

Learning from Complaints 2023/24

Quarter 1– 1 April 2023 to 30 June 2023

	No. of Stage 1 complaint's
No. of Stage 1 complaints received	4
No. escalated to Stage 2	0
Stage 1 – response in 5 working days	3
Average no. of working days to respond	3.5
Stage 1 - Extended to 10 working days	1
Average no. of working days to respond	6
All stage 1 complaints – Average no. of working days for response	4.5
Outcome at Stage 1 - upheld/partially upheld/not upheld/ resolved	2 upheld/1 partially upheld/0 not upheld/1 resolved

	No. of Stage 2 complaint's
Stage 2 – no. escalated from Stage 1	0
Stage 2 – response in 20 working days	0
Average no. of working days to respond	n/a
Stage 2 – no. started at Stage 2	1
Stage 2 - response in 20 working days	1
Average no. of working days to respond	13
Total number of Stage 2 complaints	1
Outcome at Stage 2 - upheld/partially upheld/not upheld/ resolved	0 upheld/0 partially upheld/0 not upheld/1 resolved

Total Complaints submitted: 5

No. of Stage 1 complaints as a % of all complaints: 4 (80%)

No. of Stage 2 complaints as a % of all complaints: 1 (20%)

Complaints resolved as a % of all complaints: 2 (40%)

Complaints upheld as a % of all complaints: 2 (40%)

Complaints partially upheld as a % of all complaints: 1 (20%)

Complaints not upheld as a % of all complaints: 0 (0%)

Complaints referred to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO): 0 (0%)

Outcome of Stage 1 Complaints:

There were 4 Stage 1 complaints in this quarter.

There was 1 stage 1 complaint relating to Electoral Registration.

The complaint related to an application made on the Government Portal for a Voter Authority Certificate. The elector was asked to provide additional information and spoke to a Processing Administration Officer over the phone. The elector was unhappy with the attitude of the member of staff and felt they were spoken to in an aggressive and demeaning manner. The Head of Electoral Services investigated the matter and listened to the phone calls as all our phone calls are records for monitoring and training purposes. The elector was advised that there was no evidence to support these allegations. It was noted that the Processing Administration Officer had difficulty in accessing the Government Portal to view the necessary information to discuss the electors query and that the elector should have received a follow-up phone call or put on hold with an explanation as the length of time was longer than was acceptable. In light of this, training will be provided for call handling to improve our level of service in future.

*The complaint was **partially upheld** on the basis that the interaction was not of the high quality of service LVJB aims to provide.*

There were 2 stage 1 complaints relating to Council Tax.

The first complaint relates to lack of response to initial email in May 2022. A holding email was issued in May 2022 advising that the banding was being investigated as a possible error but since May 2022, no further contact has been made to The Council Tax payer. The Council Tax payer emailed Governance to advise that she would like more information regarding the investigation into the banding of their house and their neighbours properties. This information was forwarded to the Valuation Services Team Manager and the Technician response for the area. The Technician advised they would telephone the Council Tax payer regarding their enquiry.

*The complaint was **upheld** on the basis that the timescale for responding to the Council Tax payers original enquiry had not been met and had fallen short of the level of service LVJB aim to provide.*

The second complaint was where a Council Tax payer had made a proposal last year which was invalid as they were not the owner of the property at that point. They submitted a sequent proposal, but it was assumed that this was also invalid and therefore no action was taken in 2022. The Council Tax payer made their complaint via a telephone call with a member of the Customer Support Team. The call was investigated by our Valuation Services Team Manager (VSTM) who established that the Council Tax payer had become the owner of the property after their initial proposal was lodged. The subsequent proposal was valid, and a Technician would contact the Council Tax payer to discuss the matter with them. The appeal would also be added to the list of outstanding appeals to be heard by the Tribunal Service. The VSTM confirmed this information with the Council Tax payer over the phone and the Council Tax payer was satisfied with the action taken to resolve the matter.

