



Grampian Valuation Joint Board

Friday, 01 November 2019

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that at a Meeting of the **Grampian Valuation Joint Board** is to be held at **Council Chambers, Council Office, High Street, Elgin, IV30 1BX** on **Friday, 01 November 2019** at **10:30**.

BUSINESS

- 1. Sederunt**
- 2. Declaration of Group Decisions and Members Interests ***
- 3. Minutes of the meeting of 23 August 2019** **5 - 8**
- 4. Revenue Budget Monitoring Statement** **9 - 14**
Report by the Treasurer
- 5. 3 Year Financial Planning** **15 - 24**
Report by the Treasurer
- 6. Valuation Roll and Council Tax Valuation** **25 - 32**
Report by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer
- 7. Register of Electors Annual Canvass** **33 - 36**
Report by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer
- 8. Public Performance Report** **37 - 42**
Report by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer
- 9. IRRV Scottish Conference** **43 - 44**
Report by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer

10. Question Time ***

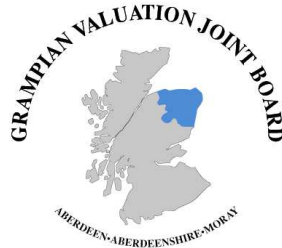
Consider any oral question on matters delegated to the Committee in terms of the Council's Scheme of Administration.

GUIDANCE NOTES

- * **Declaration of Group Decisions and Members Interests** - At the beginning of the meeting, immediately following the Sederunt, the Convener will, in terms of Standing Order 25, seek declarations from individuals on any financial or other interests.

- ** **Written Questions** - Any member can put one question to the Convener about relevant and competent business not already on the Agenda for a meeting of the Board. No member can put more than one question at any meeting. The member must give notice in writing of their question to the Clerk 4 working days prior to the meeting. A copy of any written answer provided by the Convener will be tabled at the start of the relevant meeting. The member who has put the question may, after the answer has been given, ask one supplementary question directly related to the subject matter but no discussion will be allowed.

- *** **Question Time** - At each ordinary meeting of the Board, 10 minutes will be allowed for question time when any member can put one question to the Convener regarding any matter within the remit of the Board. The Member who has put the question may, after the answer has been given, ask one supplementary question directly related to the subject matter, but no discussion will be allowed. In the event of further information/investigation being required in order to answer the question, the Clerk will arrange for a written answer to be provided within 7 working days.



Grampian Valuation Joint Board

SEDERUNT

Councillor Graham Leadbitter (Chair)
Councillor Bill Cormie (Depute Chair)
Councillor Charles Buchan (Member)
Councillor Marion Buchan (Member)
Councillor Neil Copland (Member)
Councillor Alan Donnelly (Member)
Councillor Gordon Graham (Member)
Councillor Andy Kille (Member)
Councillor Neil MacGregor (Member)
Councillor Ron McKail (Member)
Councillor John Reynolds (Member)
Councillor Brian Topping (Member)
Councillor Judy Whyte (Member)
Councillor Frank Brown (Member)
Councillor Theresa Coull (Member)

Clerk Name: Tracey Sutherland
Clerk Telephone: 01343 563014
Clerk Email: tracey.sutherland@moray.gov.uk



Minute of Meeting of the Grampian Valuation Joint Board

Friday, 23 August 2019

Woodhill House, Aberdeen,

PRESENT

Councillor Frank Brown, Councillor Charles Buchan, Councillor Neil Copland, Councillor Bill Cormie, Councillor Theresa Coull, Councillor Gordon Graham, Councillor Andy Kille, Councillor Graham Leadbitter, Councillor Ron McKail, Councillor John Reynolds, Councillor Michael Roy, Councillor Brian Topping, Councillor Judy Whyte

APOLOGIES

Councillor Alan Donnelly, Councillor Neil MacGregor

IN ATTENDANCE

Also in attendance at the above meeting were the Ian Milton, Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer, Maggie Bruce, Audit Scotland, Atholl Scott, Audit Manager, Lorraine Paisey, Head of Financial Services and Tracey Sutherland, Committee Services Officer all Moray Council:

1. Chair

The meeting was chaired by Councillor Graham Leadbitter.

2. Declaration of Group Decisions and Members Interests *

In terms of Standing Order 25 and the Councillor's Code of Conduct, there were no declarations from group leaders or spokesperson in regard to any prior decisions taken on how Members will vote on any item on the agenda or any declarations of Member's interests in respect of any item on the agenda.

3. Agenda Order

The Chair advised the Board that agenda items 4, 5 and 6 would be taken in the order of 5, 6 and 4.

4. Minutes of the Meeting from 21 June 2019

The minute of the meeting of the Board dates 21 June 2019 was submitted and approved by the Board.

5. Reports to those Charged with Governance 2018-19

A report by the Treasurer to the Board asked the Board to consider the reports to those charged with governance from the Board's External Auditor for the year ended 31 March 2019.

The External Auditor explained to the Board that the annual accounts for 2018/19 would not be signed off following the meeting as following the McLeod Judgement changes would need to be included in pension charges. The actuaries have provided figures to the Treasurer and these figures have been incorporated in an updated version of the accounts, which were sent to External Audit on 22 August for scrutiny.

Following consideration the Board agreed to note the covering memo and draft Annual Report on the 2018/19 audit from the External Auditor.

6. Internal Audit Annual Report 2018-19

A report by the Treasurer to the Board advised the Board of the internal audit work completed on the Assessor's Service for the financial year ended 31 March 2019 and provides an opinion on the adequacy of the control systems received.

Following consideration the Board noted the satisfactory audit opinion derived from audit work completed.

7. Annual Accounts for Year Ending 31 March 2019

A report by the Treasurer to the Board asked the Board to consider and approve the audit Accounts for the financial year ending 31 March 2019.

As detailed by the External Auditor earlier, the Treasurer to the Board explained that the revised accounts, following the outcome of the McCloud Judgement, had been send to External Audit on 22 August.

The Treasurer to the Board explained that the revisions would not impact on the refunds to the constituent authorities and the agreement of the Board for the accounts to be signed off subject to the revisions, the adjustment for the refunds would be made to the October requisitions.

8. Financial Regulations and Anti-Fraud and Corruption

A report by the Treasurer sought the Board's approval for revisions to the Financial Regulations which control Grampian Valuation Joint Board's financial administration and the Board's Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy.

Following consideration the Board agreed to:

- i) approve the proposed changes to the Financial Regulations as set out in Appendix 1 of the report;
- ii) approve the proposed changes to the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy as set out in Appendix 2 of the report; and
- iii) note that the documents will be reviewed at least every three years and any proposed changes reported to the Board for approval.

9. Code of Corporate Governance

A report by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer sought approval for a revised Code of Corporate Governance that reflects the revised financial framework and introduction of a scheme of delegation.

Following consideration the Board agreed to approve the revised Code of Corporate Governance.

10. Question Time ***

No further questions were raised.



