

Comments & Complaints

How to comment or complain about a Council service



“Feedback from our customers is essential if we are to really understand how well we are delivering our services. I see complaints as a valuable part of that feedback. We clearly want to get things right first time, and a formal complaint means we may have got something wrong. This does though give us the opportunity to better understand and learn how our customers experience dealing with the council. The council therefore welcomes complaints and actively listens to our customers, so we can learn from what you tell us to help improve our services.”

Chief Executive, Fife Council

Fife Council complaints procedure

Fife Council is committed to providing high-quality customer services.

We value complaints and use information from them to help us improve our services.

If something goes wrong or you are dissatisfied with our services, please tell us. This leaflet describes our complaints procedure and how to make a complaint. It also tells you about our service standards and what you can expect from us.

What is a complaint?

We regard a complaint as any expression of dissatisfaction about our action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by us or on our behalf.

What can I complain about?

You can complain about things like:

- delays in responding to your enquiries and requests
- failure to provide a service
- our standard of service
- council policy
- treatment by or attitude of a member of staff
- our failure to follow proper procedure.

Your complaint may involve more than one council service or be about someone working on our behalf.

What can't I complain about?

There are some things we can't deal with through our complaints handling procedure. These include:

- a routine first-time request for a service, for example a first-time request for a housing repair or action on anti social behaviour
- requests for compensation from the council
- things that are covered by a right of appeal.
Here are some examples:
 - If you have received a Penalty Charge Notice (PCN) for a parking offence and believe it has been issued incorrectly you have the right to appeal the PCN
 - If you are dissatisfied with the level of priority you have been given when applying for a house, you have the right to appeal against the decision.
 - If your planning application is refused, you will have a right to request either an appeal to Scottish Ministers or a review by the planning authority's Local Review Body. Which one depends on the circumstances of the application and the timescale for appeal or review will normally be explained in correspondence and the decision notice from the planning authority.
 - If you believe your house is incorrectly valued for council tax, you can appeal to the Assessor.

If other procedures or rights of appeal can help you resolve your concerns, we will give information and advice to help you.

Who can complain?

Anyone can make a complaint to us, including the representative of someone who is dissatisfied with our service. A representative will be required for young people under 12 years of age. Please also read the section in this leaflet 'Getting help to make your complaint'.

How do I complain?

You can complain in any of the following ways:

- Go online at www.fifedirect.org.uk/commentsandcomplaints
- phone our general enquiries line: **03451 55 00 00**
(8am-6pm Monday to Friday)
- BT Text Direct: **18001 01592 55 00 00**
- visit us at any Council office and speak to a member of staff
- fill in our comments and complaints form at the end of this leaflet and hand it in or post it to us, you don't need a stamp
- write to us at: Freepost RTBZ-BBJT-BBYC, Comments and Complaints, Fife Council, Fife House, Glenrothes, KY7 5LT
- if you are deaf and have registered for the Council's SMS text service, please send your complaint to the number given when you registered.

It is easier for us to resolve complaints if you make them quickly and directly to the service concerned. So please talk to a member of our staff at the service you are complaining about. Then they can try to resolve any problems on the spot.

When complaining, tell us:

- your full name and address
- as much as you can about the complaint
- what has gone wrong
- how you want us to resolve the matter.

How long do I have to make a complaint?

Normally, you must make your complaint within six months of:

- the event you want to complain about, or
- finding out that you have a reason to complain, but no longer than 12 months after the event itself.

In exceptional circumstances, we may be able to accept a complaint after the time limit. If you feel that the time limit should not apply to your complaint, please tell us why.

What happens when I have complained?

We will always tell you who is dealing with your complaint.

Our complaints procedure has two stages:

Stage one – frontline resolution

We aim to resolve complaints quickly and close to where we provided the service. This could mean an on-the-spot apology and explanation if something has clearly gone wrong, and immediate action to resolve the problem.

We will give you our decision at Stage 1 in five working days or less, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

If we can't resolve your complaint at this stage, we will explain why and tell you what you can do next. We might suggest that you take your complaint to Stage 2. You may choose to do this immediately or sometime after you get our initial decision.

Stage two – investigation

Stage 2 deals with two types of complaint: those that have not been resolved at Stage 1 and those that are complex and require detailed investigation.

When using Stage 2 we will:

- acknowledge receipt of your complaint within three working days
- discuss your complaint with you to understand why you remain dissatisfied and what outcome you are looking for
- give you a full response to the complaint as soon as possible and within 20 working days.

If our investigation will take longer than 20 working days, we will tell you. We will agree revised time limits with you and keep you updated on progress.

What if I'm still dissatisfied?

After we have fully investigated, if you are still dissatisfied with our decision or the way we dealt with your complaint, you can ask the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) to look at it. There is no further level of appeal within the Council.

