

ITEM No ...3.....

REPORT TO: SCRUTINY AND AUDIT COMMITTEE - 3 DECEMBER 2025

REPORT ON: BI-ANNUAL REPORT ON COMPLAINTS - 2025/26

REPORT BY: CHIEF EXECUTIVE

REPORT NO: 331 - 2025

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The Bi-Annual Report on Complaints for 2025/26, contained in Appendix 1, presents an update on complaints handling performance between 1 April and 30 September 2025, showing trends in complaints performance over the recent years. The report shows how the Council continues to learn from complaints and presents results from the satisfactions survey issues to complainants on a quarterly basis.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that Committee notes:

- a) the key performance indicators on complaints closed between 1 April 2025 and 30 September 2025, with trends from previous periods (Section 3 of the attached report);
- b) a summary of complaints about the Council received by and determined by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman during 2024/25 (Section 5);
- c) examples of the range and volume of transactions the Council has with customers and citizens as a context for the number of complaints (Section 7);
- d) examples of how complaints have been used to improve services (Section 8);
- e) examples of compliments received about Council services (Section 9); and
- f) results of the satisfaction survey sent to people who made complaints (Section 10).

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the agreement of this report.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The Model Complaints Handling Procedure for Local Authorities requires that regular reports are produced for Elected Members. This report covers complaints closed between 1 April and 30 September 2025. Additionally, it includes information about the complaints about Dundee City Council, which were dealt with by the Ombudsman in 2024/25.
- 4.2 The report further presents the benchmarking information from all Scottish Councils, based on analysis by the Scottish Local Authorities Complaint Handlers Network – data relates to 2024/25 financial year, as these statistics are not yet available at the time when Dundee City Council's annual report on complaints is presented to the Committee in June of each year. The benchmarking data reported is provisional, pending submission of 2024/25 annual performance indicators from four councils.

5. OVERVIEW OF PERFORMANCE

5.1 Detailed information is included in the report contained Appendix 1, but key information to highlight is summarised below:

- a) The Council closed 472 complaints in the first half of 2025/26, compared to 388 in the same period in 2024/25.
- b) 57.5% of Stage 1 complaints were completed within the 5-day target – a decrease from 67.4% in the same period in 2024/25.
- c) The average number of days taken to close Stage 1 complaints was 8.2, compared to 5.8, in the first half of 2024/25.
- d) 43% of Stage 2 complaints were completed within the 20-day target, lower than in the first half of 2024/25 (49.2%).
- e) The average number of days to handle Stage 2 complaints increased to 34.6, from 28.4 in the same period of 2024/25.
- f) The top reason for complaints in the first six months of the year was “Failure to provide a service” - 30.3%. The second most common reason for complaints was “Treatment by or attitude of a member of staff” - 18.3%.

5.2 Benchmarking information from other Scottish Councils, based on analysis by the Scottish Local Authorities Complaint Handlers Network, shows that in 2024/25 Dundee City Council performed better at handling Stage 1 complaints than the Family Group average, or the Scottish average score. This includes: the average number of days to close Stage 1 complaints and the percentage of complaint cases closed within the 5-day target. The average days taken to close Stage 2 complaints indicator was better than the Family Group average score, but worse than the Scottish average. Percentage of Stage 2 complaints closed on time indicator was worse than the Family Group, or the Scottish average scores.

5.3 Any complaint performance issues reflected in this report will continue to be discussed by the Council Leadership Team, the Complaints Review Group and within individual services. The “Learning from Complaints” section demonstrates the Council’s commitment to continually improve the service that is provided to the citizens of Dundee, as well as the processes to prevent the same issues recurring.

5.4 Bespoke Handling Complaints training is being offered to services tailored to their operational remit. The training sessions aim to improve the quality of complaints handling, increase customer satisfaction from the Council’s complaints process, and contribute to the improvement in complaints performance. An “Introduction to Complaints” e-learning module is being developed and will be made available to all frontline employees. A paper version of the module will be made available for those employees who are not office-based. The module aims to increase awareness of the Council’s complaints process across the organisation, enable employees to more accurately identify which interactions with the Council are complaints, and which ones are enquiries or service requests, and raise awareness of the importance of dealing with complaints promptly.

5.5 Senior Policy Officer will engage with other authorities in Family Group Four to identify better performing councils within the family group. It will provide an opportunity to learn from best practice in complaint handling.

6. STATISTICS FROM THE SCOTTISH PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN

6.1 35 complaints were received by the Ombudsman about Dundee City Council in 2024/25, compared to 31 in 2023/24. This represented 2.20% of complaints received by the Ombudsman about all local authorities in the year 2024/25. Out of the 35 complaints, “Housing” was the most frequent subject complained about (9 cases), followed by “Road or transport” (5 cases).

6.2 The Ombudsman determined 32 cases in 2024/25 with outcomes recorded as:

- Advice given: 15
- Early Resolution: 17
- Investigation: 0

7. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 This report has been subject to the Pre-IIA Screening Tool and does not make any recommendations for change to strategy, policy, procedures, services, or funding and so has not been subject to an Integrated Impact Assessment. An appropriate senior manager has reviewed and agreed with this assessment.

