Item 3

4th November 2026

Glasgow City Council

Operational Performance and Delivery Scrutiny Committee

Report by Director of Communication and Corporate Governance

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COMPLAINTS HANDLING PERFORMANCE 2025-26

Purpose of Report:

To advise elected members of the council family's performance in complaints handling for the year beginning April 1, 2025, apart from Social Work complaints, which are covered in a separate report to this committee.

Recommendations:

The Operational Performance and Delivery Scrutiny Committee is asked to note the content of this report.

Ward No(s):	Citywide: ✓
Local member(s) advised: Yes ☐ No ☐	consulted: Yes ☐ No ☐

1. Executive Summary

a. This report covers the Glasgow family of organisations' complaints handling performance for the period from April 1, 2025. Since 2013 all Scottish councils have been required to monitor and report their performance on handling complaints under their Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP) against a suite of high-level performance indicators to meet the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) statutory requirements.

b. All core GCC service departments and ALEOs use the model Complaints Handling Procedure, introduced in the Glasgow family of organisations in June 2013. This consists of three stages: frontline resolution (stage 1); investigation stage (stage 2) and external review (stage 3), where a referral is made to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO), either by the complainant or the authority.

c. Compliance with the model CHP is a statutory requirement. The relevant legislation is contained in the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman Act 2002.

d. There are several different outcomes to formal complaints: upheld; partially upheld; not upheld; withdrawn, transferred to another process and resolved. Most complaints received by the Glasgow family continue to be upheld or partially upheld, either at Stage 1 or 2.

e. Complaints can be dealt with either at the frontline resolution stage, or the investigation stage. Most complaints are dealt with at the frontline stage.

f. Frontline stage resolution is generally applied where the complaint is reasonably straightforward and involves a one-off or limited-service failure. The Service Level Agreement for a frontline complaint resolution is five working days.

g. Staff are encouraged to try to resolve a customer complaint at the time it is made. Training is provided to assist staff in customer-facing roles, who may take a customer complaint, via courses on GOLD. The frontline course of GOLD was updated in July 2026 to reflect the new processes around Child Friendly Complaints.

h. Where a complaint is upheld in whole or part, a suitable apology can be made to the customer and actions taken, wherever possible, to address their concerns and/or improve service provision.

i. Where complaints identify issues of persistent service failure, these should be addressed by managers in the relevant Service. Analysis of complaints data should be carried out regularly by Service senior managers and embedded in change and improvement processes.

j. Investigation stage complaints are more complex and can generally be categorised as maladministration, or persistent service failure. Complaints handlers can immediately move a complaint received to the investigation stage where they consider it will not be possible to investigate or resolve within five working days (due to its complexity). Customers who have had their complaint dealt with at the frontline stage are offered the option to have it considered at stage 2, if they are dissatisfied with the frontline response. Complaints considered at stage 2 (after a referral from stage 1) should be investigated by more senior staff not connected to the initial complaint to ensure objectivity. The SLA for investigation stage is 20 working days and will always be concluded with a formal, written response to the complainant, advising of the outcome and signposting the complainant to the SPSO. At that point the council's investigation is concluded and further correspondence with the customer is not necessary.

k. Extensions to the above timescales for responses may be granted – for example, where the case has a degree of complexity or seriousness that does not allow for a response within SLA, or where staff absence will impact on response times. We always try to agree extensions with the customer. Requests by complainants to move a complaint immediately to stage 2 are at the discretion of the council. This is to help avoid relatively trivial matters being considered at Stage 2 and to give the relevant Service the opportunity to respond at Stage 1.

l. At the conclusion of stage 2, customers are referred to the SPSO, should they remain unhappy. The SPSO may decide to investigate the complaint and this is considered the third, and final, stage of the complaint's journey. Once a complaint has exhausted the council's CHP, dialogue with the complainant should cease pending the SPSO investigation to avoid prejudicing the outcome. Where the SPSO decides on a complaint, it cannot be investigated again by the council.

