

## Statistics Tables – Explanatory Notes and Commentary

Attached are summary details of the enquiries and complaints about your Council that the SPSO has received and determined.

The first document attached shows (in Table 1) details of total contacts (by complaint subject) received for your Council for 2006-07 and 2007-08, along with the total of local authority complaints for 2007-08. Table 2 shows the outcomes of complaints determined by the SPSO in 2007-08.

Please note that, as the notes accompanying the tables explain, we changed our incoming logging procedures in April 2007, which has implications for comparing 2007-08 complaints data with previous years. The total numbers of contacts (enquiries plus complaints) received for each year are not affected and are therefore directly comparable. However, the figures shown as 'complaints only' in Table 1 are recorded on a different basis in each year and are, therefore, not directly comparable. Similarly, the change to our logging procedure has affected comparison of cases determined between 2006-07 and 2007-08 in Table 2.

The second document attached is a visual representation of the information from the right side of Table 1. You will see that in 2007-08 your Council was above the national average in terms of complaints about planning, and below the average for complaints about housing.

### Prematurity rates

A graph is also enclosed showing for each Council the percentage of complaints determined that we identified as premature, and the national average for all Councils. Your Council is number 5 on that graph. We consider a complaint to be premature when it reaches us before the complainant has been through the full complaints process of the organisation concerned. Please note that the graph does not reflect the number of premature complaints that we received about your Council, but shows how your Council, proportionally, compares against the average for all Scottish local authorities. The actual number of premature complaints for your Council was 20, which was 57% of the total number of complaints determined about the Council during the year, and proportionally a slight increase from the previous year.

Please note that no adjustments have been made in the graph to estimate the impact of housing stock transfer. It is evident, however, that there is a tendency for authorities that retain housing stock to fall higher within the prematurity graph than those that have undertaken stock transfer – this is to be expected given that housing complaints are usually the largest category of complaint and that there is a disproportionately high incidence of prematurity with housing complaints.

The SPSO considers it important that organisations have the chance to resolve complaints through their own procedures and we are actively working with service providers with the aim of reducing the number of complaints that reach us prematurely. You will be aware that our Valuing Complaints website (<http://www.valuingcomplaints.org.uk/>) contains information designed to assist with such issues, and that our Outreach Team ([ask@spsso.org.uk](mailto:ask@spsso.org.uk)) are pleased to answer enquiries about how we can support your Council.

### **Investigated Complaints and Recommendations**

We investigated three complaints about your Council in 2007-08, of which we upheld one and partially upheld two. We have attached a summary sheet showing these complaints, and summarising any recommendations made. As you are no doubt aware, where she thinks it appropriate, the Ombudsman may make recommendations even where a complaint is not upheld, if she believes that there are lessons that may be learned. You will also be aware that SPSO Complaints Investigators will be following up to find out what changes have been made as a result of recommendations.

For both of the partially upheld complaints, the recommendations made related partly to record keeping.

We closed one complaint about your Council during the investigation stage; this complaint was not reported on.

.....

We hope that you find this summary information useful. If you have any enquiries about the statistics provided, please contact Annie White, SPSO Casework Knowledge Manager, on 0131 240 8843 or by emailing [awhite@spsso.org.uk](mailto:awhite@spsso.org.uk). Fuller statistical reports are available on the SPSO website at: <http://www.spsso.org.uk/statistics/index.php>.