7.2 The complaints recording database includes a feature that asks those dealing with complaints to note whether any complaints relate to an equalities issue - age, disability, gender, LGBT, race or religion. During the first half of 2025/26, there were five such complaints recorded, three relating to disability, one case in relation to sex and one in relation to race/nationality. All five cases will be drawn to the attention of the lead officer with responsibility for equality and diversity, and any issues identified will be taken up with the services concerned.

8. CONSULTATIONS

8.1 The Council Leadership Team were consulted in the preparation of this report.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

9.1 None.

GREGORY COLGAN
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

DATE: 11 NOVEMBER 2025

ANDREA CALDER
HEAD OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S SERVICE

Dundee City Council
Bi-annual Report on Complaints
2025-26

Report by: Chief Executive's Service

1. INTRODUCTION

Dundee City Council values complaints and uses the learning from complaints to improve the services it delivers to its customers.

Things can go wrong in any organisation which provides services, especially one that has many varied interactions with the public.

Complaints are treated as a valuable source of customer feedback, and the Council strives to deal with them well, carrying out thorough, fair and impartial investigations and making evidence-based decisions.

If something has gone wrong, complaints provide an opportunity for things to be put right and can also help the Council learn lessons and improve the processes to prevent the same problems from reoccurring.

2. DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL COMPLAINTS PROCESS

The Council uses the Scottish Local Authorities Model Complaints Handling Procedure which defines a complaint as:

“an expression of dissatisfaction about the Council’s action or lack of action or about the standard of service provided by or on its behalf”

The Council aims to resolve complaints quickly, and as close the point of service delivery as possible. The procedure has two stages:

- At Stage 1 of the complaints process, the target is to respond within 5 working days, unless there are exceptional circumstances. this can be extended to up to 10 working days if necessary.
- Stage 2 complaints process is used if the complaint is particularly serious or complex and can't be dealt with within 10 days, or if the person remains dissatisfied after they've had a Stage 1 response.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they have the option to have their case reviewed by the independent Scottish Public Services Ombudsman.

3. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman places a duty on Local Authorities to record and report on key data related to the complaints handling process. Dundee City Council performance data on handling complaints during the first half of 2025/26 is presented below, with regards to all complaints “closed” during the period between 1 April 2025 and 30 September 2025.

3.1 Total number of complaints closed

The Council closed 472 complaints between April and September 2025. This represents a 22% increase on the same period last year, when 388 complaints cases were closed. There were 379 Stage 1 (Frontline) complaints and 93 Stage 2 (Investigation) complaints.

Total number of complaints closed in the first half of the last 7 years

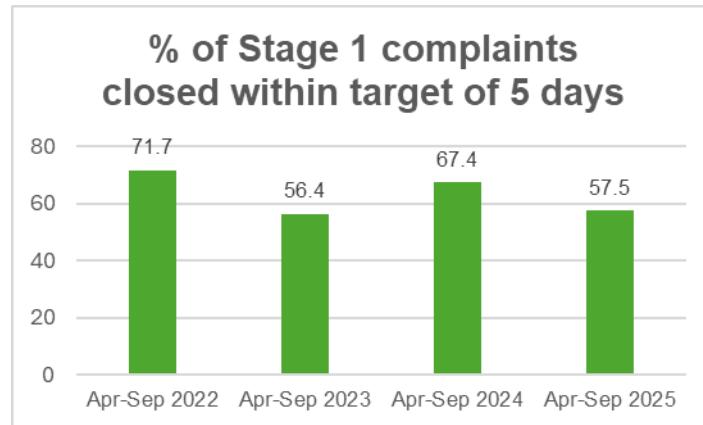


The chart below shows the number of complaints closed by service in the first half of the last seven years.

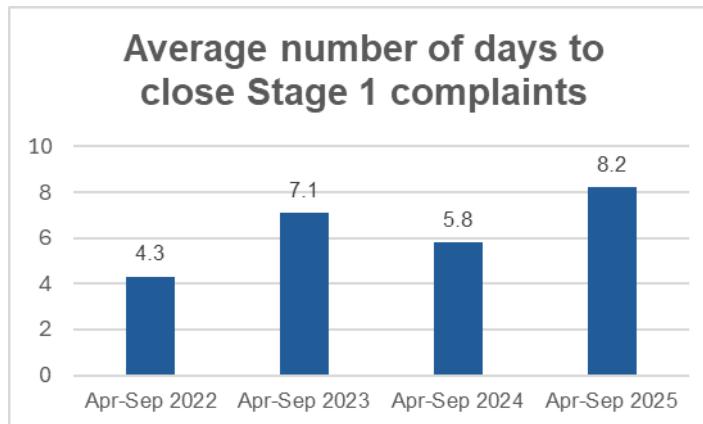
In January 2025, Neighbourhood Services: Communities, Safety and Protection service was merged with the Housing and Construction, under new name of Neighbourhood Services: Housing, Construction and Communities. Data in the chart below for "Housing and Construction" from 2025/26 onwards will also include complaints relating to Communities.