m. Complaints can be made in a variety of ways: in person, by telephone, using a paper form or online using a bespoke website complaints form. Making a complaint online has advantages both for the customer and the council: for the customer it means the complaint is expressed in their own words and can be entered on a 24/7 basis and for the council it saves time processing the complaint. While complaints made via social media channels are noted by the digital teams, customers are always signposted to the online complaints procedure, should they wish their complaint to be progressed formally. This process is embedded in the CHP. Complaints made on social media are not recorded in council systems due to the difficulties of establishing complainants' identities and tracking such complaints.

n. There is a considerable onus on a complaints handler to recognise at which stage the complaint should be handled. Some complaints are categorised as being fit for stage 1 when they should immediately be moved to stage 2 as it is apparent a resolution/response cannot be

provided within the stage 1 SLA due to the complexities of the case. This has an adverse effect on the overall SLA response rate at stage 1.

o. At the present time, it is not generally possible to quantify the amount of time spent by officers on dealing with complaints. Some complaints are straightforward and will involve little resource to resolve, while others will take much longer to resolve and potentially involve a larger group of officers. A small number of complainants can take up a disproportionate amount of officer resource, potentially to the disadvantage of the broader customer base. Where complainants persistently refuse to accept the council's explanation or decision on a matter, this may be managed via its Unacceptable Actions Policy (UAP) which aims to effectively manage the contact of vexatious customers, or those whose actions we consider unacceptable. Customers placed under some form of UAP restriction will always be given at least one point of contact within the council for the period of the restriction.

p. Responsibility for complaints handling is operationally managed by the corporate Customer Care Team (within CBS) for the core council and by complaints handlers/managers within the specific ALEOs. Strategic responsibility for complaints reporting, compliance and governance resides with the Chief Executive's Department.

q. Complaints were recorded, tracked and managed in an IT system called Lagan up to and including January 20, 2026. This system was then replaced by an integrated complaints recording solution called Granicus.

2. **The general trends and issues in 2025 – 26 for complaints handling can be summarised as follows:**

    a. The overall number of complaints received has increased.

    b. There was a small improvement in performance in terms of meeting timescales for responses at stage 1. The average time to resolve a Stage 1 complaint during 2025 – 2026 was 16 days, compared to 20 days in the previous reporting period. However, this remains well above the national target of five working days.

    c. Performance at Stage 2 is 57 working days on average for complaints to be closed. This is well above the national performance target of 20 days. However, there were special circumstances affecting this figure as outlined below.

    d. Complaints at Stage 2 relating to proposed changes to School Library Services represented an unprecedented volume and format of submissions for Glasgow Life, involving a petition and associated complaints from approximately 475 pupils and staff across Lourdes and Holyrood Secondary Schools. The complaints arose following Glasgow City Council's approved budget reduction and subsequent review of School Library Services, which led to proposals affecting librarian provision across secondary schools. Due to the unusual nature of the submissions, limited contact information, and the timing of receipt immediately before the school summer holidays, Glasgow Life sought advice from the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) on two occasions. SPSO confirmed that the petition and associated submissions should be managed through the Child-Friendly Complaints process. Glasgow Life subsequently worked closely with Education Services to coordinate responses, facilitate pupil engagement meetings, and ensure all complainants had an opportunity to be heard. Most complaints were received in the summer of 2025 which also coincided with the school holiday period. Following a programme of complaint handling, correspondence, and on-site meetings with pupils, all outstanding complaints were concluded and closed by February 2026.

    e. Excluding these specific complaints, the average time to close Stage 2 complaints was 16 days, which is within SLA.

    f. Complaints performance is reported to Service/ALEO senior management teams on a regular basis. Cases investigated by the SPSO are brought to the attention of senior officials in the relevant service and to the Chief Executive.

3. Complaints statistical data 2025 - 26

This period has seen an increase in the number of complaints received about services provided by the Glasgow family of organisations.