*The complaint was **resolved** on the basis that our staff had engaged with the Council Tax payer and there had been a positive outcome.*

There was 1 stage 1 complaint relating to Valuation Roll.

The complaint was made by a ratepayer who was issued with a number of valuation notices in respect of properties. The ratepayer emailed our office to advise they did not have an interest in the properties and confirmed the one commercial property he had an interest in along with the details of their home address. In their complaint the ratepayer advised that they believed that an assumption had been made other persons with the same name had been assumed to be them. The ratepayer's home address had been added to a large owner entry for a ratepayer with the same name and this was the reason he had received so many valuation notices. The ratepayer has made a complaint of racism and maladministration with regard to the update of the Valuation Roll. The complaint was acknowledged when it was received. Our Support Manager investigated the matter but due to the passage of time it was unclear when the home address of the ratepayer was originally added to the Valuation Roll. No source could be found. This was explained to the ratepayer. We could not find evidence to support the allegation of racism but there was an error made by the processor in the updating of the Large Owner details. This type of error could have occurred for a name's information being updated whether as a sole trader or a company. We did apologise and advised the ratepayer that it was not our intention to cause any offence.

*The complaint was **upheld** on the basis that there was a processing error which caused the ratepayer upset and offence and was not of the high quality of service LVJB aims to provide.*

The ratepayer subsequently responded accepting our apology for any upset caused with regard to the Valuation Roll but continued to highlight issues of racism within our organisation which they still wished Lothian Valuation Joint Board to address. The ratepayer's email was passed to our Assessor and their management team. Our Engagement Officer has responded to the ratepayer outlining that Lothian Valuation Joint Board (LVJB) have an Equality and Diversity Policy in place to ensure both employees and other stakeholders are treated fairly, equally and with respect. Furthermore, LVJB is fully committed to embracing and implementing the principles and ethos of the Equality Act 2010 and the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012. As set out in the 2023 Mainstream Report on Equalities, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training has been promoted to all LVJB employees in the last year and further funding has been secured to promote this again in 2023. LVJB's Equality and Diversity Policy and 2023 Mainstream Report on Equalities can be viewed on our website - [HERE](#)

Whilst we will continue to work to identify and put in place arrangements to enhance the provision of training for staff around equality and diversity, we acknowledge that there is always room for improvement and learning. We have engaged with the ratepayer to assist in our understanding of the issues they have raised.

Outcome of Stage 2 Complaints:

There was 1 stage 2 complaint relating to Council Tax which was started at stage 2.

The complaint from The Council Tax payers was relating to their disappointment in the level of service they have received from our office. A review of some properties in Dunbar had been carried out due to address banding inconsistencies, but the outcome of the review took longer than anticipated. This has caused frustration on the part of the Council Tax payers. The Council Tax payers were moving from their property in mid-June 2023 and, should they have been entitled to a reduction in the band of their property, they asked this to be applied as soon as possible.

An Assistant Assessor had been liaising with the Council Tax payers and had contacted them on numerous occasions in the last month along with the Technician and Divisional Valuer for the area in order to keep the Council Tax Payers informed with regard to the review and it's progress. The Council Tax payers were asking that their banding was reduced from Band G to Band F from 2013 when they moved into the property and that they are refunded the difference without delay.

The complaint was allocated to another Assistant Assessor for impartiality to investigate and respond. There was no evidence found to suggest that the technical staff involved in the banding review had not engaged with the Council Tax payers, this was supported by the volume of calls that were made to the Council Tax payers in order to update them during the review. The Assistant Assessor did apologise for the length of time the banding had taken to complete but did outline the scale of the task involved in undertaking the review. It was conceded that training should be provided to staff undertaking reviews of this nature in the future so that our shareholders can have clear expectations of the timescales. There was a positive outcome for the Council Tax payers in this instance as a result of the banding review.

*The complaint was **resolved** on the basis that our staff had engaged with the Council Tax payers and there had been a positive outcome.*

Created by	Governance Team	19/07/2023
Approved by	Corporate Leadership Team	26/07/2023