

Report

Report to:	Lanarkshire Valuation Joint Board
Date of Meeting:	5 September 2011
Report by:	Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer

Subject:	Progress Report
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- Provide an overview of the service;
- Outline current issues and service priorities;
- Provide an update on performance;
- Highlight issues affecting the future direction of the Joint Board

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Board is asked to approve the following recommendation(s):-

(1) that the contents of the report are noted

3. Service Reports

3.1. Electoral Registration

3.1.1 Rolling Registration

The workload in electoral registration has been dominated since June by preparations for and implementation of our duties in relation to the annual canvass of electors. Work has, however, been ongoing in maintaining the register as part of the normal business of rolling registration. Between 1 December 2010 and the register in force from 1 September 2011, some 15,952 names were added to the registers for North and South Lanarkshire and 17,664 names deleted resulting in a net decrease in electors of 1,712. This compares to the previous year when 10,459 names were added to the registers for North and South Lanarkshire and 14,593 names deleted. A breakdown of these figures is provided in appendices 1.1 and 1.2 along with comparison with the equivalent figure for the previous 2 years. The volume of changes is up 32% on last year. This reflects the continuing development of a more proactive approach to rolling registration between canvasses. This is part of the Joint Board's ongoing strategy for improving the accuracy of the register.

3.1.2 Annual Canvass

Work has begun on the annual canvass and the first issue of forms has now taken place. Like last year, this first phase is being carried out in two parts. Those properties which have no registered elector but which are believed to be occupied are being visited by a canvasser who will try to persuade the residents to register to vote. The exceptions to this are properties which have been visited by door to door canvassers for 3 consecutive years and have still failed to respond. These will only be canvassed by post this year. Those properties which have existing electors will receive their form by post. Those properties confirmed as empty at the moment will

be issued with a form by post at the reminder stage to allow for the possibility that they become occupied in the near future. Those properties where it is believed there has been a change of resident during the year will be canvassed by post at stage one but will be visited by a door to door canvasser at stage 2 if they fail to respond to the postal canvass. In total 287,275 forms will be issued in phase one. Of these 20,704 will be hand delivered by a canvasser. Reminders will be issued in October. A breakdown of the numbers of properties to be canvassed is provided in Appendices 1.3 and 1.4.

3.1.3 Publication and Republication of the Register of Electors

Following the canvass, the revised registers will be published on or before 1 December 2011. North Lanarkshire Council is, however, about to carry out a significant review of its polling districts. This review is not due to be completed until December 2011 after publication of the register. The change is likely to mean a reordering of the register. It is likely, therefore, the registers for North Lanarkshire Council area will require to be republished after completion of the review. I anticipate this will be 1 February or 1 March 2012.

3.1.4 Individual Electoral Registration

A White Paper and draft legislation has been brought before the Westminster Parliament to bring forward the implementation of Individual Electoral Registration. This has significant implications for the Joint Board's future workload and is subject of a separate report.

3.2. Non-Domestic Valuation

Workload in valuation in general has been dominated by dealing with appeals resulting from the 2010 Revaluation.

3.2.1 2005 Revaluation Appeals

Progress in this area is steady. 15 Revaluation appeals and 74 Running Roll appeals with a combined Rateable Value of £25.5m remain referred to the Lands Tribunal for Scotland. The listing of these appeals for hearing by the Tribunal should commence during the current financial year and may impact on resources during the year (see appendix 2.4).

3.2.2 2010 Revaluation Appeals

7,506 revaluation appeals have been received and appeal hearings have commenced to deal with these within the statutory timetable set by the Scottish Parliament. 934 appeals had been resolved by 30 June 2011 and progress continues steadily with around 1,000 appeals listed for hearings by the local Valuation Appeal Panel at any one time (see appendix 2.5).

3.2.3 Running Roll Appeals

Since 1 April 2010, 4,061 Running Roll appeals have been received. These are primarily on the grounds that the current economic downturn amounts to a material change of circumstances affecting the value of various properties. This is almost the total received throughout the previous 5 year revaluation cycle. Around 3,000 of these were received during March 2011 and indications are that this pattern may be repeated throughout the current 5 year cycle as companies and other organisations seek to cut their costs. Resourcing this increased workload will be a significant challenge in the years ahead. Costs associated with funding the Valuation Appeal Panel and costs for legal representation at hearings are likely to rise as a consequence of this increase. (see appendix 2.5).

3.2.4 Changes to the Valuation Roll

Appendices 2.1 to 2.3 provide a summary of performance in this area. As can be seen from appendix 2.3, the volume of changes made to the Roll is up around 40% by comparison to the same period last year. It is too early to confirm whether or not this increased level will continue for the remainder of the year.

3.3. Council Tax

Workload in this area continues to be dominated by adding new houses to the Council Tax list and dealing with Council Tax proposals and appeals. Appendices 3.1 to 3.4 provide a summary of performance in this area.

3.3.1 New Houses

As can be seen from appendix 3.2, the volume of new houses added to the List is down by around 40% by comparison to the same period last year. The figures from last year, however, included the transfer of around 200 houses from Glasgow to North Lanarkshire following a boundary change and the true fall in numbers is closer to 20%. The new housing market generally remains depressed with fewer completions achieved, particularly in North Lanarkshire. However, an element of this decrease can be attributed to the transfer of resources to deal with appeals and the increase in non domestic survey workload and, consequently, fewer visits to building site. Figures may, therefore, recover to some degree later in the year.

3.3.2 Proposals and Appeals

As can be seen from appendices 3.3 and 3.4, we continue to make steady progress in this area of workload.

4. Employee Implications/Staffing Issues

- 4.1. In accordance with the current budget strategy, 6.5 FTE posts are being held unfilled.

Staff absence levels for last year are summarised in appendix 4.0. Performance continues to be satisfactory in this area with an average absence rate of 2.94% which is equivalent to around 8 days per FTE.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 See 3.1.3 and 3.2.1 above.

6. Other Implications

- 6.1 Non domestic appeal workload is up over 45% from the equivalent point in the last Revaluation cycle. In addition, staffing levels have fallen from 75 FTE to 63.5 FTE over the same period. This means that current NDR appeal workload per FTE is up over 50% on the equivalent point in the 2005 Revaluation cycle. Since these appeals must be dealt with within a fixed statutory timetable, resources will have to be redirected from other tasks to accommodate this increased workload. This is likely to impact on service delivery elsewhere. Most at risk are the timescales for adding houses to Council Tax where there is a more flexible statutory regime for making changes to the Valuation List. Non statutory tasks such as providing advice and provisional values for proposed developments may also be affected.

An internal reorganisation of staffing resources has been carried out to try to mitigate some of this risk but it is inevitable that requests to treat some cases as priority will have to be refused.

7. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

7.1 This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a change to an existing policy, function or strategy and, therefore, no impact assessment is required.

8. Privacy Impact Assessment

8.1 The report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a change to an existing policy, function or strategy and therefore no impact assessment is required.

Edward P Duffy
Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer

16 August 2011

Previous References

Progress Report 2 June 2011

List of Background Papers

None

Contact for Further Information

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:-

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