



Valuation Office
Agency

Clive Betts MP
Chair, Housing, Communities and
Local Government Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

12 November 2018

Dear Mr Betts

BUSINESS RATES APPEALS

Thank you for your letter of 31 October 2018, about business rates appeals.

The Agency published its latest Official Statistics on outstanding business rates appeals in August 2018, showing figures relating to challenges and changes to the 2010 and 2017 rating lists as at 30 June 2018.

The statistics show that the Agency has continued to make good progress in clearing the unresolved appeal cases from the 2010 list.

In 2017-18 we cleared around 150,000 appeals across England and Wales. In the first quarter of this year, we cleared a further 23,000. There were approximately 117,000 unresolved appeals as at 30 June 2018.

Around 54,000 of these unresolved appeals were held up by litigation. We are unable to provide an indication on the timeline for these cases being resolved. This is because the resolution of these cases is dependent on the length of time the courts take to hear the cases, and because the settlement timeframe after the relevant litigation will depend on the detail of the specific decisions.

We will clear the remaining unresolved appeals from the 2010 list which are not held up by litigation by the end of September 2019.

We expect new, additional appeal cases on the 2010 list to be received as a result of the 2018 Rating (Property in Common Occupation) and Council Tax (Empty Dwellings) Act, which reversed the so-called "Staircase Tax", and received royal assent on 1 November 2018.

Regarding the Check Challenge Appeal (CCA) service, the Official Statistics release in August showed that, as at 30 June 2018, the Agency had:

- Registered 36,310 checks under the new CCA system. 28,040 checks had been resolved. Most checks are being resolved within 3 months.
- Registered 4,460 challenges under the new CCA system. 1,030 challenges had been resolved. These numbers reflect the fact that volumes are still building up and, for example, the process for resolving Challenges, as set out in legislation, takes some time to complete. Most challenges are being resolved within 6 months.

Additionally, over 62,000 Interested Persons (which include the owner, occupier or ratepayer) and over 4,000 Agents had registered to use the CCA service and 169,000 property claims by businesses had been approved as at 30 June.

The next statistics release is due to be published on 22 November 2018 and will provide figures as at 30 September 2018.

The statistics concerning the number of appeals made under CCA are the responsibility of the independent Valuation Tribunal Service (VTS). The VTS published figures in August 2018, which shows that 15 appeals had been received by 30 June 2018. Of these, 4 had been cleared.

VTS statistics can be found at <https://www.valuationtribunal.gov.uk/about-us/publications-policies/vts-statistics/>.

On 14 May 2018, we published a roadmap setting out the additional improvements and functionality that we intended to deliver for the Check and Challenge system. So far, we have delivered the improvements set out in the roadmap on or before the planned time. The roadmap can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/online-check-and-challenge-service-upgrade/online-check-and-challenge-service-upgrade>.

A Freedom of Information (FOI) request received by the Agency in August 2018 sought satisfaction data for the period from 20 March to 8 August 2018. However, the data it requested was for a particular feedback form, which reflects feedback from a very small number of customers, and exclusively from those who have not completed the Check process.

As we made clear in response to that FOI, we do collect feedback and satisfaction scores specifically from Check and Challenge customers. This reflects a much bigger, more robust and representative sample of customers. Figures for the first six months of 2018-19 (i.e. 1 April - 30 September 2018), show that, overall, 53% of Check and Challenge users were "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with their experience.

This suggests that the improvements we have made to the Check and Challenge digital system are having a positive impact for users.

Yours sincerely



Melissa Tatton CBE