REPORT TO: GRAMPIAN VALUATION JOINT BOARD ON 1 NOVEMBER 2019

SUBJECT: REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING STATEMENT FOR THE PERIOD 1 APRIL TO 30 SEPTEMBER 2019

BY: TREASURER TO THE BOARD

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 To consider the Revenue Budget Monitoring Statement for the period 1 April to 30 September 2019.
- 1.2 To consider the Estimated Outturn position for the year 2019/20.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that the Board considers and notes:

- (i) **The Revenue Monitoring Statement for the period 1 April 2019 to 30 September 2019 and;**
- (ii) **The estimated outturn forecast for the financial year 2019/20.**

3. CURRENT POSITION

- 3.1 At its meeting on 1 February 2019 the Board agreed the Revenue Budget for 2019/20 and approved that the requisitions from constituent authorities be set at £4,463,000.
- 3.2 **APPENDIX 1** shows the monitoring position to 30 September 2019. It gives details of the 2019/20 revenue budget, the actual to date and the variance to date. It also shows the estimated outturn and the estimated variance for the year. Total net expenditure to 30 September 2019 is £2,238,000 which results in an underspend against budget to date of £78,000.
- 3.3 To date there is a £94,000 under spend within employee costs. Salaries, including on costs, are £95,000 under spent which directly relates to vacant posts and the interval that arises between filling posts. When the budget was approved, the pay awards for 2018/19 and subsequent years had not been

agreed, but were budgeted for. Since then, a three year pay award from 2018/19 has been agreed and applied, so no variances are arising due to pay awards. Recruitment is continuing to prove difficult due to the competitive salaries available in the private sector.

- 3.4 It was reported at budget setting time that there was an increased workload arising from the Barclay review of Non Domestic Rates, and additional budget of £99,000 for staffing and other costs were approved. The distribution of the additional funding to local authorities hadn't been confirmed at the time of budget setting, but was subsequently confirmed in LGF Circular 2/2019 (Annex E) on 7th March 2019.
- 3.5 The Assessor intended to recruit undergraduates in year one, with a view to offering them full time employment from 2020/21. The budget is for four trainee Valuers budgeted at £37,000. They have been successful in appointing one of the posts and are interviewing shortly to fill the remaining three. The other NDR reform costs were for the SAA portal (£10,000) and IT systems (£50,000) which are on target.
- 3.6 Property Costs to date are £12,000 under budget; which mainly relates to a service charge adjustment for 2018/19 for Woodhill House. There are no other variances within this heading.
- 3.7 Transport costs are on budget to date and at a similar level to last year at the same point.
- 3.8 The total expenditure on Supplies and Services is £363,000 which is £28,000 overspent against budget to date.
- 3.9 The Assessor has been working with the Moray Council Procurement team to develop a Procurement Action Plan (PAP) that will assist with its procurement activity; as a public body, the Board and its Assessor is bound by EU, national and local legislation and regulation in relation to its procurement activity. This year the PAP will prioritise projects that are high risk, or collectively high value, in addition to the training needs of the GVJB staff. The prospect of achieving savings from suppliers will be monitored and reported to the Board.
- 3.10 The IT maintenance and support budget shows an overspend to date of £26,000. As part of the PAP it was recommended that the IT category undergoes a detailed assessment as there are a number of IT suppliers delivering different technical aspect of the service requirements.
- 3.11 Postages expenditure is on budget. The Postage budget was reduced this year by £60,000 down to £220,000 after taking into account trends in previous years. The Household Enquiry Forms and Invitations to Register comprise the bulk of the mailing, and these will all be completed mid-October.
- 3.12 There are other minor overspends and underspends within Supplies and Services.

- 3.13 The support services charge is processed at 31 March as part of the year end closedown.
- 3.14 Another key area of uncertainty is the level of government funding towards the cost of Individual Electoral Registration (IER). The 2019/20 budget report offered three different scenarios, as the level of funding hadn't been agreed, and the mid-point of £130,000 was adopted for the purposes of the 2019/20 budget. The Assessor received a letter in July 2019 notifying that the grant allocation for 2019/20 is £151,810. Later in the financial year the Cabinet Office will run a Justification Led Bid (JLB) process which will give an opportunity to claim for additional IER-related costs that have been incurred in the year. Any such costs and JLB claims will be reported to future Board meetings, although at this point it is not expected that a claim will be necessary.
- 3.15 There are no other significant variances to report at this stage.

4. ESTIMATED OUTTURN 2019/20

- 4.1 The revenue budget is expected to be underspent by the year end and at this halfway point in the year the variance is estimated to be an underspend of £245,000.
- 4.2 The largest underspend anticipated is in employee costs, at £207,000 by year end. In addition, there was an adjustment for vacancy management included in the budget of £76,000. With NDR reforms taking place, the ability of the service to recruit and retain qualified members of staff is already a concern, but is being addressed by focusing on recruiting and training undergraduates. The implications of having key positions vacant are the operational resilience of the service and its ability to meet statutory requirements. Valuation roll appeal resolution is of paramount importance to the business community and the focus of much political and media attention. If the service cannot fill posts that fall vacant in an appropriate timescale, the ability to meet the statutory deadline of December 2020 for appeal resolution is placed under threat.
- 4.3 Property costs are expected to be below budget. The insurance tender was recently evaluated through the PAP and a three year agreement reached, with savings of £5,000 in the first year and further discounts the following two years; this has been reflected in the estimated actual figures.
- 4.4 Supplies and Services are estimated to be £1,000 over budget by year end.
- 4.5 It was reported at budget time that in a 'normal' year i.e. with no major election or referendum taking place, total postage costs are estimated at £200,000. With an election or referendum this could be as high as £280,000. However, the current political climate, and uncertainty surrounding a further UK Parliament election, makes it extremely problematic to estimate the year end position. With this in mind, the estimated expenditure included in the Appendix is on budget.

- 4.6 Valuation appeals are estimated to be on budget. There are appeals cases due to be heard which could incur up to £20,000 of additional costs.
- 4.7 Specialist Services was increased this year, and for the next four years, for the NDR portal costs. This heading also includes the external audit fee, pension fund fees and other portal costs. To this point this is forecast to be on budget.
- 4.8 Income from sales of the electoral register is difficult to predict with most sales occurring in the second half of the year. The outturn has been estimated at the budget level.
- 4.9 As stated in paragraph 3.14 the IER grant allocation awarded to Grampian VJB this year is £151,811.
- 4.10 The estimated outturn as shown in Appendix 1 is an underspend of £245,000.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The total net expenditure as at 30 September 2019 is £2,238,000; an underspend against budget to date of £78,000.
- 5.2 The estimated outturn is an underspend of £245,000.
- 5.3 An update on the estimated outturn will be reported to the Board at the meeting in February 2020.
- 5.4 The Assessor and his Senior Management Team closely monitor and control budgets in order to keep within agreed levels and generate savings wherever possible throughout the year.

