

Report

Report to:	Lanarkshire Valuation Joint Board
Date of Meeting:	7 June 2010
Report by:	Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer

Subject:	Monitoring of Complaints - 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ◆ Provide statistics and information on all complaints received into the Joint Board since a new monitoring system was introduced on 1 April 2008.

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Board is asked to approve the following recommendation(s):-

(1) that the report be noted.

3. Background

3.1. Following a review of the customer complaints process by the Joint Board's Management Team, a more streamlined approach was introduced to deal with customer complaints. This change was approved by members on 3 March 2008 and introduced from 1 April 2008. As part of this change, members will receive a report covering both qualitative and quantitative information on complaints received by the Joint Board on an annual basis. This is the second such annual report.

4. Current Position

4.1. The definition of a complaint adopted is 'an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, which alleges failure on the part of the Assessor, ERO or Joint Board to perform a function or provide a service'. This does not however extend to complaints about the rateable value or banding of a property or to the refusal to register an elector or grant a postal vote since in all of these areas there are rights of appeal to independent judicial bodies. The data being collected on complaints received by the Joint Board is being categorised by:

- ◆ 'Justified' (the complaint was justified and action was required as a result) and 'unjustified' (no action required except and apology and/or explanation).
- ◆ The reason for the complaint whether justified or not.
- ◆ Action taken as a result of justified complaints.
- ◆ Changes made or proposed to service delivery as a result of complaints received.
- ◆ Equal opportunities monitoring of complaints.

- 4.2. The other information being gathered includes response statistics in line with adopted standards for dealing with complaints and method of making a complaint.
- 4.3. The report also includes the area of the Board's services where the complaint was received.

5. Summary

- 5.1. A total of 23 complaints were received in the period 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010. 20 related to Council Tax and 3 to Electoral Registration. 5 were classified as justified and 18 as unjustified.
- 5.2. The breakdown of justified and unjustified complaints by service area is as follows:

Service	Total No	Justified	Unjustified
Council Tax	20	3	17
Non-Domestic Rating	0	0	0
Electoral Registration	3	2	1
Total	23	5	18

- 5.3. The Complaint Type reason for the justified complaints in this period was:

Failure to deliver service to standard/quality	3	60%
Delays in responding	1	20%
Employee Attitude (Negative)	0	0%
Dissatisfaction with LVJB policy/standards	0	0%
Misc. Complaint	1	20%
Total	5	100%

- 5.4. The reasons for unjustified complaints in this period are:

Appeals against Council Tax banding	11	61%
Issue of Postal Vote matter for RO and driven by statute	1	6%
Complained directly to SPSO on matters concerning Council Tax appeals	6	33%
Total	18	100%

- 5.5. Examples of citizen expectation not met where there was a failure to deliver the service to standard/quality. 2 were complaints received concerning the length of time to amend the council tax band following the sale of the property. 1 was the failure to issue a postal vote application following a telephone request.

In Council Tax, as a result of a media and internet campaign, many taxpayers have been led to believe that their house is in the wrong band. When a check is carried out and they are advised that the band is correct they are consequently disappointed.

5.6. Action taken as a result of justified complaints

Action taken	No.
Apology Issued	2
Policy Reviewed/Amended	1
Amended Guidance, Policy, Procedures	2

Some examples of action taken as a result of justified complaints are:

- ◆ Immediate Change to existing procedures.
- ◆ Apologised for the delay in dealing with council tax bandings.
- ◆ Apologised for the manner in which staff dealt with the individual.

5.7. Of the 23 complaints received in this period, 6 were made direct to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman and did not require a direct response to the citizen although we were informed of the complaint and the outcome by the Ombudsman. 1 was made direct to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman which required a direct response to the citizen. This was responded to within the target timescale 10 working days. Of the remaining 16, 12 (75%) were responded to within the target standard timescale of 10 working days. The remaining 4 (25%) were responded to outwith this timescale as the time required for the necessary investigation resulted in a full response being delayed.

5.8. The breakdown of method of customer contact is shown below with the most popular method for contact being by letter.

Letter	20
Compliment, comment & complaint card	1
Email direct to an officer	2

5.9. Of the 6 complaints which went direct to the Ombudsman 1 was lodged on behalf of constituents by a MSP. While the other 5 complaints were lodged by the citizen.

5.10. There were no justified or unjustified complaints relating to equal opportunities received during the period under review.

6. Complaints to the Ombudsman

6.1. For the period covered, the breakdown of complaints referred to the Ombudsman is as follows:

6 complaints were not pursued because they were out with the remit of the Ombudsman

Council Tax	5	All 5 complaints related to decisions not to reduce the banding of houses. The Ombudsman found no fault with the procedure carried out and does not have a remit for deciding the accuracy of bands since there is a separate independent appeals process for such matters.
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1 complaint was premature

Council Tax	1	The Ombudsman considered that the complainant had not yet exhausted the Council Tax appeals procedure or the Joint Board's complaints procedure.
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7. Employee Implications

- 7.1. For the complaints where a member of staff had not followed office procedures further training and emphasis on good customer care and good working practice is being provided. Direct line managers have also been reminded of their responsibility for proper staff supervision.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1. None.

9. Other Implications

- 9.1. None.

10. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

- 10.1. This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a change to existing policy, function or strategy and, therefore, no impact assessment is required.

11. Privacy Impact Assessment

- 11.1. Appropriate security measures have been put in place to protect any personal information disclosed by complainants as part of their complaint.

Edward P Duffy
Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer

18 May 2010

Previous References

Report on Customer Care Procedure approved 3 March 2008

List of Background Papers

LVJB Customer Care Procedure

Contact for Further Information

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:-

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