



Helping young people understand their voice in local governance

Every day, residents across Johannesburg rely on municipal services that directly impact their quality of life, from water and electricity supply to road maintenance and recreational facilities. However, many residents, particularly the youth, are often unaware of where to access information, seek assistance or obtain guidance on municipal services and City processes. Improving awareness of and access to these resources is essential to empowering communities and strengthening civic participation.

In support of this year's national Youth Month programme, the Office of the Ombudsman for the City of Johannesburg (the "Joburg Ombudsman") will host a **Youth Month Outreach Activation at Alexandra High School on 5 June 2026**. This session forms part of our ongoing commitment to educating and empowering communities on matters of municipal service delivery, fair administrative processes and when to escalate matters to our office.

This particular outreach aims to equip specifically learners, educators, parents and School Governing Body members with a better understanding of how local government functions, the services provided by the City of Johannesburg and the channels available for raising concerns and resolving service delivery-related complaints.



Through community outreach programmes and information clinics conducted across the city, we have observed that many residents are unaware of the role of our office and the support available when municipal concerns remain unresolved. We therefore aim to bridge this knowledge gap by equipping young people with a clearer understanding of local government, municipal accountability and the mechanisms that promote fairness, transparency and administrative justice in the delivery of public services in the City.

Young people are often at the forefront of experiencing the effects of service delivery challenges in their daily lives. By learning

how the city functions and understanding the appropriate channels for addressing concerns, they are empowered to become informed and engaged citizens who can advocate for positive change and play an active role in building a stronger and more responsive local government.

Many residents are unsure of where to turn when they experience municipal challenges. The Ombudsman exists to assist and Youth Month provides a valuable opportunity to ensure that young people are also aware of this support.

As an office, we aim to achieve this by giving learners the opportunity to engage directly with us, ask questions and learn more about our mandate. Most importantly, we seek to emphasise that fair and accountable administration begins with informed communities and that access to information is a cornerstone of good governance and meaningful public participation.

City of Joburg refunds: What you should know

Incorrect billing remains one of the most common complaints received by the Office of the Ombudsman for the City of Johannesburg (the "Joburg Ombudsman"). Many of these complaints relate to credit balances, overpayments and property transfers, often leaving residents uncertain about whether they are entitled to a refund and if so, how to go about claiming it.



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As part of our commitment to promoting fair administration and empowering residents through information, we put a spotlight on the City's Group Finance's refund processes and requirements. Understanding your rights, as well as your responsibilities, can help ensure that refund applications are processed efficiently and may prevent unnecessary delays and frustration.

Property owners should note that, in terms of Section 118 of the Municipal Finance Management Act, customers are





generally required to pay an amount equivalent to two months' deemed consumption when acquiring a property, while foreign nationals are required to pay six months' deemed consumption when applying for services. The legislation further requires that certain outstanding municipal debt be settled before a Clearance Certificate can be issued.

Before a property transfer can be registered, the seller must obtain a Clearance Certificate confirming that CoJ municipal charges have been paid. Once the change of ownership has been completed and the account finalised, any credit balance or overpayment due to the previous owner may be refunded.

Where a refund is due to a company, applicants should ensure that all required supporting documentation is submitted, including proof of identity, company registration documents, proof of directorship and the necessary authorisations where applicable.

Residents are encouraged to familiarise themselves with the City's refund requirements and procedures before applying. This includes understanding how to request a refund, how credit balances are dealt with during property transfers and the process for claiming refunds resulting from overpayments or incorrect payments.

For detailed copy of the refund guideline document, answers to frequently asked questions and access to the Property Refunds Application Form, please visit the City's [step-by-step Refunds Guidelines](#).

As part of our mandate to promote fair, accountable and responsive administration, we encourage residents to first utilise the City's established processes when seeking assistance with refunds and account-related matters.

However, should these mechanisms fail to yield fruit, particularly where there are allegations of maladministration, unreasonable delays, unfair treatment or procedural irregularities, residents may contact the Office through the following channels:

- Telephone: 010 288 2800 (*currently out of service*)
- WhatsApp: 081 365 0225
- Email: complaints@joburgombudsman.org.za
- Walk-ins: Sappi Building, 48 Ameshoff Street, Braamfontein.

Reflections beyond Workers' Day 2026

With Workers' Day having recently passed on 1 May 2026, it is an appropriate moment to reflect on the nature of work in public service, not merely as work but as an ongoing exercise in strengthening trust, fairness and administrative justice. In every interaction between us and residents, the real measure of our service lies in how we treat our customers.

Within the City of Johannesburg, including all departments and oversight functions such as the Joburg Ombudsman, our work is grounded in shared public trust. We are not only systems administrators but also stewards of the public experience of local government. In this sense, public service is a calling (one that demands professionalism even under pressure within a highly political and complex environment).



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Research in South African public administration and government monitoring frameworks, including the [Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation's 2021 Citizen-Based Monitoring](#) approach, consistently shows that public trust is shaped less by policy intent and more by everyday service experiences. Citizens may not assess government in technical terms but they remember whether they were heard, treated with dignity and given clear and timely responses. Perceptions of unfairness often stem not from decisions themselves but from breakdowns in communication, delays or non-responsiveness at the point of service delivery.

This is where procedural fairness becomes essential. The experience of being acknowledged, informed and treated with dignity is not secondary to service delivery but central to it. Each email answered, each query resolved and each conversation handled with patience contributes to whether we're seen as legitimate, efficient and responsive.

Workers' Day therefore offers a useful pause to ask ourselves how do we show up in these everyday moments of service? The answer is often simple but significant i.e., responding timeously, communicating clearly, providing accurate information and engaging residents with respect and empathy. These are not minor administrative actions but building blocks of public trust.

Let us therefore choose, each day, to be officials who listen before we respond, who care before we conclude and who recognise that behind every query is a person deserving of respect. In doing so, we do more than provide a service, we restore confidence in public institutions, one interaction at a time.

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