Author of Report: Susan Souter, Accountant.
Background papers: Held within Accountancy Section, Moray Council

Author of Report: Lorraine Paisey, Treasurer to the Board
Ref: LP/LJC/
Date 16 October 2019

APPENDIX 1

GRAMPIAN VALUATION JOINT BOARD REVENUE MONITORING STATEMENT
FOR PERIOD 1 APRIL TO 30 SEPTEMBER 2019

Line No.	2019-20 Total Budget	2019-20 Budget to Date	Actual 30 Sept 2019	Variance 30 Sept 2019	2019-20 Estimated Outturn	2019-20 Estimated Variance
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000		
<u>Employee Costs</u>						
1 Salaries	2,645	1,320	1,253	67	2,489	156
2 National Insurance	271	135	126	9	253	18
3 Superannuation	509	254	235	19	476	33
4 Additional Pensions	23	11	11	0	23	0
5 Other Employee Costs	3	0	0	0	3	0
6 Training	10	6	7	(1)	10	0
Total Employee Costs	3,461	1,726	1,632	94	3,254	207
<u>Property Costs</u>						
7 Accommodation Charges	319	212	200	12	298	21
8 Repairs and Maintenance	3	1	1	0	3	0
9 Energy Costs	8	4	4	0	11	(3)
10 Cleaning	4	2	2	0	5	(1)
Total Property Costs	334	219	207	12	317	17
<u>Transport Costs</u>						
11 Staff Travel and Subsistence	73	37	37	0	73	0
Total Transport Costs	73	37	37	0	73	0
<u>Supplies & Services</u>						
12 Equipment, Furniture & Materials	2	1	0	1	2	0
13 Protective Clothing	1	0	0	0	1	0
14 Text & Reference Books	10	6	8	(2)	8	2
15 Printing & Stationery	34	12	11	1	34	0
16 Postages	220	170	171	(1)	220	0
17 Telephones	7	4	4	0	7	0
18 Advertising	7	4	4	0	7	0
19 IT Maintenance & Support	232	114	140	(26)	232	0
20 Canvass Expenses	75	2	2	0	75	0
21 Valuation Appeals	56	7	7	0	56	0
22 Members Allowances	0	0	0	0	3	(3)
23 Fees, Charges & Subs	3	0	0	0	3	0
24 Specialist Services	35	15	15	0	35	0
25 Other Supplies & Services	1	0	1	(1)	1	0
Total Supplies & Services	683	335	363	(28)	684	(1)
<u>Support Services</u>						
26 Lead Authority Charge	57	0	0	0	57	0
Total Support Services	57	0	0	0	57	0
Gross Expenditure	4,608	2,317	2,239	78	4,385	223
<u>Income</u>						
28 Sales and Other Income	(13)	(1)	(1)	0	(13)	0
29 Government Grant and recharges	(130)	0	0	0	(152)	22
30 Interest on Revenue balances	(2)	0	0	0	(2)	0
Total Income	(145)	(1)	(1)	0	(167)	22
31 Net Expenditure	4,463	2,316	2,238	78	4,218	245
32 Requisitions	(4,463)	(2,237)	(2,237)	0	(4,463)	0
33 (Surplus)/Deficit for Year	0	79	1	78	(245)	245



REPORT TO: GRAMPIAN VALUATION JOINT BOARD ON 1 NOVEMBER 2019

SUBJECT: FINANCIAL PLANNING FOR 2020/21 AND FUTURE YEARS

BY: TREASURER TO THE BOARD

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 To consider different scenarios that will form the three year Revenue Budget from 2020/21 onwards and to discuss the operational issues facing the Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) in the medium to long term.

2 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Board considers and notes the:

- (i) Three year core budget from 2020/21;
- (ii) Various scenarios where the outturn is unpredictable, and the range of upper and lower limits;
- (iii) Operational issues facing the service; and
- (iv) Course of action to be taken ahead of the budget setting meeting in February 2020.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The main issues for the Assessor's service to be addressed in setting the budget are:
- Increased duties and workload for the services arising from implementation of the Barclay review of Non Domestic Rates;
 - Level of staff turnover/challenges in recruiting and retaining staff
 - Financial uncertainty in key areas, particularly salaries, accommodation and government funding of Individual Electoral Registration
 - The current political climate where a snap election and/or referendum are possible.

- 3.2 The Annual Audit Plan 2018/19 was presented to the Board at the meeting on 1 February 2019 by the external auditors to the Board; Audit Scotland. The Plan highlighted the risk of the service not planning for various scenarios, especially when there are so many indefinite variables behind the statutory functions of the service. Medium to long term financial planning for the Assessor's service requires to be developed, taking the emerging issues to the fore and deciding all possible scenarios. Board members should decide which of these should be built into the budget, whilst remaining aware that the nature of the service can have unforeseen pressures.
- 3.3 This report aims to look at different scenarios, using a range of possible outcomes and the impact this has on the budget, and thus requisitions from the three constituent authorities. This will give Board members some key points for discussion and offers the flexibility to create contingency plans. Some of these scenarios will have a financial impact that can be quantified; however other potential issues affecting the service can't be measured so easily.
- 3.4 Appendix 1 shows the core budget for each of the three years ahead, with a separate column for the previously approved NDR reforms budget.

4. CURRENT POSITION

Non-Domestic Rates Reform

- 4.1 The budget report in January reported on the impending changes following the Barclay review of the Non-Domestic Rates (NDR) system in Scotland. The Scottish Government decided on three main reforms, two of which have significant implications for the Assessors. The move to a three yearly revaluation cycle from a five year cycle, and the need to resolve all revaluation appeals within the same timeframe has a significant operational impact. As previously explained, the Assessor proposed to recruit undergraduates on a temporary basis in 2019/20 with a view to offering them full time employment from 2020/21. As such, salary costs increments as well as pay awards increase year on year. However, take-up of this opportunity has been disappointing and the Assessor is considering alternative strategies to address the expertise requirements for implementation of the NDR reforms. Additional IT and portal development work will also be required to meet the additional demands for wider and more detailed provision of valuation information along with the anticipated new powers to serve Assessor Information Notices and the resultant operation and administration of a civil penalty regime that are all elements of the new three year revaluation cycle. These figures have been shown in Appendix 1, separate from the core budget.

5. SCENARIOS – optimistic, worst case and mid-point

The main cost driver for the service is salary and associated costs.

Salaries and Recruitment

- 5.1 The 2019/20 budget for salaries, including on costs, makes up almost 77% of the net expenditure budget of the service. The service is reliant on recruiting and retaining professionals in order to carry out its statutory functions. It is frequently reported that the recruitment of staff and staff turnover is an issue for the service. Due to the competitive nature of salaries in the private sector, it is susceptible to carrying vacancies unfilled for long periods with the attendant negative impact on the in-post employees.
- 5.2 A three year pay award was agreed by COSLA from 2018/19, and the budgeted figures have been updated for 2019/20 and 2020/21. The scenarios for the subsequent two years are shown below, along with the impact on the budget. These figures exclude the NDR posts which are additional posts, explained in paragraph 4.1.

Scenario	Impact on 2021/22 Budget £000	Impact on 2022/23 Budget £000
1% pay award	51	50
2% pay award	85	89
3% pay award	113	123
5% pay award	177	199

The mid-point 3% pay award has been included in Appendix 1 core budget.

