the service determines what actions are required to support improvement and prevent a repeat of circumstances that led to the complaint.

4.36 Service improvement recording commenced in November 2016 for Inverclyde Council only. Service improvement tracking requires to be developed for the HSCP as this is not currently in place although work is underway to implement this. Inverclyde Leisure implemented their service improvement tracking in January 2020 which is reflective in the improvements seen in the last quarter of the year.

4.37 The Council publishes the outcomes of complaint investigations and a selection of actions taken as a result of complaints on a quarterly basis.

4.38 It is important that a robust stage two investigation is completed by the investigating officer and that the complainant is provided with all of the relevant information before they are referred to the SPSO to investigate their complaint. This will ensure timely review of cases that are referred to the Ombudsman. Whilst Inverclyde Council have not had any complaints this year where this has been an issue with our approach it is an important reminder. It is equally important, to ensure that when the SPSO requests information at the investigation stage of the complaint that they are provided with full information at this point rather than waiting to provide this at the provisional decision stage.

4.39 The SPSO has also highlighted that it is important that the Council responds to provisional decisions, if only to say the Council have no comments to add, as it can

make a difference to the outcome and wording of the SPSO’s final decision. In circumstances where a complaint is upheld, the SPSO has reminded the Council to confirm to the SPSO whether it has agreed with its final recommendations as this will be reflected in their final decision. Not only does it demonstrate positive outcomes and approaches, it also helps the Council to display its commitment to learning from complaints.

5.00 Scottish Public Services Ombudsman Right of Review

5.1 Following a stage two investigation and written response, if a complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of the complaint investigation they have the right to review that decision with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO).

5.2 The table below outlines the number complaints received at the SPSO for Inverclyde Council and HSCP

	Complaints received at the SPSO				
	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18	2017/16
Inverclyde Council	7	15	15	15	21
HSCP	3	11	6		

5.3 The Ombudsman investigated 7 complaints for Inverclyde Council during the period 2020/21.

5.4 There were 4 complaints reviewed at the Early Resolution stage of which two were identified as not being suitable for review as they had been presented prematurely and 2 were identified as being good examples of complaint handling and not taken further.

5.5 There were 3 complaints were assessed at the Advice stage which did not progress through to a review.

5.6 Overall this reflects a reduction of 8 complaints across the 3 areas when comparing to last years data. It should be noted that no cases were reviewed in the period where the complainant was dissatisfied with the Council’s complaint handling.

Stage	Outcome of Group	Inverclyde Council 2020//21
Advice	Discretion – alternative action proposed	0
	Organisation not in jurisdiction	0
	Premature	0
	Subject matter not in jurisdiction	0
	Unable to proceed	3
	Total	3
Early Resolution	Cause and impact test not met (s 5 (3))	0
	Discretion – alternative route used or available	0
	Discretion – Insufficient benefit would be	0

	achieved by investigation	
	Discretion – alternative action proposed	0
	Discretion - Good complaint handling	2
	Discretion – referred back	0
	Member of the public test not met (s 5 (6))	0
	Premature	2
	Right of appeal to court/tribunal/Scottish ministers (s 7 (8))	0
	Subject matter not in jurisdiction	0
	Time limit (s 10)	0
	Unable to proceed	0
	Total	4
Investigation	Fully upheld	0
	Some Upheld	0
	Not Upheld	0
	Resolved	0
	Total	0
Total Complaints		7

5.7 The Ombudsman reviewed three complaints for the HSCP. One complaint was fully upheld, one complaint was not upheld. One complaint was reviewed at the Early Resolution stage and did not progress to a review, this case was identified as an example of good complaint handling too. Overall this reflects a reduction of 8 complaints across the 3 areas when comparing to last years data

5.8 Please note the undernoted table and that comparable data is not available as this is skewed due to the increased granularity of assessment that the SPSO have implemented.

