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**REPORT TO:** Grampian Valuation Joint Board on 26 August 2022

**SUBJECT:** Complaints handling performance

**BY:** The Depute Assessor & ERO (Aberdeenshire)

**1. Reason for Report**

1.1 To report on complaints handling performance.

**2. Recommendation**

**2.1 It is recommended that 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 may feel let down by poor service.

3.2 2021/22 is the sixth 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 format for reporting these indicators has been amended for 2022/23 onwards by the CSA and next year's report will reflect the new style and amended indicators.

#### 4.2 Complaints performance 2019/20 to 2021/22

Indicator	2019/20		2020/21		2021/22	
	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.
Total number of complaints		16		5		11
Total number of complaints/1000 population		0.03		0.01		0.02
Complaints closed at Stage 1	100%	16	80%	4	73%	8
Complaints closed at Stage 2		0	20%	1	27%	3
<b>Resolution outcome</b>						
Complaints upheld at Stage 1	44%	7		0	18%	2
Complaints partially upheld at Stage 1	12%	2		0		0
Complaints not upheld at Stage 1	44%	7	80%	4	55%	6
Complaints upheld at Stage 2		0		0	9%	1
Complaints partially upheld at Stage 2		0		0	18%	2
Complaints not upheld at Stage 2		0	20%	1		0
<b>Resolution time</b>						
Average time for a full response at Stage 1		2 days		6 days		6 days
Complaints resolved at Stage 1 against SPSO target 5 days	100%	16	50%	2	50%	4
Complaints extended at Stage 1 beyond SPSO target 5 days		0	50%	2	50%	4
Average time for a full response at Stage 2		-		10 days		14 days
Complaints resolved at Stage 2 against SPSO target 20 days		0	100%	1	100%	3
Complaints extended at Stage 2 beyond SPSO target 20 days		0		0		0

- 4.3 The organisation has a high level of contact with stakeholders in the Grampian area and beyond with a canvass to almost 300,000 dwellings for around 445,000 electors, almost 3,000 new dwellings being added to the valuation list and 1,700 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, whilst up from 2020/21, remains extremely low in 2021/22.
- 4.4 A review of the 11 complaints recorded for 2021/22 show that all of the complaints related to electoral registration matters. This review has not identified any maladministration, or any significant failure in service delivery.
- 4.5 Whilst the overall number of complaints has increased from 5 in 2020/21 to 11 in 2021/22, the low volume prevents statistically significant analysis. However, the feedback from all complaints over time, including those that have not been upheld, is utilised by the Management Team to improve communications, particularly in relation to electoral registration matters.

## **5. Conclusion**

- 5.1 The sixth year of operation of the updated complaints handling procedure has remained effective, with ready access for stakeholders and frontline personnel seeking to resolve issues within extremely short timeframes.
- 5.2 The overall low number of complaints in 2021/22 does not readily allow a comparison of resolution times with previous years. As in previous years, no firm conclusion can be taken from the volume of complaints. Anecdotally, as complaints were limited to the electoral registration aspect of our service, it would appear that the increase in complaints from 5 in 2020/21 to 11 in 2021/22 may be attributable to the 2021/22 monitoring period coinciding with both the Scottish Parliamentary Election in May 2021 and the lead up to the Local Government Elections in May 2022.

Author of Report: James A Barron Depute Assessor & ERO