

Learning from Complaints 2024/25

Quarter 3 – 1 October 2024 to 31 December 2024

	No. of Stage 1 complaint's
No. of Stage 1 complaints received	3
No. escalated to Stage 2	0
Stage 1 – response in 5 working days	3
Average no. of working days to respond	4
Stage 1 - Extended to 10 working days	0
Average no. of working days to respond	0
All stage 1 complaints – Average no. of working days for response	4
Outcome at Stage 1 - upheld/partially upheld/not upheld/ resolved	1 upheld/2 partially upheld/0 not upheld/0 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	0
Stage 2 – no. started at Stage 2	0
Stage 2 - response in 20 working days	0
Average no. of working days to respond	0
Total number of Stage 2 complaints	0
Outcome at Stage 2 - upheld/partially upheld/not upheld/ resolved	0 upheld/0 partially upheld/0 not upheld/0 resolved

Total Complaints submitted: 3

No. of Stage 1 complaints as a % of all complaints: 3 (100%)

No. of Stage 2 complaints as a % of all complaints: 0 (0%)

Complaints resolved as a % of all complaints: 0 (0%)

Complaints upheld as a % of all complaints: 2 (66.5%)

Complaints partially upheld as a % of all complaints: 1 (33.5%)

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 3 stage 1 complaint relating to Council Tax.

The Council Tax payer lodged a complaint about the delay in contact from our office and in particular regarding the conduct of the member of staff who was dealing with their Council Tax appeal. They were of the opinion their contact with the member of staff had been ignored and they had been treated with disdain. They were particularly unhappy after their Council Tax appeal had not been successful. There is a separate and distinct route for appeals under a statutory process therefore the issue of the Council Tax appeal will not be considered as a ground for complaint under the LVJB Complaints Procedure. Our member of staff admitted that the ongoing communications could have been better, and they will improve on this in future. The documentation issued from our office does state that there is a six-month response period from receipt of the proposal, which our member of staff adhered to. We advised that we continue to review all feedback and review practices where necessary.

Partially upheld (The contact/response times should have been better with the Council Tax payer and this part of the complaint was upheld. The part of the complaint relating to the timescale for proposal/appeal was within the 6 months KPI target and therefore was not upheld.).

A complaint was received from a Council Tax payer who received an acknowledgement for the opening of their case for appeal for their property's council tax band in May 2024. This acknowledgement outlined the member of the Assessor's staff who was allocated the case. Since at date the Council Tax payer had made every attempt possible to progress their proposal and arrange for the member of the technical team to complete a survey of their property. The Council Tax payer was unhappy with the lack of response to the contact they made with our office. Numerous dates were provided regarding attempted contact with our technical team from May to the end of September 2024 where no response was provided to the enquiry made.

Our Principal Surveyor responded to the complaint and apologised to the Council Tax payer for the lack of response they received. They advised that as an organisation we focus on ensuring that we comply with our statutory obligations and providing the best quality customer service. The level of service we provided had fallen short of the service level our office aims to provide to our stakeholders. We will review feedback and review our practices where necessary. Immediate communication was issued to the valuation team to highlight the issues brought to our attention following the receipt of this complaint.

Upheld (There were repeated requests from the Council Tax payer for a survey of their property which were not responded to therefore our level of service fell short on this occasion).

A complaint was received from a Council Tax payer who has an ongoing Council Tax appeal. The appellant made an accusation of discrimination as they had not been provided with written information during a visit from two members of staff from our valuation team to discuss their appeal. The appellant advised that English was not their first language and that the Assessor's staff had used electronic devices to show them relevant sales information and other relevant information relating to their live Council Tax appeal. The appellant had not advised our staff of their concerns at the time of the visit, and it is our normal practice to use electronic devices for site visits as this allows access to all the necessary up-to-date information regarding Council Tax. All appellants are provided with a full production of information or information requested which is relevant to their

Council Tax appeal prior a hearing by the First-Tier Tribunal Service and the use of electronic devices is standard practice, but our staff must ensure that the appellant is comfortable with the procedure used.

The complainant's concerns were taken seriously. Our Principal Surveyor responded to the Council Tax payer 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 we will look to continue this again in 2024. 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 asked the ratepayer to engage with us to assist in our understanding of the issues they have raised.

After investigation of this matter by our Principal Surveyor there was no evidence to support the claim that the Council Tax appellant had been discriminated against. An incorrectly worded letter had been issued to the appellant which advised that the appeal they made in respect of the band of their property was closed when it was still live. This caused the appellant upset and distress for which our Principal Surveyor provided an apology to the Council Tax payer. We have provided additional training and ensured that any out-of-date letters were removed from our files to prevent any future issues of this nature.

Partially Upheld. (an incorrectly worded letter was issued to the Council Tax appellant and caused them upset and distress therefore this part of the complaint was upheld. We did not uphold the accusation that there had been discrimination by the member of our staff).

There were no stage 1 complaints relating to Valuation Roll.

There were no complaints Stage 1 complaints relating to Electoral Registration.

There were no Stage 2 complaints.

Produced by	Governance Team	23/01/2025
Approved by	Corporate Leadership Team	28/01/2025