



Customer Service Policy

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CUSTOMER SERVICE POLICY

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Board is responsible for the creation and maintenance of the Valuation Roll, Council Tax List and Electoral Register. To undertake these activities the Board staff are in regular contact with our stakeholders.
- 1.2 This contact comes in many forms from issue of questionnaires, telephone calls, emails, face to face meetings, and the public promotion of our services. Our customers are from all sectors of the community and their requirements are many and varied.
- 1.3 As a result of our activities and level of contact, customer care is a vital and important component of service provision to our stakeholders. By formalising the steps currently taken, a base can be established upon which a high level of quality service can be delivered.
- 1.4 This policy underlines our commitment to Customer Service and provides information of our current approach.

2 CUSTOMER CONTACT

- 2.1 While our customers make contact in the normal way through letters, e-mails and telephone, they also use appointed representatives and agents, and employees regularly visit commercial and domestic properties. Often, this is the first point of contact with our stakeholders and during this meeting important information is provided and received. To ensure this meeting is productive employees must communicate in a polite, and informative manner.
- 2.2 To satisfy the legal requirements surrounding the Valuation Roll, Council Tax List and Electoral Register the Board undertakes extensive collection of data and information by electronic and paper format. For this to be effective, the forms and questionnaires supplied to our stakeholders must be customer friendly and easily understood.
- 2.3 Where further communication arises, a delegated employee will deal with all enquiries and provide additional information and guidance as requested. Correspondence should be timeously issued and be concise and provide clarity to meet any language and easy to read standards.

3 OUR STANDARDS

3.1 Performance Targets

The Board operates a range of performance targets relating to all its functions. These organisational targets are aimed at achieving and delivering effective service standards.

These performance targets are used to assist with the process of improvement and ensuring the highest levels of service to our customers are achieved.

3.2 **Response Times**

Further details on response times are attached as Appendix 1.

3.3 **External Appointments**

3.3.1 Where employees are required to meet with customers out with the office they shall conduct themselves in accordance with the Board's approved policy on Code of Conduct.

3.3.2 At all times employees will behave professionally and approach the customer in a fair, honest and helpful manner.

3.3.3 Without request, employees shall present their Board identification badge in all instances when visiting individual customers and organisations. On all occasions staff must ensure that the reason for the visit is fully explained.

3.4 **Telephones**

We will answer calls within 5 rings or if the line is busy the call will transfer to another line or to an answer phone. We will greet all callers in welcoming manner and aim to answer enquiries satisfactorily at the first call. Answerphone messages will be returned within 24 hours with the exception of weekend and public holidays. A dedicated team of employee's provide a telephone answering service and the majority of incoming telephone enquiries are dealt with by this group in an efficient and standard manner.

3.5 **Requests for Information**

Throughout the year the Board issues many questionnaires seeking different information. A number of these are issued under statutory authority where a return is a legal requirement. To assist with this process, all forms are regularly reviewed to ensure that, where possible, concise language is adopted and completion is straight forward.

While some forms can be provided in a number of foreign languages we can also provide a translation service via the telephone and hard copy, which is regularly utilised by customers.

3.6 **Hearing Loop**

At the Joint Board office a hearing loop system is in operation. This facility provides assistance to those members of the public with hearing difficulties.

3.7 **Code of Conduct**

The Board operates a code of conduct policy, which outlines a set of standards by which all employees must abide to in performance of their duties.

3.8 **Equality Policy**

The Board has an Equality Policy, the main aims of which are diversity and inclusion for everyone.

4 PROVIDING INFORMATION

- 4.1 It is important that our customers are able to access information about our services through a variety of different media. The Board hosts a website www.lothian-vjb.gov.uk which provides information and interactive methods of communication that allow direct access to the organisation. The Valuation Roll, Valuation List and Electoral Register are publicly available documents and we ensure access to these by providing copies at the Joint Board office, libraries and other council offices. In addition, as a member of the Scottish Assessors Association, further access to interactive services and information is available at www.saa.gov.uk
- 4.2 In order to promote electoral registration to our customers the Board has a number of information and display stands which are used at such locations as community centres, libraries, universities and other public events.
- 4.3 Also specific, targeted advertising is undertaken throughout the year, at election periods and at the annual canvass promoting various aspects of the registration process.

5 CUSTOMER FEEDBACK

- 5.1 While it can be seen that the Board is committed to providing customer focused services, it is essential that facilities exist which allow proper feedback and the views of our customers to be made known. It is important to establish accurate customer perception of our performance.
- 5.2 Currently, this is achieved by ensuring full contact details are provided with any communications issued and through feedback facilities on our website, social media channels and that of the Scottish Assessors Association. The Board also has a Complaints Procedure through which customers can seek resolution.
- 5.3 In addition the Board has and shall continue to participate in customer based consultative forums.

TIMESCALES FOR DEALING WITH ENQUIRIES

This table below sets out the response times applicable to the principle types of enquiry received by the organisation.

The times indicated are maximum limits and it is anticipated that responses shall be given within these scales.

ENQUIRIES	
Telephone Calls	<input type="checkbox"/> Immediate response if certain of facts otherwise advise enquirer of how we intend to resolve <input type="checkbox"/> If not immediately resolved then prepare a brief note of the circumstances <input type="checkbox"/> Provide full reply within 7 working days or further advise the enquirer <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure to advise that any appeal must be made in writing
E-mails & online	<input type="checkbox"/> Out with peak activity periods we will respond within 7 working days or advise enquirer of how we intend to resolve
Letters	<input type="checkbox"/> Out with peak activity periods we will respond within 7 working days or advise enquirer of how we intend to resolve
Counter Calls	<input type="checkbox"/> Immediate response if certain of facts otherwise advise enquirer of how we intend to resolve <input type="checkbox"/> If not immediately resolved then prepare a brief note of the circumstances <input type="checkbox"/> Provide full reply within 7 working days or further advise the enquirer <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure to advise that any appeal must be made in writing