- 5.3 Recruitment and vacancy adjustment has been taken from the budget figures
- 5.4 Work is ongoing with the Energy Savings Trust to review the service's grey fleet and as such is not at the reporting stage as of yet.

Accommodation

- 5.5 Moray Council are currently investigating works at the Elgin Office situated on High Street which is shared with the Assessor. There is possibly a boiler replacement to be carried out, insulation works and the heating and ventilation system to be replaced. Along with general redecoration of the premises, the service will have to pay for its share of the costs. At this time there has been no consultation with the Assessor over potential costs. The purpose built Banff office is in need of general decoration, both internal and external, along with some minor structural alterations to increase the capacity for the premises to accommodate disaster recovery IT servers. When quotes are available the Assessor will update.
- 5.6 The office accommodation occupied in Woodhill House is leased out on a ten year basis at £125,000 per annum for rental and service charge of £70,000. There is also expenditure for NDR, water charges, insurance and extraordinary repairs and maintenance. There has been discussion lately that the Assessors

might be moved within the premises to a smaller location, which should mean reduced costs. At the time of this report the latest decision is not known, and so it is proposed to leave the core budget with the existing budgets in place for the next three years. Insurance savings have been confirmed and are reflected in the budget. Any move would require careful planning to permit continuous service delivery and minimise disruption to the service

IT and Procurement

- 5.7 The Procurement Action Plan (PAP) that has been drawn up by the Moray Council Procurement team and the Assessor has identified an estimated contracted spend by the service of around £300,000 per annum, calculated on the basis of past expenditure. Priorities have been set for the coming year and savings have already been achieved in insurance. The IT category is undergoing more detailed assessment, but at this juncture the potential for savings in this budget are to be clarified.
- 5.8 Some IT contracts are purchased in US Dollars, and the impact of exchange rate fluctuations could have an effect on the expenditure. These are a small amount compared to the value of contracts in Sterling, circa 2%, so any change in exchange rates would not have a significant impact.

Unplanned Election and Referendum

- 5.9 The postage budget was reduced this year to £220,000, after looking at trends in postage costs in recent years. In a 'normal' year, i.e. with no election or referendum, the bulk of mailings are Household Enquiry Forms and Invitations to Register, and the total expenditure is expected around £200,000. When an election or referendum is planned, the service would attempt to build this into the financial planning and anticipate the additional budget requirement, along with any other additional costs such as overtime.
- 5.10 With the current political climate, the possibility of an unplanned election is real, putting additional pressure on the resources of the service, and an increase in expenditure. The table below shows the scenarios for such eventualities, and the impact on a £200,000 base budget. An optimistic scenario would be to budget for the base budget of £200,000, meaning a reduction to the 2019/20 budget of £20,000. The mid-point is the current budget position, with no further reduction next year. The third and fourth scenarios are where an election and/or referendum are called at short notice. Broadly speaking an election will generate outgoing mail of between 20,000 and 40,000 items, depending on the type of election, and the overtime would start at £20,000 to £30,000, increasing by two or three times for a major UK Parliamentary election. A referendum would also generate high outgoings of mail, and an Independence Referendum could potentially see overtime as high as £100,000. The core budget in Appendix 1 includes the optimistic budget. This leaves an expectation that the service would have to cope with any spend in excess of this from the general fund.

Scenario	Impact on 2020/21	Impact on 2021/22	Impact on 2022/23
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	Budget £000	Budget £000	Budget £000
Optimistic	(20,000)	(20,000)	(20,000)
Current	0	0	0
UK Election			
- Postage	8,000 - 16,000	8,000 - 16,000	8,000 - 16,000
- Overtime	20,000 - 30,000	20,000 - 30,000	20,000 - 30,000
Referendum			
- Postage	20,000	20,000	20,000
- Overtime	Up to 100,000	Up to 100,000	Up to 100,000

Income

5.11 Income IER grant funding

Scenario	Impact on 2020/21 Budget £000	Impact on 2021/22 Budget £000	Impact on 2022/23 Budget £000
Low	0	0	0
Mid-point			
Optimistic	150,000	150,000	150,000

6. General Fund

- 6.1 The General Fund provides the Assessor with the flexibility to investigate and implement any future “Spend to save” projects where one-off expenditure is required in order to deliver future budget savings. The reserve would allow the Assessor to re-invest savings generated by efficiencies and could also be used as a contingency to meet unforeseen costs and assist financial planning by enabling limited budget flexibility between financial years. This limited flexibility may prove invaluable over the next year or so now that the phase of IER is complete and is expected to be incorporated into the day to day business of the service. There is no assurance of how additional costs resulting from the implementation of IER will be funded in the future.
- 6.2 It was agreed by the Board at its meeting on 28 January 2011 (paragraph 4 of the Minute refers) that transfers to the General Fund would be restricted to 3% of the total budget in any one year and that the cumulative balance of the fund would not exceed 5% of the total budget.
- 6.3 The balance of the General Fund at 31 March 2019 was £215,000.
- 6.4 The estimated outturn for 2019/20 is an underspend of £245,000 which would increase the General Fund by £8,000 to £223,000 at 31 March 2020, the maximum permitted. The remaining surplus would be refunded to constituent authorities on approval of the audited accounts.

7. Risks

- 7.1 Accommodating the professional teams that provide the valuation and registration services along with provision of secure and resilient IT facilities is a key aspect of service delivery. The multi-centre approach with low cost devolved centres in Banff and Elgin and a strategy of reducing the more costly floorplate in Aberdeen seeks to maximise resilience, efficiency and benefit from a workforce drawn from the entire Grampian area and beyond. The lack of a capital fund means that the revenue budget may be called upon for capital expenditure items.
- 7.2 Two of the three statutory service strands delivered by the Assessor and the ERO are subject to high levels of uncertainty through active reform agendas being pursued in Westminster and Holyrood. The Non-Domestic Rates (Scotland) Bill is currently at stage 2 in Holyrood and secondary legislation that will have a major bearing on the service with effect from 1 April 2020 has yet to be drafted. The Scottish Elections (Franchise and Representation) Bill, Referendums (Scotland) Bill and Scottish Elections (Reform) Bill are all in Committee stages in the Scottish Parliament and will impact significantly on the registration service. Similarly the UK Government has just laid the Representation of the People (Annual Canvass) (Amendment) Regulations 2019 in draft and similar provisions will be required in Holyrood. A further dimension was added by way of the Queen's address to Parliament on 14 October 2019 that announced the UK Government's new electoral integrity measures that will require the registration service to renew postal voting arrangements on a three year cycle. All of these legislative measures will impact on the service and represent risks to service delivery that the Assessor and ERO must meet.
- 7.3 Finally, one recurring risk that is embedded in the current and future systems of non-domestic property valuation is the reactive nature of the appeals system. As reported on a regular basis by the Assessor in the last year, appeal volumes are at a record level and the rate of disposal, direction and level of challenge and thus demand placed on the service and the attendant costs on the service, and those of the Valuation Appeal Panel must be met by the valuation authority. As these are largely determined by external stakeholders, the capacity to implement mitigation measures is extremely limited.

