



REPORT TO: Grampian Valuation Joint Board on 19 June 2020

SUBJECT: Complaints handling performance

BY: The Assessor & ERO

1. Reason for Report

1.1 To report on complaints handling performance.

2. Recommendation

2.1 **The Board consider the complaints handling performance.**

3. Background

3.1 Complaints are valuable. When handled well, they can provide a low cost and important source of feedback and learning for the organisation to drive improvement and restore a positive relationship with service users who feel let down by poor service.

3.2 2019/20 is the fourth year of operation of the revised Complaints Handling Procedure. The procedure follows the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman's (SPSO) model complaints handling procedure and comprises three stages

- Stage 1 - frontline resolution;
- Stage 2 - investigation where stage 1 is not capable of resolving the issue;
- Stage 3- referral to the SPSO where service failure or maladministration has not been identified at Stage 2 and the issue remains unresolved.

3.3 Local authorities are required to assess complaints handling performance to provide assurance in relation to their performance, to facilitate continuous improvement and to assist in benchmarking between local authorities.

4. Current position

4.1 The SPSO's Complaints Standards Authority (CSA) developed a series of performance indicators. The 2019/20 performance of the organisation is provided in the table at 4.2, along with that for the previous two years for comparative purposes.

4.2 Complaints performance 2017/18 – 2019/20

Indicator	2017/18		2018/19		2019/20	
	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.
Total number of complaints		7		10		16
Total number of complaints/1000 population	-	0.01		0.02		0.03
Complaints closed at Stage 1	43%	3	80%	8	100%	16
Complaints closed at Stage 2	57%	4	20%	2		0
Resolution outcome						
Complaints upheld at Stage 1	29%	2	20%	2	44%	7
Complaints partially upheld at Stage 1	14%	1	30%	3	12%	2
Complaints not upheld at Stage 1	-	0	30%	3	44%	7
Complaints upheld at Stage 2	14%	1	20%	2		0
Complaints partially upheld at Stage 2	29%	2		0		0
Complaints not upheld at Stage 2	14%	1		0		0
Resolution time						
Average time for a full response at Stage 1	2 days		3 days		2 days	
Complaints resolved at Stage 1 against SPSO target 5 days	100%	3	88%	7	100%	16
Complaints extended at Stage 1 beyond SPSO target 5 days	-	-	12%	1		0
Average time for a full response at Stage 2	11 days		22 days		-	
Complaints resolved at Stage 2 against SPSO target 20 days	75%	3	50%	1		0
Complaints extended at Stage 2 beyond SPSO target 20 days	25%	1	50%	1		0

- 4.3 The organisation has a high level of contact with stakeholders in the Grampian area and beyond with a canvass to over 280,000 dwellings for over 445,000 electors, over 3,000 new dwellings being added to the valuation list and 2,000 updates to the valuation rolls made relative to non-domestic properties. Despite such a widespread reach of the organisation's service provision across the Grampian area, the volume of complaints remains extremely low.
- 4.4 An analysis of the 16 complaints recorded for 2019/20 show that the majority of complaints made related to electoral registration matters. This reflects the fact that two national elections took place during the year in question, and both were called at short notice and as such were challenging for many electors who had to alter travel arrangements or make registration and/or absent vote applications at short notice in order to secure their vote. Both elections also gave rise to significant public interest and engagement. The analysis has not identified any major concentration around one aspect of service delivery or failure in process, but has identified similar areas to those in 2018/19 where the Management Team can bring about further improvements through messaging and training on contact management.
- 4.5 Complaints handling data shows that the organisation has reduced the time taken to resolve complaints and in this year has achieved 100% resolution at Stage 1.
- 4.6 The low volume of complaints make any statistically significant analysis difficult however the increase in the number of complaints recorded over time suggests that the organisation is becoming more attuned to the recording and analysis of complaints. Feedback from complaints, including those that have not been upheld, has been utilised by the Management Team to improve communications with particular reference to the absent voting application process ahead of elections.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 The fourth year of operation of the updated complaints handling procedure has proved effective, with ready access for stakeholders and frontline personnel seeking to resolve issues within extremely short timeframes.
- 5.2 The organisation has shown an improvement in resolution times and used the quantitative and qualitative output from this procedure to implement service improvements.

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