

This fact sheet is about complaints about council tax. It should be read together with our general information sheet about our service.

Your local council is responsible for setting your bill and collecting payment. To do this, the council has to work within the relevant law, regulations and government guidance. If you think that the council has not followed the law, regulations or guidance, the Ombudsman may be able to help you with your complaint.

What the Ombudsman can do

He can:

- look at complaints that the council failed to properly advise you of your property band, your bill, your right to appeal or of pre-court action
- check that the council has taken enforcement action fairly and by following the rules
- consider issues like unreasonable delay in taking action, failing to recognise your appeal, failing to keep proper records, failing to communicate properly or making mistakes in processing payments.

What the Ombudsman cannot do

He cannot:

- value your property for council tax purposes
- change the band that your property falls into
- change the value of your council tax band
- adjust your bill or your payments
- prevent a council from taking enforcement action against you
- tell a council how to collect an outstanding debt from you once a liability order has been obtained
- normally look at a complaint where there is or was a right of appeal against your council tax bill to the Valuation Tribunal for Wales.

Issues to bear in mind

Council tax is a general taxation to help pay for local services. The council cannot offer you a reduction on your bill because you do not benefit personally from certain local services.

Your council tax band is set by the Valuation Office Agency. If you think the banding might be wrong you should contact your local valuation office, details of which can be obtained at <http://www.voa.gov.uk/>

You have a right of appeal in law against many council tax decisions. If you think the amount of your bill is wrong or that you are not the person responsible for the bill, you should write to the council in the first instance. If the matter is still unresolved, you may have a right of appeal against the council's decision to the **Valuation Tribunal for Wales**. More information can be obtained at <http://www.valuation-tribunals-wales.org.uk/>

Further information

You can get free, independent advice about appealing against your council tax bill from your local Citizens Advice Bureau, details of which can be obtained at www.citizensadvice.org.uk

You can find more detailed information about the council tax on the Welsh Assembly Government's website at www.cymru.gov.uk/topics/localgovernment/financeandfunding/counciltax/?lang=eng

The council's own website may also contain information about the administration of council tax in your local area.

The Ombudsman is independent and impartial; he cannot order public bodies to do what he recommends – but, in practice, they almost always do.

Examples of cases that the Ombudsman has looked at can be found on our website. Please see www.ombudsman-wales.org.uk

If you are unsure whether the Ombudsman would be able to look into your complaint, please contact us:

- **phone** 0845 601 0987;
- **e-mail** ask@ombudsman-wales.org.uk;
- **visit the website at** www.ombudsman-wales.org.uk;
- **write to:** The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales
1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae, Pencoed CF35 5LJ