Service	Apr-Sep 2019	Apr-Sep 2020	Apr-Sep 2021	Apr-Sep 2022	Apr-Sep 2023	Apr-Sep 2024	Apr-Sep 2025
Corporate Services	35	36	44	47	53	35	41
Children and Families							
- Education	47	7	29	29	37	43	44
- Children's Services	22	19	22	29	25	16	29
- Criminal Justice	5	0	2	3	1	5	1
Neighbourhood Services							
- Housing and Construction	78	49	82	69	150	116	153
- Environment	58	61	107	138	148	107	114
- Communities, Safety and Protection	7	12	17	20	34	13	n/a
City Development	19	15	25	27	59	43	52
Chief Executive's	2	1	1	0	1	0	1
Dundee Health and Social Care Partnership: Social Work	23	10	29	18	16	10	37
TOTAL	296	210	358	380	524	388	472

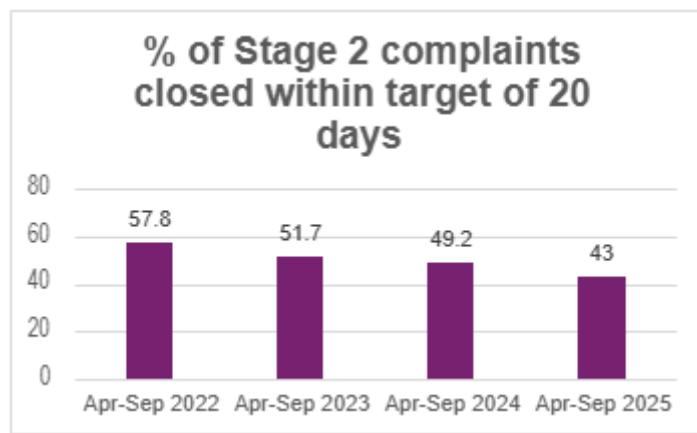
3.2 Percentage of Stage 1 complaints closed within the target of 5 working days



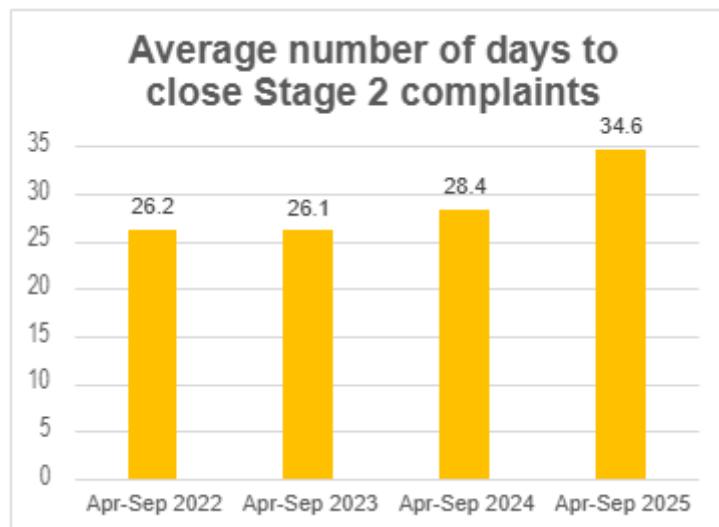
3.3 Average number of days taken to close Stage 1 complaints



