

Report to:	Lanarkshire Valuation Joint Board
Date of Meeting:	6 June 2011
Report by:	Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer

Subject:	Monitoring of Complaints - 1 April 2010 to 31 March 2011
----------	---

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 for the period 1 April 2010 to 31 March 2011.

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, I undertook to provide members with a report covering both qualitative and quantitative information on complaints received by the Joint Board on an annual basis.

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 an 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 will also include the area of the Board's services where the complaint was received.

5. Summary

5.1. A total of 11 complaints were received in the period covered by this report. 6 related to Council Tax, 3 to Electoral Registration and 2 to Non-Domestic rating. 4 were classified as justified and 7 as unjustified.

5.2. The breakdown of justified and unjustified complaints by service area is as follows:

Service	Total No	Justified	Unjustified
Council Tax	6	4	2
Non-Domestic Rating	2	0	2
Electoral Registration	3	0	3
Total	11	4	7

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

Failure to deliver service to standard/quality	4	100%
Total	4	100%

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

Appeals against Council Tax banding	1	14%
Complained directly to SPSO on matters concerning Council Tax appeals	1	14%
Appeals against Rateable Value	2	29%
Appeals against removal of Electors following Review process	3	43%
Total	7	100%

5.5. Examples of citizen expectation not met where there was a failure to deliver the service to standard/quality. 3 were complaints received concerning the length of time to deal with council tax appeals and 1 was the way in which the banding increase was dealt with.

5.6. Action taken as a result of justified complaints

Action taken	No.
Apology Issued	1
Resolved	3

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

- ◆ Apologised for the delay in dealing with council tax appeal.
- ◆ Process for reconsidering Council Tax bands following the sale of a dwelling reviewed and streamlined.

5.7. Of the 11 complaints received in this period, 2 were made direct to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman and did not require a direct response to the citizen. Of the remaining 9, 8 (89%) were responded to within the target standard timescale of 10 working days. The remaining 1 (11%) was 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	8
Compliment, comment & complaint card	1
Email direct to an officer	2

- 5.9. The 2 complaints which went direct to the Ombudsman 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:

1 complaint required further information

Council Tax	1	The complaint related to a decision not to reduce the banding of a house and how the appeal was handled. The Ombudsman closed the complaint pending further information.
-------------	---	--

1 complaint was not pursued because it was outwith the remit of the Ombudsman

Electoral Registration	1	The Ombudsman considered that the matter had been concluded as the entry on the Register had been corrected.
------------------------	---	--

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 Failure to have an effective customer complaints policy and procedure would leave the Joint Board open to criticism from the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman.
- 9.2 Failure to monitor and report on complaints could result in missed opportunities to improve service delivery.
- 9.3. The current budget strategy of further reducing staffing levels carries a risk of delays in service delivery and may lead to an increase in complaints in the future.

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

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:-

Edward P Duffy, Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer

Phone: 01698 476078

E-mail: assessor@southlanarkshire.gov.uk