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Customer Complaints Monitoring Report

Annual Report 2021/22

This report covers the twelve month period from 1 April 2021 to 31March 2022. This period saw continued effects and restrictions due to the global pandemic, however DABVJB continued to operate throughout, albeit the demands for our services and our methods of service delivery varied throughout the year.

Appendix 1 contains the Scottish Public Sector Ombudsman’s Performance Indicators.

# What is a Complaint?

Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute Valuation Joint Board’s definition of a complaint is:

An expression of dissatisfaction by one or more members of the public about the Joint Board's action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of the Joint Board.

A complaint may relate to:

* A failure to provide a service,
* A failure to achieve standards or quality of service promised by the Joint Board,
* Dissatisfaction with Joint Board policies or the way they are being applied or administered,
* Disagreement with a decision where the customer cannot use another procedure (for example an appeal) to resolve the matter,
* The Joint Board’s failure to follow the appropriate administrative process,
* Failure, negligence or delays in responding to customers’ inquiries or requests,
* Unhelpful or insensitive treatment by, or attitude of, a member of staff,
* Malice, bias or unfair discrimination,
* Inadequate or incomplete provision of information and/or advice,
* Failure to take account of relevant matters in coming to a decision,

The above list is not exhaustive.

A complaint is **not**:

* A routine first-time request for a service,
* A request for compensation only,
* An issue that is in court or has already been heard by a court or a tribunal,
* A disagreement with a decision where a statutory right of appeal exists, for example in relation to council tax or non-domestic rating appeals or Electoral Registration objections,
* An attempt to reopen a previously concluded complaint, or to have a complaint reconsidered where we have already given our final decision.

# Complaints Received During 2021/22

There were a total of 8 Complaints received during 2021/22 which was an increase of 4 from last year. Six of the complaints related to our Electoral Registration function, and 2 to the Council Tax service.

# Resolution of Complaints

Five complaints (62.5%) were resolved at the frontline resolution stage. Of the remaining three complaints, the first was taken to the SPSO who took no further action, one was received on the 31st March and remains open, the other has been through our procedures and has advised they are proceeding to the SPSO.

# Referral to the Scottish Public Sector Ombudsman

1 complaint, relating to the Electoral Registration function was referred to the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman decided not to pursue an investigation and the case was closed. The open case referred to above has indicated they will pursue the matter with the Ombudsman, however it remains unclear whether this has been done.

# Learning from Complaints

The outcome of complaints are discussed at the regular management team meetings and any learning is implemented. Three of the complaints relate to wording which is on standard letters which are prescribed by the Electoral Commission. The complainants have been advised of this, however feedback has also been passed on to the Electoral Commission in case they wish to act on it.

A further complaint involved a deceased elector receiving an item of mail from us. The Joint Board had not been informed of the passing of the elector, and on investigation, no information had been received from either the Registrars or the Tell Us Once service. An apology was offered when a second item of mail was received, which had been included in a data export that had happened some days prior. Awareness of the timing of data exports was recorded by the Management Team at its meeting on the 5th May 2022 as being important in sensitive situations such as this.

# Conclusion

The number of complaints received in the last year was 100% up on the previous year. The volume of complaints in the previous year was low (2019/20 had 14 complaints), due in the main to the global pandemic, and perhaps an acceptance from stakeholders in the initial period that service standards would be reduced. As the pandemic progresses, there is more of an expectation that service levels should be returning to normal, although restrictions on the occupation of office space existed throughout the majority of the year, the consequence being the majority of our employees worked remotely for most of the year.

The feedback from the complaints we received and also our customer satisfaction survey are invaluable in gauging the success of our evolving processes necessitated by our now distributed workforce.

Russell Hewton

Depute Assessor & ERO

9 May 2022

**Appendix 1**

**SPSO Performance Indicators**

**Indicator 1: Complaints Received per 1000 of population.**

**0.028**

**Indicator 2: Closed complaints.**

The number of complaints closed at stage one as a percentage of all complaints: **62.5%**

The number of complaints closed at stage two as a percentage of all complaints: **0%**

The number of complaints closed at stage 2 after escalation as a percentage of all complaints: **25%**

**Indicator 3: Complaints upheld, partially upheld and not upheld.**

The number of complaints upheld at stage one as % of all complaints closed at stage one: **0%**

The number of complaints not upheld at stage one as a percentage of all complaints closed at stage one: **100%**

The number of complaints partially upheld at stage one as a percentage of all complaints closed at stage one: **0%**

The number of complaints upheld at stage two as % of all complaints closed at stage two: **N/A**

The number of complaints not upheld at stage two as a percentage of all complaints closed at stage two: **N/A**

The number of complaints partially upheld at stage two as a percentage of all complaints closed at stage two: **N/A**

The number of escalated complaints upheld at stage two as % of all escalated complaints closed at stage two: **0%**

The number of escalated complaints not upheld at stage two as a percentage of all escalated complaints closed at stage two: **100%**

The number of escalated complaints partially upheld at stage two as a percentage of all escalated complaints closed at stage two: **0%**

**Indicator 4: Average time in working days for a full response to complaints at each stage.**

Average time in working days to respond to complaints at stage one: **1 day**

Average time in working days to respond to complaints at stage two: **N/A**

Average time in working days to respond to complaints after escalation: **9 days**

**Indicator 5: Percentage of complaints at each stage which were closed in full within the set timescales of 5 and 20 working days.**

The number of complaints closed at stage one within 5 working days as % of total number of stage one complaints: **100%**

The number of complaints closed at stage two within 20 working days as % of total number of stage one complaints: **N/A**

The number of escalated complaints within 20 working days as % of total number of stage one complaints: **100%**

**Indicator 6: Number of cases where an extension was authorised.**

The number of complaints closed at stage one where extension was authorised, as % all complaints at stage one: **0%**

The number of complaints closed at stage two where extension was authorised, as % all complaints at stage two: **0%**

**Indicator 7: Customer satisfaction**

The statutory functions undertaken by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer are covered by a number of different appeal mechanisms, such as Non Domestic Valuation and Council Tax Appeals and some aspects of Electoral Registration. Representations under these are quite rightly not recorded as complaints. The resolution of these appeals can be confrontational or adversarial but, despite this, our staff have scored consistently highly for their professionalism and knowledge in our Customer Satisfaction Survey. The relatively low number of customer complaints does not lend itself to an analysis solely of these.

**Indicator 8: Learning from Complaints**

Reports of the number and type of complaints received are submitted to the management team at each meeting, normally held every 6 to 8 weeks with any trends being identified. Where the underlying cause of the complaint is not within the Assessor or ERO’s power to resolve, for example the wording on forms produced by the Electoral Commission that the ERO is required to use, then this is fed back to the relevant organisation.