The SPSO cannot normally look at:

- a complaint that has not completed our complaints procedure (so please make sure it has done so before contacting the SPSO)
- events that happened, or that you became aware of, more than a year ago
- a matter that has been or is being considered in court.

You can contact the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman:

In Person:

SPSO
Bridgeside House
99 McDonald Road
Edinburgh EH7 4NS

Freephone:

0800 377 7330

Online contact:

www.spso.org.uk/contact-us

Website:

www.spso.org.uk

By Post:

Freepost SPSO

Care complaints

If your complaint relates to a care service we provide, you can choose whether to complain to us or the Care Inspectorate. You can find out more about their complaints procedure, or make a complaint, by contacting them.

The Care Inspectorate has several offices around Scotland.

Please refer to: www.scswis.com
Telephone: **0345 600 9527**
Fax: **01382 207 289**
Email: enquiries@careinspectorate.com

Getting help to make your complaint

We understand that you may be unable, or reluctant, to make a complaint yourself. We accept complaints from the representative of a person who is dissatisfied with our service. We can take complaints from a friend, relative, or an advocate, if you have given them your consent to complain for you.

You can find out about advocates in your area by contacting the Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance.

Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance

Tel: **0131 556 6443** Fax: **0131 550 9818**
Website: www.siaa.org.uk

We are committed to making our service easy to use for all members of the community. In line with our statutory equalities duties, we will always ensure that reasonable adjustments are made to help customers access and use our services. If you have trouble putting your complaint in writing, or want this information in another language or format, such as large font or Braille please contact us on 03451 55 55 00.

Making a comment

As well as complaints, we are always interested in your comments on Council services, policies and procedures. Your comments can help us to:

- improve the quality of services we provide, and
- plan and improve services which better meet your needs.

We also like to know when things have gone well and you have received good customer service, we can then pass this on to the staff involved.

Our contact details

Please contact us by the following means:

Go online at www.fifedirect.org.uk

Phone our general enquiries line: **03451 55 00 00**
(8am-6pm Monday to Friday)

Visit us at any Council office and speak to a member of staff.

Information about Fife Council can be made available in large print, braille, audio CD/tape and Gaelic on request by calling **03451 55 55 00**

SMS Service for Deaf customers

please text (SMS) 07781 480 185

BT Text Direct:

18001 03451 550000

Language lines

خط هاتف اللغة العربية: 03451 55 55 77

বাংলায় আলাপ করার জন্য টেলিফোন লাইন: 03451 55 55 99

中文語言熱線電話: 03451 55 55 88

Polskojęzyczna linia telefoniczna: 03451 55 55 44

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Quick guide to our complaints procedure

Complaints procedure

You can make your complaint through the web or email, by phone or in writing / completing our comments and complaints leaflet.

We have a **two-stage complaints procedure**. We will always try to deal with your complaint quickly. But if it is clear that the matter will need a detailed investigation, we will tell you and keep you updated on our progress.

Stage 1: frontline resolution

We will always try to resolve your complaint as soon as possible, within **five working days** if we can.

If you are dissatisfied with our response, you can ask us to consider your complaint at Stage 2.

Stage 2: investigation

We will look at your complaint at this stage if you are dissatisfied with our response at Stage 1. We also look at some complaints immediately at this stage, if it is clear that they are complex or need detailed investigation.

We will acknowledge your complaint within **three working days**. We will give you our decision as soon as possible. This will be after no more than **20 working days** unless there is clearly a good reason for needing more time.

The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman

If, after receiving our final decision on your complaint, you remain dissatisfied with our decision or the way we have handled your complaint, you can ask the SPSO to consider it.

We will tell you how to do this when we send you our final decision.

Fife Council Comments & Complaints Form

PLEASE WRITE YOUR NAME & ADDRESS IN BLOCK CAPITALS

Title: Mr Mrs Miss Ms Dr other

Forename:

Surname:

Address:

Postcode:

Email:

Contact Tel:

My comment/complaint: (Please tick the relevant boxes and give as many details as possible, noting what action you would like us to take)

Comment **Complaint** **I would like a response**

Continue on a separate sheet if necessary

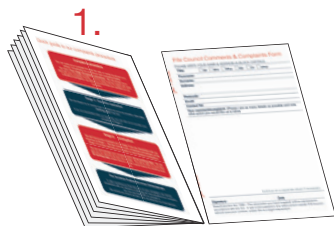
Signature

Date

The information you have supplied will be used by Fife Council to manage your comment or complaint. Further details on how your information is managed can be found at www.fifedirect.org.uk/privacy. For further information contact the Councils Data Protection Officer at dataprotection@fife.gov.uk.

To return your comments and complaints form either:

- Hand it into a member of staff or
- Post it to us following the instructions below.
 1. Separate the form from this booklet (see illustration).
 2. Fold along dotted line (see illustration).
 3. Tape edges closed (see illustration).



2. fold along dotted line

2



Freepost RTBZ-BBJT-BBYC
 Comments and Complaints
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