3.4 Percentage of Stage 2 complaints closed within the target of 20 working days

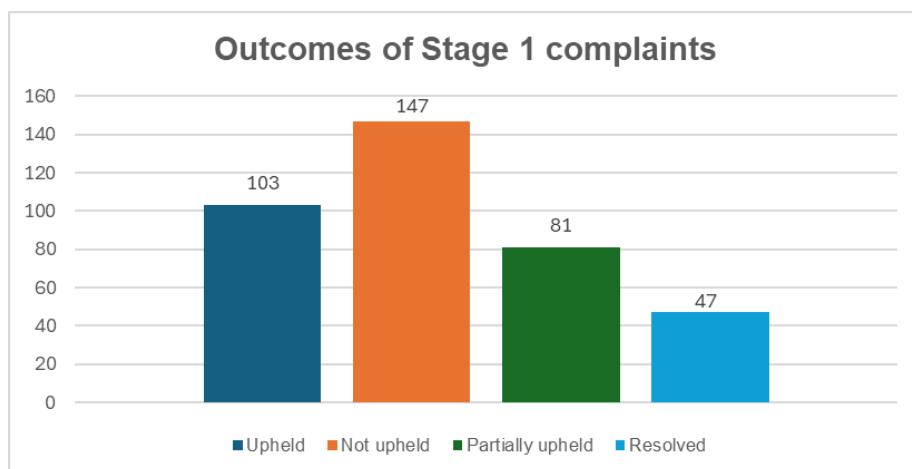


3.5 Average number of days taken to close Stage 2 complaints

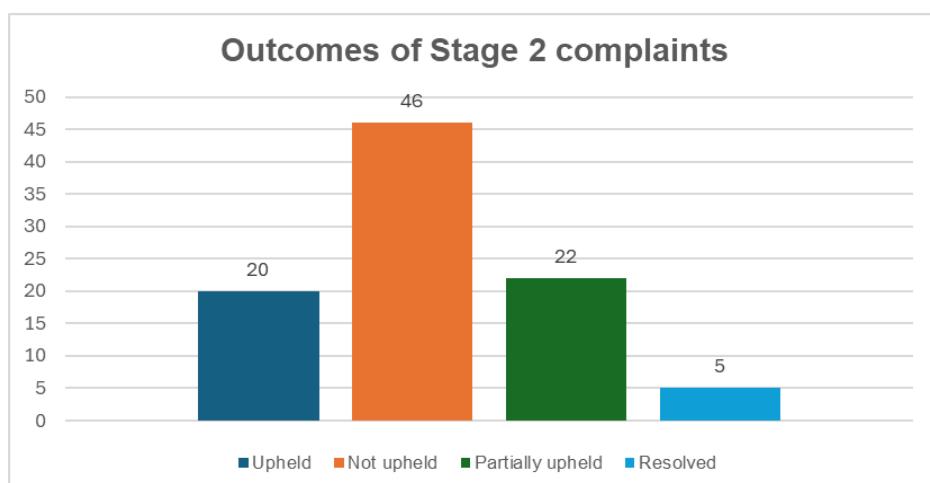


3.6 Outcomes of Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints closed in the period April - September 2025

There were a total of 379 Stage 1 complaints closed. 184 were either upheld or partially upheld.



There were 93 Stage 2 complaints, with 42 upheld or partially upheld.



4. NATURE OF COMPLAINTS

The chart below shows the nature of complaints closed in the first half of the year over the last seven years.

	Apr-Sep 2019	Apr-Sep 2020	Apr-Sep 2021	Apr-Sep 2022	Apr-Sep 2023	Apr-Sep 2024	Apr-Sep 2025
Delay in responding to enquiries and requests	16.30%	11.20%	18.20%	19.70%	23.10%	23.00%	17.20%
Failure to meet our service standards	17.80%	13.10%	19.00%	15.40%	14.40%	14.00%	13.90%
Treatment by or attitude of a member of staff	24.80%	23.80%	21.20%	19.50%	20.10%	21.00%	18.30%
Failure to provide a service	25.60%	27.10%	25.20%	36.70%	25.00%	26.00%	30.30%
Dissatisfaction with our policy	11.20%	15.90%	12.60%	6.20%	11.90%	11.00%	15.30%
Failure to follow the proper administrative process	4.30%	8.90%	3.80%	2.60%	5.50%	5.00%	5.00%

5. STATISTICS FROM THE SCOTTISH PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR 2024/25

35 complaints were received by the Ombudsman about Dundee City Council in 2024/25, compared to 31 in 2023/24, representing a 2.2% increase. This rate of increase in number of cases received by the SPSO is similar compared to previous year.

The list of subjects of complaints received is summarised in the table below:

Subject of complaint:	No of cases:
Education	2
Environmental Health & Cleansing	2
Finance	2
Housing	9
Planning	4
Roads & Transport	5
Social Work	4
Subject Unknown (or outside of Jurisdiction)	6
Other	1
Total	35

The Ombudsman determined a total of 32 Dundee City Council's cases in 2024/25. None of the cases were taken forward for a full investigation.

Outcome of cases determined:	No of cases:
Advice Given	15
Early Resolution	17
Investigation	0
Total	32

6. NATIONAL COMPLAINTS BENCHMARKING FOR 2024/25

Complaints performance indicators are collected annually from all 32 local authorities in Scotland and annual benchmarking data is made available for all Family Groups for comparison purposes. The annual benchmarking data is not available at the time of the Council's annual complaints performance report for 2024/25, therefore the figures are reported in the subsequent bi-annual complaints report to show member of the public, officers and Elected Members how Dundee City Council performs against the Family Group average and the Scottish average. The benchmarking data presented in the chart below is provisional as four councils have yet to submit their annual performance indicators.

Dundee is in Family Group 4. Figures in brackets indicate statistical information for the year 2023/24 for comparison.

6.1 Key Performance Indicators 2024/25 (and 2023/24 for comparison)

Indicator	Dundee	Family Group 4	Scottish Average
% of Stage 1 closed within target	66.8% (55.7%)	65.2% (59.1%)	59% (64.6%)
% of Stage 2 closed within target	49.3% (46.8%)	56% (56.9%)	68.4% (62.5%)
Stage 1 average days	5.9 (7.7)	10.9 (14.2)	8.4 (9.4)
Stage 2 average days	24.9 (27.8)	26.5 (24.9)	21.4 (22.9)

6.2 Outcomes of complaints in 2024/25 (and 2023/24 for comparison)

Stage 1 complaints:

Outcome	Dundee	Family Group 4	Scottish Average
Upheld	27.2% (24.9%)	36% (29.8%)	40% (31.1%)
Not Upheld	38.5% (48.1%)	30% (33.0%)	30.1% (36.1%)
Partially Upheld	21.2% (12.8%)	20.9% (23.1%)	15.3% (17.1%)
Resolved	13.1% (14.2%)	13.2% (14.1%)	13.9% (15.7%)

Stage 2 complaints:

Outcome	Dundee	Family Group 4	Scottish Average
Upheld	21.5% (21.9%)	15.6% (20.1%)	23.2% (18.2%)
Not Upheld	49.5% (58.2%)	46.5% (46.1%)	47.9% (52.6%)
Partially Upheld	23.6% (15.6%)	25% (26.9%)	22.1% (25.3%)
Resolved	5.4% (4.3%)	12.9% (7.0%)	6.5% (3.9%)

7. EXAMPLES OF ANNUAL CUSTOMER TRANSACTIONS WITH THE COUNCIL



8. LEARNING FROM COMPLAINTS

Officers closing off a complaint as upheld or partially upheld are asked to identify planned service improvements, designed to prevent similar issues recurring. These often involve speaking to individual employees, arranging training for teams on correct use of procedures and customer care standards, or close supervision for a period of time.