Stage	Outcome of Group	HSCP 2020/21
Advice	Not duly Made or withdrawn	0
	Premature	0
	Total	0
Early Resolution	Not duly made or withdrawn	0
	Out of jurisdiction (discretionary)	0
	Out of jurisdiction (non-	0

	discretionary)	
	Premature	0
	Proportionality	0
	Resolved	0
	Discretion – good complaint handling	1
	Discretion – alternative route used or available	0
	Discretion – Insufficient benefit would be achieved by investigation	0
	Discretion – alternative action proposed	0
	Discretion – referred back	0
	Subject matter not in jurisdiction	0
	Time limit (s 10)	0
	Unable to proceed	0
	Total	1
Investigation	Fully upheld	1
	Some upheld	0
	Not upheld	1
	Not duly made or withdrawn	0
	Total	2
Total Complaints		3

6.00 Developments

6.1 The Council implemented the Model Complaint Handling Procedure (MCHP) on 1 April 2021. Given the range of changes that the new MCHP introduced monitoring will be undertaken to embed the procedure of the course of the coming months.

6.2 The changes that are being introduced are to the core text of the revised (MCHP), which is consistent across local authorities and all sectors except NHS. Outlined below is the over of the key changes that the MCHP will introduce

6.2.1 Structure and presentation

- The core text is standardised across all local authorities and sectors (with additional sector-specific text and examples in each version)
- It is presented in five parts to make relevant information easier to find
- The HSCP and Local Authority MCHPs have been combined

6.2.2 Resolving complaints

- The Council may **resolve** a complaint by agreeing any action to be taken with the complainant, without making a decision on whether to uphold / not uphold.
- Therefore there must be a clear record of the resolution agreed and signposting to next stage of the procedure if this approach is adopted.
- The complaint system has been updated to capture the new “Resolved” outcome to enable reporting on this outcome to be captured.

6.2.3 Agreeing complaint and outcome sought at stage 2

- The Council must agree the points of complaint and outcome sought with the complainant at the start of stage 2 (investigation)
- Where the points of complaint and outcome sought are clear, this can be done by setting these out in the complaint acknowledgement letter.

6.2.4 **Time limit for making complaints**

- The six-month timeframe to make a complaint also now applies where the customer wishes to escalate to Stage 2 because they are unhappy with the Stage 1 response.

6.2.5 **Supporting staff**

- The Council must share relevant parts of the complaint and response with any staff members complained about
- At stage 2, staff members must be given information about the complaint process and support available, and kept updated on any timeframe extensions

6.2.6 **Equality and accessibility**

- The Council should set out what kind of actions staff may take to support equal access to the complaints process (including for vulnerable groups)
- Organisations will customise this section to reflect local context

6.2.7 **Complaints on social media (and other digital platforms)**

- As a minimum, organisations must respond to complaints on the organisation's own social media channels by signposting to the complaint process and support available
- The Council will customise this section to reflect local policy and approach

6.2.8 **Contact from MPs/MSPs**

- The Council can set out details of local procedures but must ensure they comply with relevant legislation
- Where a complaint is brought by an MP/MSP, the organisation must handle it in line with the CHP and ensure they do not operate a two-tier system

6.2.9 **Performance indicators**

- The Council will report and publish on complaint statistics in line with performance indicators published by the SPSO
- These are currently being developed, and will include core performance indicators applicable to all sectors (similar to those released in the draft MCHP)
- Additional performance indicators to support benchmarking is being developed in consultation with Local Authority complaint handling networks (LACHN)

6.3 Whilst the SPSO has recommended that all Local Authorities should be completing customer satisfaction surveys regularly to gain true insight on how well they are handling complaints. The standardised approach has been delayed this year to allow the development of a straight through process within the complaint handling system to support capturing this feedback in an efficient manner.

6.4 The complaint handling procedure was implemented into the Council's Educational

Establishments on 21 October 2019. In preparation for this, training was undertaken for staff members investigating complaints and for the support staff who will be responsible for the administration of the complaints using the complaint handling procedure. The Education establishments will be handling the stage one complaints and any stage two complaint investigations will continue to be handled by Education Headquarters.

7.0 Positive Comments

- 7.1 Throughout the year the Council also receives positive comments and compliments from Service User's across Services. These recognise where employees have gone above and beyond the normal standard of service delivery and these compliments are shared with the service teams concerned.

8.0 Conclusion

- 8.1 Inverclyde Council is committed to investigating, learning from and taking action as a result of individual complaints where it is found that standards have fallen below the level expected and where services could be improved. By listening to the views of service users who make a complaint, the Council can improve our services.