8. Conclusion

- 8.1 **Preparing the scenarios for the proposed three year Revenue Budget from 2020/21 has been a challenging task, trying to balance the increasing demands placed upon the service against the operational pressures and financial constraints imposed on the public sector.**
- 8.2 **The Assessor has proposed savings where possible, and will continue to look for efficiencies and savings in the budget. Given the current political climate, operational priorities can change rapidly and have vast impact on expenditures, as the scenarios show. The Assessor will manage the service, including the resources required to maintain IER and new**

burdens on the service with NDR reforms, within the current budget and if necessary, the flexibility afforded by the General Fund balance.

Author of Report:

Background papers: Held within Accountancy Section, Moray Council

GRAMPIAN VALUATION JOINT BOARD BUDGET

Line No.	2019-20 Total Budget	2019-20 Estimated Outturn	2020-21 Core Budget	2020-21 NDR Budget	2021-22 Core Budget	2021-22 NDR Budget	2022-23 Core Budget	2022-23 NDR Budget
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
<u>Employee Costs</u>								
1 Salaries	2,645	2,489	2,681	212	2,770	250	2,863	261
2 National Insurance	271	253	276	19	280	24	293	25
3 Superannuation	509	476	513	41	530	48	548	50
4 Additional Pensions	23	23	23	-	24	-	24	-
5 Other Employee Costs	3	3	1	-	1	-	1	-
6 Training	10	10	10	1	10	1	10	1
Total Employee Costs	3,461	3,254	3,503	273	3,616	323	3,739	337
<u>Property Costs</u>								
7 Accommodation Charges	319	298	311	-	310	-	310	-
8 Repairs and Maintenance	3	3	3	-	4	-	4	-
9 Energy Costs	8	11	9	-	10	-	10	-
10 Cleaning	4	5	4	-	4	-	4	-
Total Property Costs	334	317	327	-	328	-	328	-
<u>Transport Costs</u>								
11 Staff Travel and Subsistence	73	73	70	Item 5.	70	5	70	5
Total Transport Costs	73	73	70	4	70	5	70	5
<u>Supplies & Services</u>								
12 Equipment, Furniture & Materials	2	2	2	-	2	-	2	-
13 Protective Clothing	1	1	1	-	1	-	1	-
14 Text & Reference Books	10	8	8	-	8	-	8	-
15 Printing & Stationery	34	34	34	-	34	-	34	-
16 Postages	220	220	200	-	200	-	200	-
17 Telephones	7	7	7	-	7	-	7	-
18 Advertising	7	7	7	-	7	-	7	-
19 IT Maintenance & Support	232	232	182	50	182	88	182	8
20 Canvass Expenses	75	75	75	-	75	-	75	-
21 Valuation Appeals	56	56	56	-	56	-	56	-
22 Members Allowances	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-
23 Fees, Charges & Subs	3	3	3	-	3	-	3	-
24 Specialist Services	35	35	25	10	25	10	25	10
25 Other Supplies & Services	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Supplies & Services	683	684	600	60	600	98	600	18
<u>Support Services</u>								
26 Lead Authority Charge	57	57	57	-	58	-	58	-
Total Support Services	57	57	57	-	58	-	58	-
Gross Expenditure	4,608	4,385	4,558	337	4,672	426	4,795	360
<u>Income</u>								
28 Sales and Other Income	(13)	(13)	(13)	-	(13)	-	(13)	-
29 Government Grant and recharges	(130)	(152)	-	-	-	-	-	-
30 Interest on Revenue balances	(2)	(2)	(2)	-	(2)	-	(2)	-
Total Income	(145)	(167)	(15)	-	(15)	-	(15)	-
31 Net Expenditure	4,463	4,218	4,543	337	4,657	426	4,780	360
32 Requisitions	(4,364)	(4,364)	(4,543)	-	(4,657)	-	(4,780)	-
33 NDR Requisitions	(99)	(99)	-	(337)	-	(426)	-	(360)
33 (Surplus)/Deficit for Year	-	(245)	-	-	-	-	-	-



REPORT TO: Grampian Valuation Joint Board on 1 November 2019

SUBJECT: Valuation Roll & Council Tax Valuation List

BY: The Assessor & ERO

1. Reason for Report

- 1.1 To advise the Board of current activities and performance levels achieved during the period 1 April to 30 September 2019.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 **It is recommended that the Board note the current position.**

3. Background

- 3.1 The Board's Code of Corporate Governance requires annual reporting of operational performance by reference to measures set locally and nationally.
- 3.2 The performance thresholds have been set for the performance indicators that have been agreed between the Scottish Government and the Scottish Assessors Association. The Board reviewed the valuation roll and council tax valuation list performance thresholds in September 2018.

4. Current Position

Valuation Roll

- 4.1 Appendix 1 provides performance information for the first 6 months of 2019/20 and the previous two whole years. The principal issue is to seek to ensure that the valuation roll is updated to reflect changes to properties as soon as is possible. At present, 72.8% of updates to the roll are made within the initial three-month period and this compares to the performance threshold of 70%.

- 4.2 During the last 6 months demands for the resources of the valuation service have continued to remain extremely high, with appeal resolution activity attracting a particularly high priority.
- 4.3 Valuation appeals are programmed for disposal by the independent Valuation Appeal Panel. They are required to dispose of the appeals made against 10,099 valuation roll entries following the revaluation by 31 December 2020. As at 30 September 2019, 6,734 (68% for the R2017 caseload) appealed valuation roll entries have been resolved. This compares to the 4,900 (69% of the R2010 caseload) appealed valuation roll entries resolved at the same time following the 2010 revaluation.

Council Tax Valuation List

- 4.4 Appendix 2 provides the position for the first 6 months of 2019/20 and the previous two whole years. For the second successive year the rate of completions shows an increase on the same period for the previous year. The diversion of resources to support appeal resolution and vacant professional posts that are proving challenging to fill have impacted negatively on this aspect of the service to the extent that performance lies 2% below the performance threshold of 94% of dwellings being added to the list within the 90 day performance window.

5. NDR reform

- 5.1 The Non-domestic Rates (Scotland) Bill 2019 completed Stage 1 of its passage through Parliament and Assessors have been engaged with COSLA, the Scottish Government, the Scottish Parliament's Local Government & Communities and Finance & Constitution Committees along with the Barclay Implementation Advisory Group Appeals Subgroup on a wide range of aspects of the reforms.
- 5.2 Secondary legislation, which will provide much of the detail around the new proposal and appeal system, Assessors' powers to request information and the liability for civil penalties where information is not provided has yet to be drafted and presents specific challenges in terms of implementation given that the information powers and penalties aspects of the reforms will be in place from 1 April 2020, this being the tone date for the 2022 revaluation.
- 5.3 Revised secondary legislation concerning the business growth accelerator is also anticipated. This is likely to require system and procedural changes and will place additional requirements on Assessors.
- 5.4 Assessors are currently in the process of providing the Scottish Government with updated estimates on the financial implications of the reforms that are likely to inform the allocation for grant in the 2020/21 local government settlement.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 The service has continued to maintain valuation roll and council tax valuation list update whilst delivering outstanding results set against an extremely demanding appeal resolution programme, achieving appeal resolution for 37% more properties than achieved at the same point in the previous revaluation.
- 6.2 The Assessor is actively engaged in seeking to secure the necessary additional resources to enable implementation of the NDR reforms.