In addition to these actions following complaints, below are some examples of how complaints were used to identify wider process/service improvements during the first half of 2025/26:

A customer complained that...	We listened, we acted...
A customer was issued a Penalty Charge Notice. After appealing the notice, he was dissatisfied with the response he received. The response contained subjective comments and was viewed to be lacking objectivity.	The complaint led to a review and improvement in quality of responses issued to members of the public who appeal their PCNs.
There were items of rubbish spilled from the bins when they were getting emptied by a waste disposal crew.	All waste collection crews have been informed of their duties going forward and of the policy of Cleaning up Spillages.
Black wheelie bins in a residential area were overflowing due to tenants of HMO properties disposing of large amounts of rubbish to containers which were not sufficient to cope with this amount of waste.	The Private Sector Services Unit will be writing to all managers of HMO licensed properties to remind them to ensure their tenants are aware how to correctly present waste at their property. A request to the council's IT team will be made to ensure the collections calendar link is easy to find when viewing on a mobile device.
A claimant who made an application for a Crisis Grant was refused a payment as the Decision Maker had decided that the evidence of income and expenditure provided looked like it had been altered. The claimant was not given an explanation for this decision from the Decision Maker.	Team manager will review what evidence can be used to make a decision on entitlement to a Scottish Welfare Fund Payment, and improvements will be made to how decisions are communicated, to ensure clear answer and resolution to customers.
A customer asked for grass outside their property to be cut and received no response despite sending follow-up enquiries and requests.	The Environment team are currently developing communication guidance for all staff which will include timeous responses to enquiries, service requests and complaints from the public.
A tenant received sub-standard quality of service on multiple occasions from advisers when she called to check her position on the housing waiting list.	The team leader for the service will review the calls and develop a training plan to improve standard for handling calls. A quality assurance checklist will be developed so the supervisor can regularly review the calls being carried out by the whole team, ensuring that applicants receive the correct information and treatment when calling.
Due to a communication breakdown between a Social Worker and a Support Worker, a service user was not given the opportunity to have his advocacy worker to accompany him to a meeting, which made him feel unprepared and unsupported.	Social Work teams will ensure that service users have the opportunity for advocacy support at meetings wherever this is practically possible.
A direct debit was not set up correctly for the rent of a commercial property, leading to multiple invoices being issued and reminder letters sent to the customer.	The finance team will work with IT to review the billing system to ensure that direct debits and direct debit instalments can be automated in the future.
There was a delay in responding to a request to fell an overgrown tree with roots protruding out of the ground causing a tripping hazard.	The environment service will train two new tree surgeons and will put additional resources during the winter period to ensure requests can be actioned more timeously.

9. COMPLIMENTS

I just want to thank the female adviser who processed my housing repair request and has a lovely telephone manner. I also want to thank the joiner who renewed the silicone in my kitchen. Both were extremely pleasant and an asset to Dundee City Council.

Compliment about house exteriors in Pentland/Lochee: "My friend and I walk a lot in the west end of Dundee and decided yesterday to explore the Pentland Avenue area which led us to the houses opposite the Friary and then over to Saggar Street area and up to 'The Glens' and Byron Street. (...) What a beautiful job DCC has made of hundreds of homes in these areas and quite clearly many of the residents feel the same (...) because they not only keep their garden/outside areas tidy but also make a real feature of their gardens with plants in pots as well as in the soil. Congratulations to you, DCC. It must be so very difficult in this economic climate to keep up with repairs, let alone make improvements. As a Council Tax payer and citizen I applaud your efforts.

Dear Person in charge of parks, gardens etc.,
Every year, and every season within every year, you and your staff work wonders all around Dundee with landscaping and planting.

I live in the West End and so am particularly aware of Victoria Park, Balgay Park, Magdalen Green, the gardens opposite the University, Riverside Drive, the area opposite Bridgeview Restaurant, Slessor Gardens, and indeed all sorts of nooks and crannies and expanses in the city.
I can hardly imagine the difficulties you face, given the very tough budget restraints, and yet you and your teams continue to work wonders. Please be good enough to let all your teams know that their efforts are truly appreciated by myself and countless citizens who mean to let you know but don't quite get round to it. With real appreciation and gratitude, I applaud your work.

I'd just like to take this chance to say 'Thank You' to you to everyone involved with the 'Fencing' Project in Graham Court.

A customer called to express her thanks to one of our operatives. She had taken her food waste in due to the wind, but the operative checked it and got it emptied. She was very impressed and wanted to express her thanks - she says people are quick to criticise so they should also be quick to praise!

I would like to commend the staff at the registrars for their compassion and empathy when dealing with me as I registered my fathers death last week.