## Aberdeenshire Council

Table 1

Received by Subject	2006/7		2007/8		complaints as % of total	All Local Authority Complaints	complaints as % of total
	Total Contacts	Complaints Only	Total Contacts	Complaints Only			
Building Control	1	0	1	1	3%	20	2%
Consumer protection	0	0	0	0	0%	3	0%
Economic development	0	0	1	1	3%	4	0%
Education	2	1	6	4	10%	67	5%
Env Health & Cleansing	8	6	2	2	5%	69	5%
Finance	6	2	4	3	8%	123	9%
Fire & police boards	0	0	0	0	0%	1	0%
Housing	7	3	8	6	15%	394	30%
Land & Property	3	2	1	1	3%	31	2%
Legal & admin	1	0	3	3	8%	66	5%
National Park Authorities	0	0	0	0	0%	2	0%
Other	0	0	0	0	0%	6	0%
Personnel	2	1	1	1	3%	29	2%
Planning	19	8	15	11	28%	243	18%
Recreation & Leisure	1	1	0	0	0%	21	2%
Roads	1	0	3	3	8%	71	5%
Social Work	8	6	4	1	3%	148	11%
Valuation Joint Boards	0	0	1	1	3%	11	1%
Out of jurisdiction	1	0	0	0	0%	0	0%
Subject unknown	1	0	2	2	5%	20	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>40</b>		<b>1,329</b>	

Note about comparing 2007-08 complaint numbers to the previous year:

Please note that we made a change to our logging procedures in April 2007 which has implications for comparing 2007-08 complaints data with previous years. Of the total number of local authority complaints received in 2007-08, we estimate that approximately 33% could previously have been classed as enquiries. This does not affect the number of total contacts (enquiries + complaints) received.

For more information please see the full explanation at <http://www.spsa.org.uk/statistics>.

Table 2

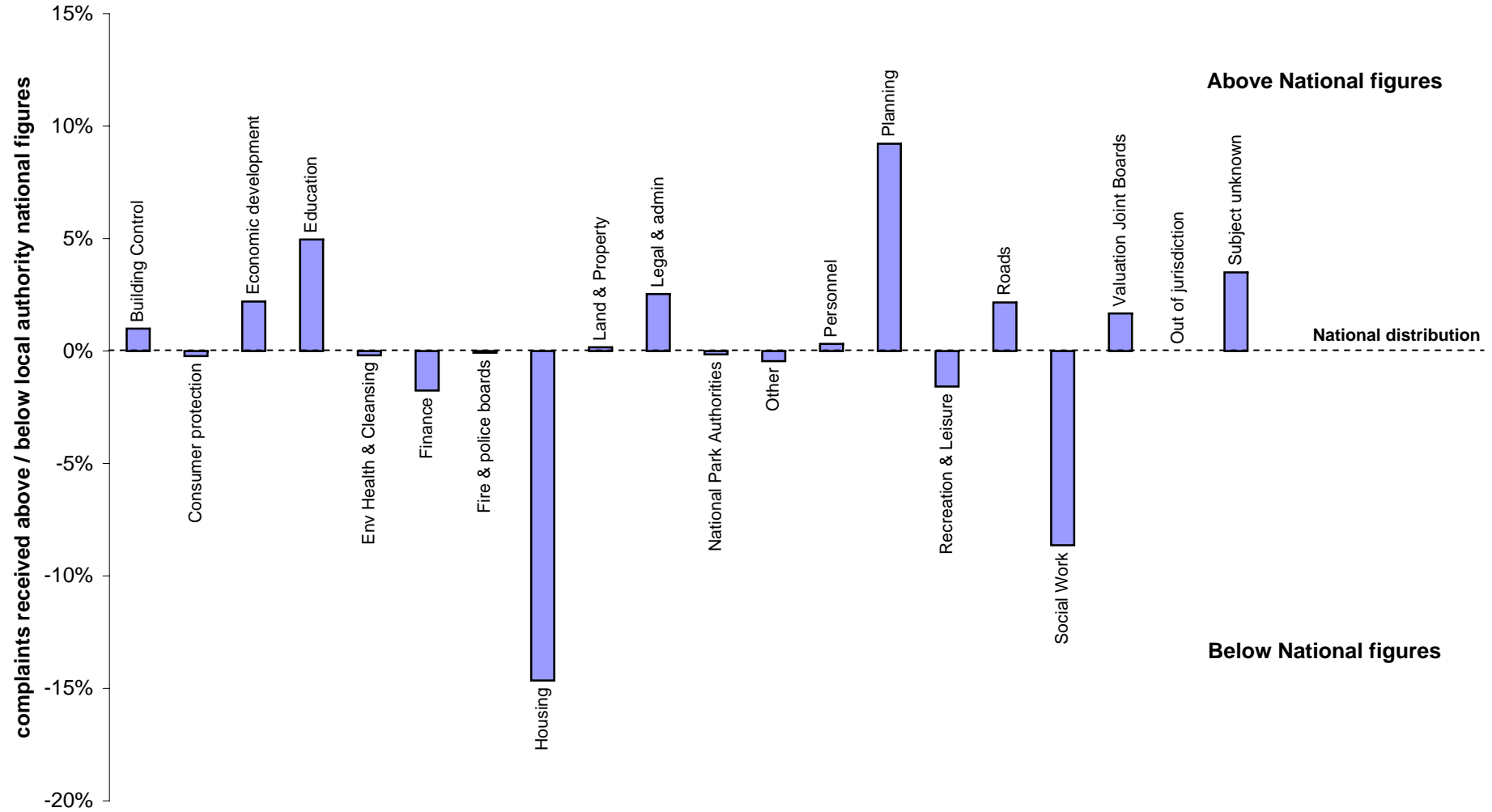
Complaints Determined by Outcome		2006/7	2007/8
Assessment	Premature	20	20
	Out of jurisdiction	7	2
	Discontinued or suspended before investigation	1	5
	Withdrawn / Failed to provide information before investigation	0	1
Examination	Determined after detailed consideration	6	3
Investigation	Report Issued - Not Upheld	2	0
	Report Issued - Partially Upheld	1	2
	Report Issued - Fully Upheld	1	1
	Discontinued during investigation	0	0
	Withdrawn / Failed to provide information during investigation	0	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>38</b>	<b>35</b>