Author of Report: Ian H Milton

Appendix 1

Valuation Roll Performance Indicators as at 30 September 2019

	Time period	2019/2020 (part year)	2018/2019	2017/2018
Amendments within time periods The number of amendments made to the valuation roll during the year as a result of material change of circumstances and new subjects. The time period is the period between the effective date of the amendment and the date the corresponding Valuation Notice is issued.	0 - 3 Months	722	1579	1699
	%	72.8%	59.2%	66.0%
	Threshold %	70.0%	70.0%	77.0%
	3 - 6 Months	188	481	427
	%	19.0%	18.0%	16.5%
	Threshold %	15.0%	15.0%	13.0%
	Over 6 Months	82	609	450
	%	8.3%	22.8%	17.5%
	Threshold %	15.0%	15.0%	10.0%
Number of amendments		992	2,668	2,576*
Total number of entries	At 1 April	29,714	29,305	26,036
Total Rateable Value	At 1 April	£1,020.16M	£1,005.58M	£978.11M

* Excludes the addition of shooting rights

Appendix 2

Council Tax Valuation List Performance Indicators as at 30 September 2019

	Time Period	2019/2020	2018/2019	2017/2018
New Entries within Time Periods The time period is the period between the effective date of the amendment and the date the corresponding Banding Notice is issued.	0 - 3 Months	1,612	3,303	2,949
	%	92.2%	93.7%	91.3%
	<i>Threshold</i> %	94.0%	94.0%	94.0%
	3 - 6 Months	100	161	178
	%	5.7%	4.6%	5.5%
	<i>Threshold</i> %	3.0%	3.0%	3.0%
	Over 6 Months	64	60	104
	%	2.1%	1.7%	3.0%
	<i>Threshold</i> %	3.0%	3.0%	3.0%
Number of New Entries Added The Actual number of new dwellings added to the Valuation List during the year.		1,749	3,524	3,231
Total Number of Entries The actual number of properties shown in the Valuation List as at 1 April annually.		292,839	290,004	287,336
Adjusted to Band “D” Equivalent	Original ratios	290,432	287,223	284,132
	2017 ratios	305,654	302,213	298,888



REPORT TO: Grampian Valuation Joint Board on 1 November 2019

SUBJECT: Register of Electors Annual Canvass

BY: The Assessor & ERO

1. Reason for Report

1.1 Inform the Board of progress with the annual canvass.

2. Recommendation

2.1 The Board note the content of this report.

3. Annual Canvass

- 3.1 The 2019 canvass that commenced on 2 August is the fifth full canvass since the introduction of individual electoral registration (IER). This canvass, of the 282,724 dwellings in Grampian benefits from implementation of an enhanced automated response service for 2019. The 2019 canvass also benefits from the exempted sole occupancy dwellings and early visits initiatives that were introduced in 2018.
- 3.2 2019 is the second year where canvass cost saving measures have been made available to EROs. These measures mean that where a householder registers to vote and indicates that they are the sole elector resident at that address, the requirement on the ERO to carry out the following annual canvass at that address is waived for a 12 month period. This meant that household enquiry forms were not required to be issued to 2,165 dwellings.
- 3.3 In a move to increase the effectiveness of the household canvass and minimise the number of visits canvassers have to make during late autumn and early winter a sample of 17,133 dwellings that have had a history of non-responses were identified and visited by canvassers during the period August and September.
- 3.4 IER requires each new elector notified on the returned household canvass form to be supported by an individual application to register. For 2019 the enhanced automated response service included for the first time an embedded ITR that enabled new members of a household to passport straight into the registration application element of the process whilst also making the household return. As at 21 October, 7,259 citizens had applied to register to vote via this service.
- 3.5 If a new potential elector does not apply to register (either independently or via an embedded ITR), the ERO is required to issue an invitation to register by post.

Since 1 October the service has issued 23,506 invitations to register. So far, 12,244 electors have been added to registers since the start of the canvass.

3.7 The canvass return statistics as at 21 October 2019 are provided in the table:-

Year	Issued	Returned Number	%	Method of Return (%)			
				Post/Other	Phone	Online	Text
21 Oct 2019	282,724	209,678	74%	50%	5%	38%	7%
30 Nov 2018	278,639	234,218	84%	55%	5%	34%	6%
27 Nov 2017	279,280	230,631	83%	59%	6%	28%	7%
21 Nov 2016	276,440	216,598	78%	65%	6%	24%	5%
23 Nov 2015	273,181	205,264	75%	70%	2%	26%	2%

Return information immediately prior to publication of the revised register for the previous four canvasses is provided for comparison purposes.

3.8 The move towards automated response methods in preference to traditional postage of a manually completed household enquiry form has continued for the 2019 canvass and has been supported by messaging in canvass materials and media releases through corresponding local authority communications teams that have focussed for the second year running on the potential for cost savings to the public purse. This messaging has been well received by responders who have welcomed such an approach.

3.9 The volume and percentage of automated responses are provided in the table:-

Year	Number of automated responses	% of total canvass
21 Oct 2019	103,615	49%
30 Nov 2018	104,597	45%
27 Nov 2017	93,919	41%
21 Nov 2016	73,379	35%
23 Nov 2015	63,041	30%

4. National Democracy Week

4.1 National Democracy Week (14-20 October) was supported by broadcast publicity across Scotland and involved contact with universities and colleges in the Grampian area along with their student union/association representatives in order to promote registration and also raise the profile of the importance of having suitable absent voting arrangements in place if required.

5. Short-notice electoral events

5.1 Uncertainty over the possibility of short notice electoral events has been a continuing aspect of the service for 2019. Annual leave management measures have therefore remained in place throughout the year. Additional measures such as the piloting of October and November updates to registers have also been implemented and an audit of overseas electors is currently underway that involves contacting some 500 overseas electors who do not have suitable absent voting provisions in place.

6. Developments

- 6.1 There are a number of legislative developments that will impact on the service. The Scottish Elections (Franchise and Representation) Bill, Referendums (Scotland) Bill and Scottish Elections (Reform) Bill are all in committee stages in the Scottish Parliament and will impact significantly on the registration service. Similarly the UK government has just laid the Representation of the People (Annual Canvass) (Amendment) Regulations 2019 in draft and similar provisions will be required in Holyrood. A further dimension was added by way of the Queen's address to Parliament on 14 October that announced the UK government's new electoral integrity measures that will require the registration service to renew postal voting arrangements on a three year cycle.

7. December Register

- 7.1 At the time of writing, the intention is that the Electoral Register will be published by 1 December with copies being made available via the secure download facility to elected members, MSPs, MPs etc as prescribed. Whilst it will contain details of attainers aged 16 or over, no data for registered attainers who are under 16 will be published. If an election is called during the interim, publication of the revised register may be delayed.

