

# Drop in number of complaints to West Lothian Council

**A milder winter has seen the number of complaints to West Lothian Council drop by almost 400 in the last three months of 2024.**

The council had more than 1,000 complaints lodged in the last three months of 2023. The bulk came from householders angry at missed bin collections as well as changes in opening hours at the county's recycling centres which were introduced in October that year.

This month's meeting of the council's Performance Committee heard that while waste operations continue to bring in the most complaints they have also seen the largest drop as the new opening hours and booking system have bedded down in the public perception.

The committee heard that the total number of complaints to the council between October and December last year was 839. This compared to 1,094 for the same time in 2023.

Operational Services and Housing, Customer and Building Services (HCBS) are the main complaint generators by service, accounting for 78.8% (661) of all recorded complaints in Quarter 3, of 2024/25.

Standards of service and council policy generate the biggest number of complaints and the biggest falls in recent figures.

Livingston south Councillor Maria MacAulay asked why figures had been so high in previous years.

Joe Murray, a Project and Systems Manager for the council, explained that bad weather had been a generator of many service complaints in missed bin collection.

He added: "In quarter three of this year the weather was particularly mild. Bins tend to be adversely affected with weather conditions in 2022/23 was possibly re-routing of collection which accounted for more complaints."

Other changes such as the introduction of brown bin charges last year also added to the number of complaints, Mr Murray told councillors.

The majority of Standard of Service complaints have been generated by Operational Services (302) and HCBS (125) which account for 79.9% of all recorded complaints in the category.

The equivalent quarter in 2023/24, Operational Services (353) and HCBS (149) had a combined total of 502 complaints categorised as Standard of Service.

Of the 302 Operational Services Standard of Service complaints, Waste Services received a total of 213 complaints. The majority of the complaints were linked to bin related issues.

A report to the committee added: "A total of 78 Policy related complaints [such as changes to recycling centre opening times] were received by the council. This was a decrease of 138 from the equivalent quarter in the previous year (216). Operational Services (36) and HCBS (24) account for 76.9% of all Policy complaints. Within Operational Services, Waste Services received 22 complaints which is a decrease of 131 when compared to the equivalent quarter in the previous year.

"These complaints are generally related to bin contamination and bin presentation issues where they are not emptied. The reduction in Policy complaints saw the largest fall linked to

Community Recycling Centres which reduced by 79.”

The report concluded: “Waste Services had a decrease in the level of complaint over this quarter when compared to Q2 2024/25 from 588 to 261. This was linked to a reduction in complaints relating to missed container collections.

“Complaints linked to the service changes to the CRC sites and the implementation of the brown bin charges peaked in Q1 2024/25 and have shown a quarter-by-quarter decrease.”

By Stuart Sommerville, Local Democracy Reporter