Note about comparing 2007-08 complaint numbers to the previous year:

Please note that we made a change to our logging procedures in April 2007 which has implications for comparing 2007-08 complaints data with previous years. Of the total number of local authority complaints determined at the assessment stage in 2007-08, we estimate that approximately 39% could previously have been classed as enquiries. There has been no change to cases determined at examination or investigation stages.

For more information please see the full explanation at <http://www.spsa.org.uk/statistics>.

**Complaints received by subject in 2007/8: Aberdeenshire Council proportions compared to the distribution of all local authority complaints received**



## Aberdeenshire Council

	Case Ref	Summary	Finding	Recs	Recommendation(s)
23/05/07	200501045	the decision to reconsider the planning application led to unnecessary delay (upheld).	Upheld	YES	(i) apologise to the applicants (the Firm) for the delay in dealing with this application; (ii) following receipt of documented evidence of the costs necessarily incurred in pursuing this complaint, reimburse the Consultants' fees relating to this to the Firm; (iii) ensure all applications which may involve development plan departures are dealt with in line with PAN 41 unless there are demonstrable reasons why it would not be appropriate to do so; (iv) end their practice of considering applications subject to 'completion of departure proceedings'; and (v) provide her with a copy of the report of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee into their decentralisation arrangements. The Council have accepted the recommendations and will act on them accordingly.
19/12/07	200603594	(a) shortcoming in the serving of a Defective Buildings Notice (partially upheld); (b) failure to provide assistance in the repair of a listed building (not upheld); and (c) shortcoming in the handling of a formal complaint (upheld).	Partially upheld	YES	(i) review their current recording practices, in respect of keeping a note of discussions from visits; (ii) decide what action is required, in respect of the outstanding Defective Buildings Notice; and (iii) send an apology to the complainant in recognition of any difficulty he experienced as a result of the lack of clarity in their previous complaints procedure. The Council have accepted the recommendations and will act on them accordingly.
20/02/08	200601424	(a) the Council's changes in their grants award policy were unreasonable (upheld); and (b) there was undue delay in processing Mrs A's grant application (not upheld).	Partially upheld	YES	(i) ensure that, where significant changes to policy are being made, advice on the legal implications of those changes is appropriately taken and recorded; and (ii) provide Mr C and the Ombudsman with comments on their current policy on Housing Improvement Grants in the light of the applicable legislation. The Council have accepted the recommendations and will act on them accordingly.