8.0 Conclusion

- 8.1 **The 2019 canvass is benefitting from an enhanced automated response service and a continued trend away from traditional postal returns. The service is also building on the 2018 successes of exempted dwellings and a fresh approach to visiting addresses which have a history of not responding to canvass forms. The piloting of additional monthly updates, participation in National Democracy Week and continued messaging to increase the use of automated response channels seek to improve efficiency and resilience.**
- 8.2 **The electoral reforms currently taking shape will impact on the service and it is anticipated that whilst some proposals will increase workloads, the reforms also have the objective of improving the effectiveness of the canvass.**

Author of Report: Ian H Milton



REPORT TO: Grampian Valuation Joint Board on 1 November 2019

SUBJECT: Public Performance Report

BY: The Assessor & ERO

1. Reason for Report

- 1.1 To seek approval for the publication of the eighteenth public performance report.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 **The Board note the content and agree to the publication of the Public Performance Report provided as an appendix to this report.**

3. Background

- 3.1 The Board's Code of Corporate Governance requires publication of an annual report incorporating financial and performance information.

4. Current Position

- 4.1 The public performance report provides financial, staffing and sickness absence data along with statistical data relative to the organisation's three service strands; council tax, valuation roll and electoral register. The report does not drill down to the level of detail provided in the quarterly and annual performance reports to the Board. It does however seek to provide an overview of the organisation's performance.
- 4.2 The report focusses on the priorities identified in the management commentary to the audited accounts and provides statistical information that shows how the organisation has performed over recent years.
- 4.3 The net budget out-turn of £4.088M against a budget of £4.292M reflects the fact that recruitment has provide to be particularly challenging during 2018/19, an operational aspect that continues into 2019/20. It also reflects the successful justification led bid for additional funding from the Cabinet Office.

- 4.4 The establishment has been maintained at 2017/18 levels and the increase in deployment of temporary canvassers during the canvass period that was trialled in 2017/18 has been repeated for a second year. This approach has shown benefits in terms of improved capacity to meet the demand for household visits that peak during the canvass period. As at 31 March 2019 there were 71 full time equivalent posts filled against an establishment of 75.
- 4.5 The overall percentage of days lost to ill-health absence shows an increase from 1.7% to 2.5%. This increase does not give rise to concern as the background to the increase in days of absence relates to known and unavoidable incidences of ill health that are not occupation-related.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 The organisation has shown improvements in its business-as-usual performance for council tax and electoral registration. Whilst valuation roll update activity has not met local targets, the same resources that are allocated to this activity have been prioritised towards valuation appeal resolution activity where the professionals involved have delivered outstanding appeal resolution performance in terms of volumes and value. In meeting these, and the other priorities identified in the public performance report for 2018/19, the members of this organisation have again demonstrated an extremely high degree of versatility and professionalism.

Author of Report: Ian H Milton

Grampian Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer

Public performance report for 2018/19

Introduction

The Grampian Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) is an independent statutory official appointed by the Grampian Valuation Joint Board to value non-domestic properties for rating purposes, allocate dwellings to council tax bands and provide an electoral registration service for the Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire and Moray Council areas.

General Information

The Grampian Valuation Joint Board is a public body that funds the Assessor & ERO by means of requisitions from Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire and Moray councils. Net expenditure for 2018/19 was £4.088M against a budget of £4.292M that was net of additional grant funding of £0.160M provided under the UK government's Electoral Registration Transformation Programme for the introduction of individual electoral registration (IER). The Assessor & ERO has a full-time equivalent of 75 posts distributed between offices in Aberdeen, Banff and Elgin. As at 31 March 2019 there were 71 full-time equivalent staff in post. In the last year staff absence due to ill health was 2.5%. This compares to 1.7% for 2017/18, 1.3% for 2016/17 and 3.9% for 2015/16.

A review of our 2018/19 priorities

The following operational priorities were specifically identified in the management commentary for the year, they must however not be considered in isolation and the organisation has a wide range of on-going priorities that relate not only to operational aspects of the organisation but also to our duty to eliminate discrimination and mainstream equalities, manage our records to the satisfaction of the Keeper of Records, protect data and provide information on request and in line with current law.

Conduct a full household canvass under the individual electoral registration (IER) regime.

The canvass of 278,637 households achieved a return rate of 84% by 1 December 2018. This was a marginal improvement on the corresponding return rate of 83% as at 1 December 2017. Into 2019 we continued to chase up non-returns and by mid-March the return rate had risen to 85%. We also managed to increase the proportion of households who responded to the canvass by automated response channels such as online, text or automated telephone options from 95,704 in 2017 to 104,965 in 2018. Automated responses are more efficient as they require less back-office processing.

Publish revised registers 1 December 2018.

We completed the household canvass earlier than in previous years and published revised registers on 1 December 2018. A qualitative and quantitative assessment carried out by the Electoral Commission concluded that we met their canvass performance standards.

Maximise valuation roll appeal resolution.

The 2017 revaluation had a significant impact on ratepayers in the North East and the volume of appeals is greater than had been the case in previous revaluation years. The sensitivity of the situation was principally due to the slowdown in the NE property market that became apparent after the valuation date of 1 April 2015 but before the revaluation values came into force on 1 April 2017. Against this backdrop the service was severely challenged by ratepayers who had been encouraged to lodge appeals against their rateable values through campaigns in mainstream and social media along with advice from high profile professionals and politicians. The resultant heightened level of expectation for significant reductions in values through the appeal resolution process service has been proven to be wrong and the resultant appeal resolution process has therefore been particularly demanding in terms of expertise and resources.

A significant decision published by the Lands Valuation Appeal Court¹ supported our approach, added clarity to the law concerning changes in the economy and has assisted the appeal resolution process. During 2018/19 we have resolved revaluation appeals against assessments for 3,627 properties and a further 3,361 running roll appeals. This represents the highest volume of resolved appeals ever achieved over 12 months in Grampian. In terms of accuracy, figures published by the Scottish Government show that the losses in rateable value through resolution of Revaluation appeals in Grampian is the lowest in Scotland².

Maintain a complete and accurate Valuation rolls and valuation lists.

The last two priorities use of quantitative target based performance indicators rather than qualitative measures and as such can at times be misleading. We have increased the number of assessments of domestic and non-domestic properties being made within the 90 day performance timeframe when compared to the previous year by 6% with 4,882 assessments in 2018/19 compared to 4,619 for 2017/18. We met our performance target of 94% of new dwellings being banded in the 90 day timeframe but did not manage to make 70% of valuation roll updates within the same 90 day timeframe. The concentration of our resources on our priority of maximising appeal resolution rates impacted here to the extent that 59% of updates were made within the 90 day timeframe.

In overall terms the organisation met its priorities for 2018/19. It has worked tirelessly to give ratepayers in the Grampian area, not only extremely accurate rateable values, but also maximised appeal resolution volumes to provide the certainty that is so important to property occupiers and taxpayers. Meantime it has rolled out a new IT system for electoral registration and continued to deliver routine business as usual canvass, rolling registration, running roll and council tax update. Once again, the organisation has shown itself to be capable of responding and delivering.

