

## THE HIGHLAND & WESTERN ISLES VALUATION JOINT BOARD

### Annual Complaints Report 1 April 2022 – 28 February 2023

#### Background

The Highland & Western Isles Valuation Joint Board (HWIVJB) is committed to providing high-quality customer services and we value complaints and use information from them to help us improve our services. In April 2021, the HWIVJB published its updated Model Complaints Procedure and under the requirements of the Scottish Public Sector Ombudsman this annual complaints report will be published on our website.

We regard a complaint as any expression of dissatisfaction about our action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by us or on our behalf.

Complaints may be made about things like:

- Failure or refusal to provide a service
- Inadequate quality or standard of service, or an unreasonable delay in providing a service
- Dissatisfaction with one of our policies or its impact on the individual
- Failure to properly apply law, procedure or guidance when delivering services <sup>i</sup>
- Failure to follow the appropriate administrative process
- Conduct, treatment by or attitude of a member of staff or contractor (**except** where there are arrangements in place for the contractor to handle the complaint themselves); or
- Disagreement with a decision <sup>ii</sup>

Complaints may involve more than one HWIVJB service or be about someone working on our behalf.

There are some things that we are unable to deal with through our complaints handling procedure which include:

- A routine first-time request for a service
- A first-time report of a fault
- A request for compensation only
- Issues that are in court or have already been heard by a court or a tribunal
- Disagreement with a decision where there is a statutory procedure for challenging that decision (such as for freedom of information and subject access requests), or an established appeals process followed throughout the sector – such as council tax or non-domestic rating and the electoral register
- Formal complaints concerning valuations under the Valuation Acts
- Objections to inclusions on the electoral register
- A request for information under the Data Protection or Freedom of Information (Scotland) Acts
- A grievance by a staff member or a grievance relating to employment or staff recruitment
- A concern raised internally by a member of staff (which was not about a service they received, such as a whistleblowing concern)
- An attempt to reopen a previously concluded complaint or to have a complaint reconsidered where we have already given our final decision

- Abuse or unsubstantiated allegations about our organisation or staff where such actions would be covered by our Customer Contact – Unacceptable Actions Policy; or
- A concern about the actions or service of a different organisation, where we have no involvement in the issue (**except** where the other organisation is delivering services on our behalf).

Our complaints procedure has two stages:

- Stage 1 – frontline response
- Stage 2 – investigation of complaint

Between 1 April 2022 and 28 February 2023, the HWIVJB recorded and dealt with the following complaints:

Period	No. of Complaints	Service	Outcome	Further action
Q1 Apr – Jun	1	Electoral Registration Officer	Stage 1	No further action
	1	Electoral Registration Officer	Stage 1	No further action
	1	Electoral Registration Officer/Assessor	Stage 2	No further action
	1	Assessor	Stage 1	No further action
Q2 Jul – Sept	1	Electoral Registration Officer	Stage 1	No further action
	1	Electoral Registration Officer	Stage 1	No further action
Q3 Oct – Dec	1	Electoral Registration Officer	Stage 1	No further action
Q4 Jan – Mar	1	Assessor	Stage 1	No further action
<b>Total Stage 1 complaints</b>		<b>7</b>		
<b>Total Stage 2 complaints</b>		<b>1 (received at Stage 1, escalated to Stage 2)</b>		

Of the 8 complaints received, 6 (75%) were responded to in full at stage 1 within 5 working days. The average number of days to respond to these complaints was 2 working days. One stage 1 complaint was responded to in full after 7 working days. The stage 2 complaint was resolved within 39 working days. No complaints have been referred to the Scottish Public Sector Ombudsman.

### Trends

From 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022, we handled 6 complaints however, two of these complaints were for the Highland Council. Whilst we have seen a slight increase in the number of complaints received up to 28 February 2023, 5 of these related to a statutory procedure i.e., election timetable deadline, electoral registration process or council tax appeals procedures.

For the other three complaints, action was taken to resolve two, with one complaint being partially upheld, with part of the complaint raised with a third-party supplier.

Further information on our Complaints Procedure can be found by visiting our website:

<https://www.saa.gov.uk/h-wi-vjb/comments-and-complaints/>

Information on complaints outcomes, actions taken and quarterly key performance indicators will be made available on our website from May 2023.

Mandy Thomson  
7 March 2023

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<sup>i</sup> **except** where there is a statutory procedure for challenging that decision, or an established appeals process followed throughout the sector

<sup>ii</sup> **except** where there is a statutory procedure for challenging that decision, or an established appeals process followed throughout the sector