Every interaction I have had has been better than I could have expected. The staff I spoke to were patient and understanding and very compassionate. This makes a huge difference to the bereaved and I can only give the highest compliments to them. Not much else to be said but thank you so much for making the whole experience as smooth and pleasant as is possible under the circumstances. Please pass this on to the appropriate manager so they know their team are doing a fantastic job.

I would like to give amazing feedback to the female adviser on the great help on bus pass and blue badge, very helpful.

Thank you to the teams and decision makers for promptly filling in potholes reported but more importantly for the decision to resurface Drumgeith road from Whitfield drive to Douglas road roundabout and Tom Johnstone avenue both covered by numerous potholes and the former made worse by the construction work for the new greenfield school campus site (former st saviours school site).

Community Payback Referral: Excellent service from the project manager, very helpful and excellent communication. If this could be replicated in all service that would be great.

I would like to compliment one of your litter pickers. This guy has a large area to cover around Strathmore Avenue, Johnston Avenue, And around the Glens area and no doubt more streets. He is so methodical, conscientious and such a nice guy who always says hi. I always make a point to thank him and I know my other neighbours think the same. He has the daunting task to keep the area

around St Johns High School very clean and it's easy to see what days he may be off that area for whatever reason.
A customer got in touch wanting to send a "thank you" to the male employee who went over and above cutting her grass. She appreciates everything the gardeners do and wanted to pass this on.
I would like to say "Thank you" to the speedy response to my fault request, which was about safety to children, what a great job completed. Thank you very much.
We would like to thank the Council for having introduced the 20mph zone in the area of the Law Terraces. While there are some drivers that still choose to race along Albany Terrace, many now appear to be more respectful of the new limits.

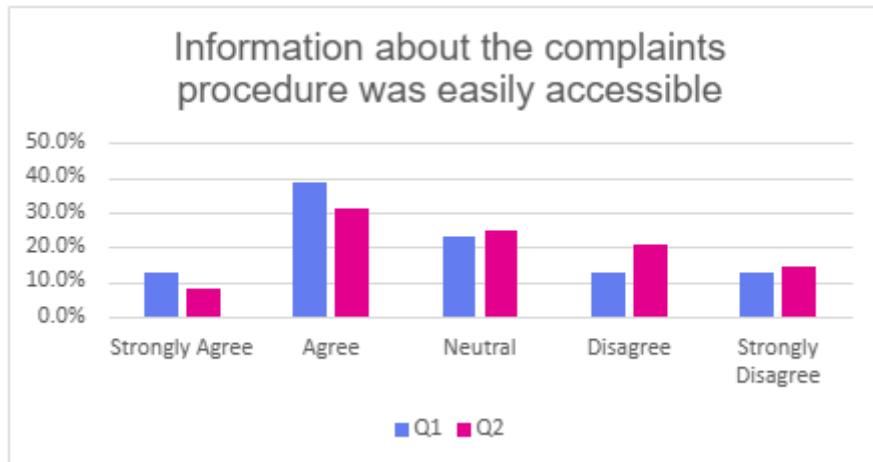
10. SATISFACTION SURVEY

The model Complaints Handling Procedure requires the Council to report on a measure of customer satisfaction with its complaints process. To do this, we issue quarterly surveys to people who have made complaints. Since the survey sample consists entirely of people who have made a complaint, many of which are not upheld, it may not be surprising that satisfaction levels are not particularly high.

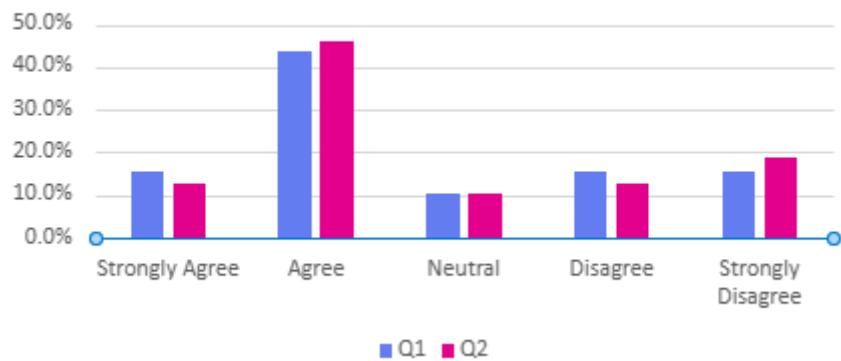
In the first quarter of the year the survey was issued to 196 customers who had their complaint dealt with between April and June 2025. A total of 39 responses were submitted. Subsequently, 169 surveys were issued to complainants who had their case closed between July and September 2025, with 48 responses received.

Out of 365 surveys sent to customers who had their complaint dealt with during the first six months of 2025/26 total of 87 responses were submitted, a return rate of 23.8%. Caution must be exercised due to the small sample who return the survey and the fact that those who remain dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint may be more motivated to do so.