¹ The Assessor for Grampian v Anderson, Anderson and Brown LLP and others 2018 at <https://www.scotcourts.gov.uk/docs/default-source/cos-general-docs/pdf-docs-for-opinions/2018csih15.pdf?sfvrsn=0>

² Non-domestic Rates Revaluation Appeals 2018-19 Q4 <https://www2.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Local-Government-Finance/NDR-Rates-Relief/Appeals2018-19Q4>

Data tables

Table 1 shows the number of new dwellings added to the lists in Grampian over the last 5 years and also the percentage that received notification within the 3 and 6 month performance windows. Table 1 also shows the performance thresholds that have been set.

Table 1 The time taken to add new dwellings to the list

Year	Number	Within 3 months		Within 6 months	
		Threshold	Actual	Threshold	Actual
2018/19	3,524	94%	94%	97%	98%
2017/18	3,231	94%	91%	97%	97%
2016/17	3,345	94%	92%	97%	98%
2015/16	3,009	94%	93%	97%	98%
2014/15	2,650	92%	92%	97%	97%

Table 2 shows the number of alterations made to the roll each year along with the percentage of alterations that were made within the 3 and 6 month performance windows. The performance thresholds are also provided. Alterations include new entries to the valuation roll for newly constructed or converted buildings as well as alterations to existing buildings. The years 2016/17 and 2018/19 are shown in *italics* as these are years when we were revaluing all non-domestic properties or dealing with record volumes of appeals in addition to our routine maintenance of the roll. For this reason resources were diverted to revaluation or appeal related tasks with a corresponding impact on our routine maintenance performance.

Table 2 The time taken to alter the Valuation Roll

Year	Number	Within 3 months		Within 6 months	
		Threshold	Actual	Threshold	Actual
<i>2018/19</i>	<i>2,668</i>	<i>70%</i>	<i>59%</i>	<i>85%</i>	<i>77%</i>
<i>2017/18</i>	<i>2,576</i>	<i>77%</i>	<i>66%</i>	<i>90%</i>	<i>83%</i>
<i>2016/17</i>	<i>2,129</i>	<i>60%</i>	<i>56%</i>	<i>85%</i>	<i>75%</i>
<i>2015/16</i>	<i>2,474</i>	<i>77%</i>	<i>61%</i>	<i>90%</i>	<i>78%</i>
<i>2014/15</i>	<i>2,200</i>	<i>77%</i>	<i>68%</i>	<i>90%</i>	<i>85%</i>

Table 3 provides the local government registers total electorate, the number of households we canvassed, the canvass response rate and the number of households that responded using our online/SMS text and phone response service rather than completing and posting the household enquiry form to us. The register published on 10 March 2014 was the last register revision based on the traditional household canvass prior to the introduction of individual electoral registration on 17 September 2014. A full canvass was not conducted in 2014/15 as this coincided with the national implementation of individual electoral registration (IER). The impact of no national elections during 2017/18 is reflected in a reduction in electorate in our revised registers published on 1 December 2018. This phenomenon is common across Scotland and underlines how elector engagement is strongly driven by electoral events rather than household canvasses. The number of households canvassed has reduced marginally as new rules were introduced that meant

that single person households who had recently applied to register were not required to be canvassed.

Table 3 Electorate and canvass details for Grampian

Register	Local Government Electorate	Number of households canvassed	Canvass Response Rate	Automated responses
1 Dec 2018	432,135	278,637	84%	104,965
1 Dec 2017	438,674	279,278	83%	95,704
1 Dec 2016	439,590	276,439	79%	79,606
1 Dec 2015	436,748	273,173	75%	64,040
27 Feb 2015	444,256	n/a	n/a	n/a
10 Mar 2014	445,541	269,163	95%	88,481

Conclusion

During 2018/19 the priority has been to maximise appeal resolution, to give businesses in NE Scotland the certainty that they require in terms of non-domestic rates liabilities. This has been assisted through the Lands Valuation Appeal Court decision upholding our approach and achieved through the absolute professionalism and dedication of our surveyors and negotiators who have been working in an extremely challenging environment.

Our agility and capacity to respond to challenges was tested late in the year when the likelihood of a European Parliamentary Election became a reality just as the roll-out of new electoral registration system neared completion. The election date was announced on 10 April 2019 and will feature in next year's public performance report. The issue for 2018/19 was that the work done through procuring, specifying and implementing the new system in 2018/19 ensured that we were able to successfully meet the demands and challenges of such a short-notice national electoral event, including the specific requirements for EU citizen declarations.

The continued high performance levels recorded in this report are a product of the professionalism, dedication and commitment of the employees of the organisation. I continue to be extremely grateful to my colleagues who work to ensure that the statutory duties of the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer are delivered in a customer focussed and effective manner to all the communities that make up the Grampian area.

Ian H Milton
Grampian Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer

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REPORT TO: Grampian Valuation Joint Board on 1 November 2019

SUBJECT: IRRV Scottish Conference

BY: The Assessor & ERO

1. Reason for Report

- 1.1 To advise the Board of attendance at the Institute of Revenues, Rating and Valuation Scottish conference.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 The Board note the content of this report.

3. Background

- 3.1 The IRRV is the largest UK based professional body operating in the field of local government revenues, rating and valuation. It holds an annual conference in Scotland, which has been attended by the Assessor and Valuation Joint Board members since 1995. The Assessor is professionally qualified as a corporate member of the Institute.
- 3.2 Councillors Kille and Topping, the Assessor and an Assistant Assessor attended the conference. Four day-session places were also used by surveyor staff members as a source of valuable professional development that is a requirement of their membership of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors.

4. The 2019 Conference

- 4.1 The 2019 conference provided 25 sessions focussing on a wide range of subjects relevant to local taxation with a number of sessions devoted to valuation for rating and NDR reform, along with revenues, benefits, information management, corporate fraud and developing digital workspace.
- 4.2 The keynote opening address was provided by Murdo Fraser MSP, Shadow Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Ministerial Address was provided by Kate Forbes MSP, Minister for Public Finance and Digital Economy. Taken together these two addresses provided delegates with an insight into the direction of current government policy and an alternative critical review of that policy. The keynote address was followed by an overview of the council tax in relation to the future for domestic local taxation.

- 4.3 The remaining sessions available to attendees covered a wide range of lands valuation assessment and local government finance related topics. Sessions that were directly relevant to the valuation service included the future NDR appeals system, revaluation, the valuation of hydro-electricity generation plant, the valuation of non-commercial occupation, the approach to the valuation of plant and machinery, the treatment of empty offices, acting as an expert witness, the business growth accelerator and the overall progress of the NDR reforms.
- 4.4 The sessions provided a valuable insight into the challenges of property taxation and NDR for members and employees.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 Apart from the benefit of the formal sessions, attendance at this conference provided representatives of the organisation with access to practitioners and innovators from other jurisdictions, Scottish Government officials and senior political figures. The sessions were very informative and provided important professional development opportunities.

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