Complaints received

Period	Total complaints received	Stage 1 (frontline) Complaints	Stage 2 (investigation) Complaints	Change from previous year
2025 – 26	10963	10305	658	+1488
2024 - 25	9475	9158	317	+1728
2023 - 24	7747	7385	362	+1840
2022 - 23	5854	5621	233	-899
2021 - 22	6753	6517	236	+665
2020 - 21	6097	5929	168	-3753
2019 - 20	9850	9437	413	+570
2018 - 19	9280	8840	479	-1808
2017 - 18	11088	10057	1,031	-2044
2016 - 17	13092	11737	1,355	-4220
2015 - 16	17312	15764	1,544	+3662
2014 - 15	13650	12139	1,511	+3526
2013 - 14	10124*	9452	672	N/A

(Note: * only partial data available for year 2013 – 14 due to introduction of new Complaints Handling Procedure during that period.

Outcomes of complaints closed at all stages	
Upheld complaints	41%
Partially upheld complaints	42%
Not Upheld complaints	17%

Average time taken to resolve complaints	Glasgow family	National performance target
Stage 1 (frontline)	16 days (20 days in 2024 – 25)	5 days
Stage 2 (investigation)	57 days (21 days in 2024 - 25)	20 days

4. **Complaints recorded against each Service or ALEO 2025 –26 and comparative figures for 2024 - 25.**

Stage 1

Organisation	2025/26	2024/25
Chief Executive	47	34
City Building	0	4
Education Services	312	337
Financial Services	1343	921
Glasgow Life	770	706
Neighbourhoods, Regeneration and Sustainability	7460	7156
City Property	2	1

Stage 2 - Direct to Stage 2

Organisation	2025/26	2024/25
Chief Executive	3	2
Education Services	159	116
Financial Services	23	27
Glasgow Life	278	12
Neighbourhoods, Regeneration and Sustainability	103	107

Stage 2 - Escalated from Stage 1

Organisation	2025/26	2024/25
Education Services	15	0
Financial Services	23	9
Glasgow Life	40	43
Neighbourhoods, Regeneration and Sustainability	15	1

- Any complaints escalated from Stage 1 to Stage 2 are only counted at the final stage of their journey to prevent them being counted at both Stage 1 and Stage 2.

5. **Systems update**

The Granicus system is now used for all ‘Contact Us’ processes, to receive, record and manage comments, compliments, complaints and for Glasgow Life enquiries.

6. Policy and Resource Implications

Resource Implications:

Financial:	There are no new financial implications arising from this report.
Legal:	This report raises no new legal issues.
Personnel:	There are no direct personnel implications arising from this report.
Procurement:	There are no procurement implications arising from this report.
Council Strategic Plan:	As a long-standing reporting requirement, this report does not relate to a specific commitment under the Council's Strategic Plan, however in general terms the function of complaints handling relates directly to 'Grand Challenge 4: Enable staff to deliver essential services in a sustainable, innovative and efficient way for our communities. In particular, the investigation of and learning from complaints relate directly to the following Missions: – Run an open, well governed council in partnership with all our communities – Enable staff to deliver a sustainable and innovative council structure that delivers value for money

Equality and Socio-Economic Impacts:

Does the proposal support the Council's Equality Outcomes 2025 - 29? Please specify.	There are no proposals in this report having any relevant potential equality impacts.
What are the potential equality impacts as a result of this report?	No significant impact
Please highlight if the policy/proposal will help address socio-	No significant impact

economic disadvantage.	

Climate Impacts:

Does the proposal support any Climate Plan actions? Please specify:	There are no proposals in this report having any relevant potential climate impacts.
What are the potential climate impacts as a result of this proposal?	No significant impact
Will the proposal contribute to Glasgow's net zero carbon target?	No significant impact

Privacy and Data Protection Impacts: Are there any potential data protection impacts as a result of this report Y/N	There are no proposals in this report that have any relevant privacy and data protection impacts.

7 Recommendations

The Operational Performance and Delivery Scrutiny Committee is asked to note the content of this report.