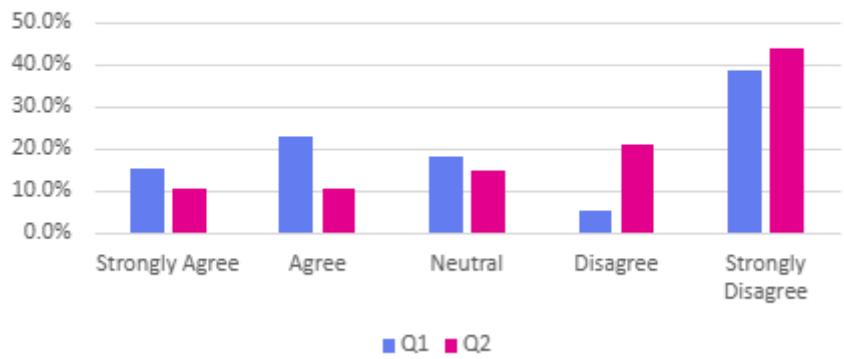
Question 1: Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statements below:



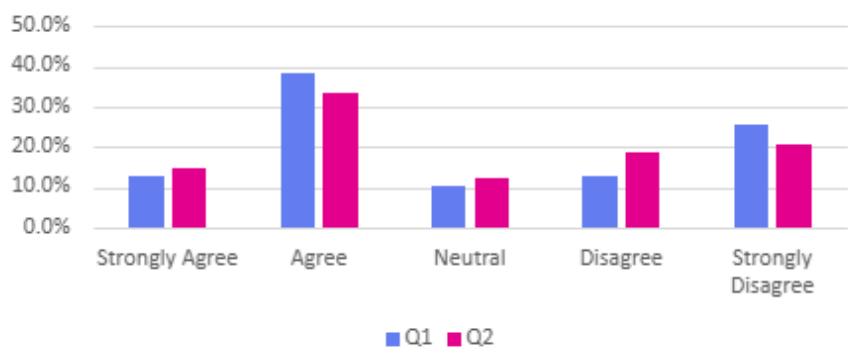
I found it easy to make my complaint



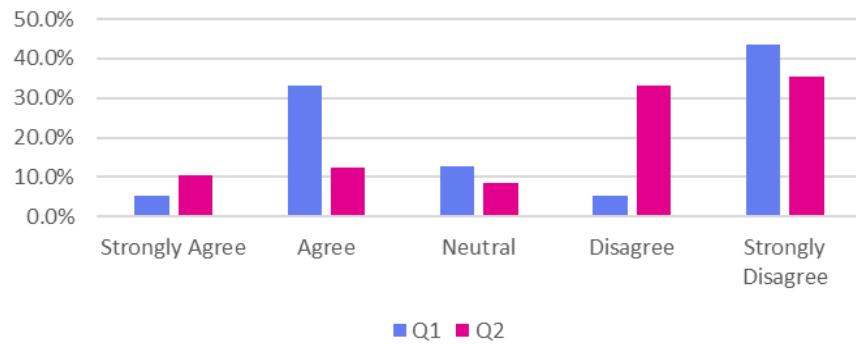
I was happy that the Investigating Officer fully understood my complaint



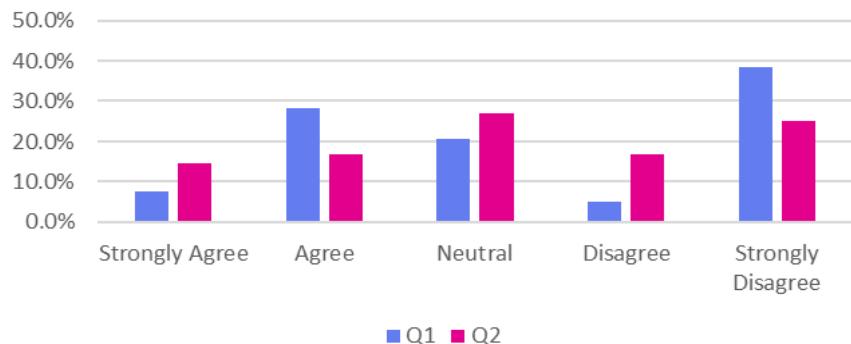
I was given the opportunity to fully explain my complaint



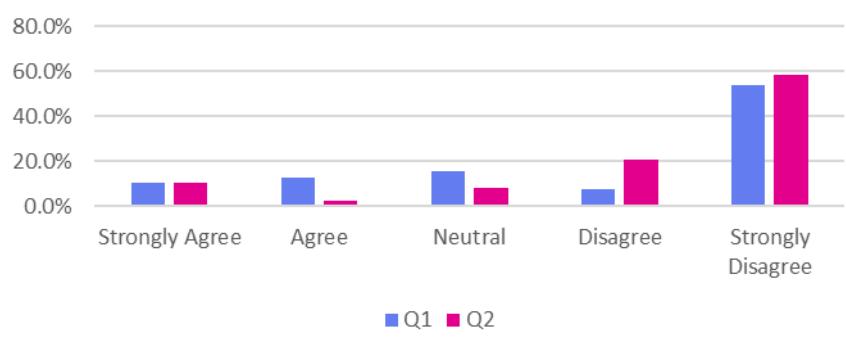
The points of my complaint were identified and responded to

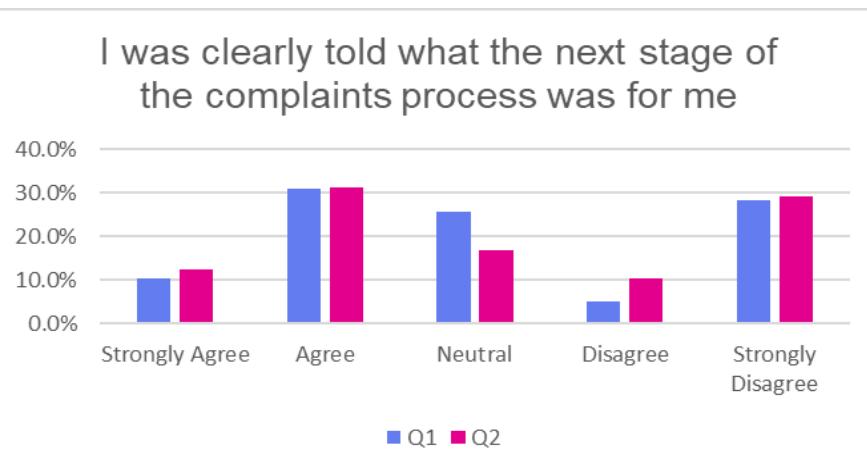


The response to my complaint was easy to understand

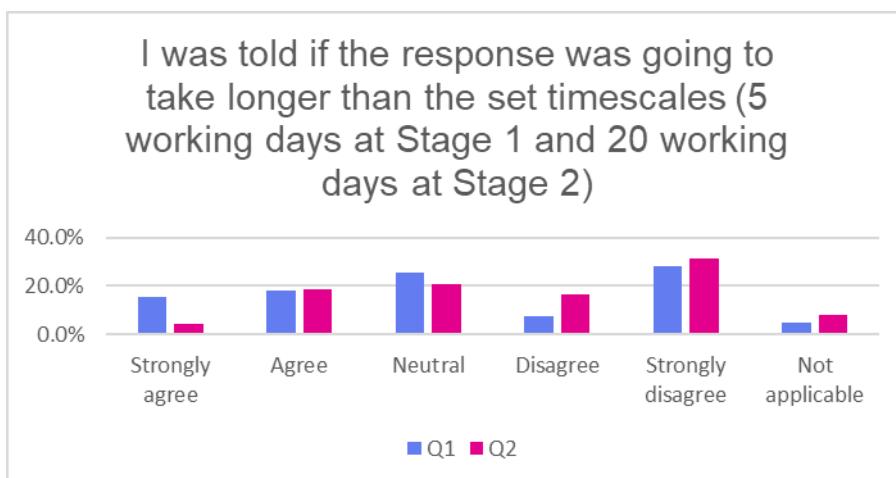


Overall I was satisfied with the handling of my complaint

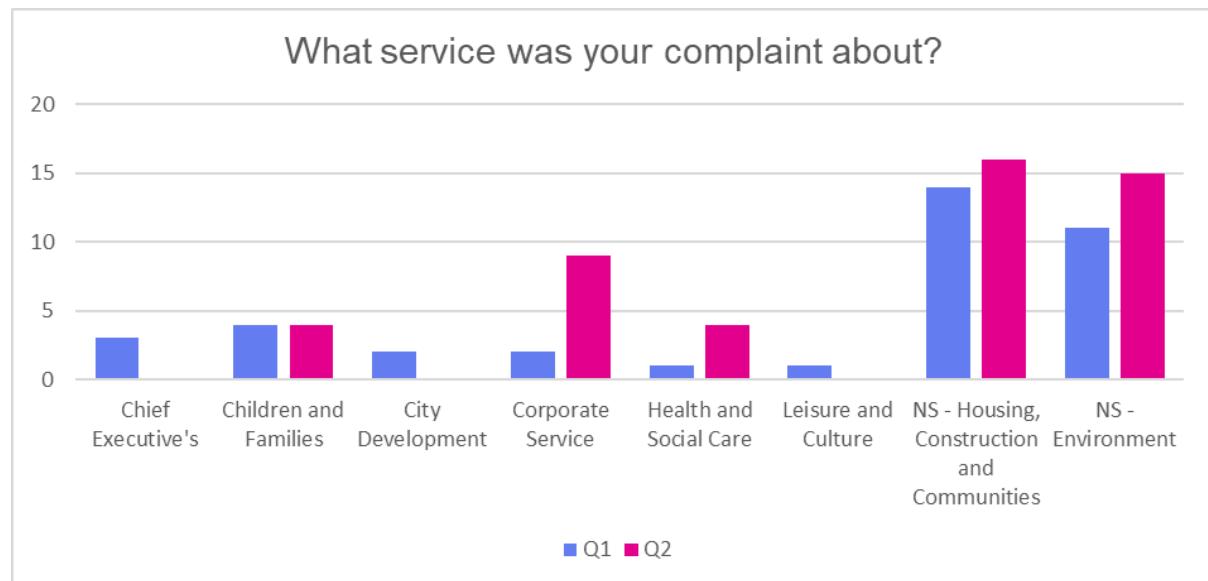




Question 2: I was told if the response was going to take longer than the set timescales (5 working days at Stage 1 and 20 working days at Stage 2)



Questions 3: What service was your complaint about?



Question 4: Overall, how satisfied, or dissatisfied are you with the outcome of your complaint?

