

Report

Report to:	Lanarkshire Valuation Joint Board
Date of Meeting:	7 March 2011
Report by:	Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer

Subject:	Progress Report to the Joint Board
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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
- ◆ Advise of proposals for closure of the offices on 28, 29 and 30 December 2011
- ◆ Request approval for an additional holiday on 29 April 2011 to mark the Royal Wedding

2. Recommendation(s)

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

- (1) that the content of the report be noted.
- (2) that an additional fixed annual leave day be granted for employees on 29 April 2011 to celebrate the Royal Wedding and that employees required to work on that day as part of an essential service be given an additional floating annual leave day

3. Service Overview and Priorities

3.1. Electoral Registration

Workload in this area is currently dominated by preparations for the Scottish Parliament elections and Alternative Voting referendum due on 5 May 2011.

3.1.1 Annual Canvass Outcome

I am pleased to report considerable progress towards the Board's vision of achieving complete and accurate electoral registers following this year's annual canvass. Appendix 1.1 shows that the Board's formal canvass statistical return to the Electoral Commission has improved from 80.45% in 2009 to 92.11% in 2010. The figures show an increase in the take up of electronic registration from 15.40% to 18.84%. The number of electors carried forward without datamatching has fallen from 31,706(10.8%) to 4,032(1.38%). In addition, the number of houses believed occupied with no registered elector has fallen from 25,705(8.75%) to 19,088(6.51%).

These figures demonstrate that the work that has been put into developing datamatching in recent years is beginning to bear fruit as is the focus on targeting properties with no registered elector during the canvass and at elections.

A more detailed report on the completeness and accuracy of the Lanarkshire registers will be presented to members at the June meeting.

3.1.2 Rolling Registration

Registration application forms are currently being issued to all residents who have become new Council Tax payers since the register came into force on 1 December 2010.

In addition, Registration Reviews are being carried out for all 4,032 properties where electors' names were carried forward at the canvass without datamatching. These are properties where a canvass return was received in 2009 but not in 2010 and where the name of existing electors could not be matched to Council Tax records. These processes will continue throughout the year until the 2010 canvass begins in September with a brief suspension during the election period.

Table 1: Change in electorate since 1 December 2010

Area	No. of electors at 1/12/10	No. added	No. deleted	Total changes	%age churn	No. of electors at 1/02/10
NLC	250,097	779	527	1,306	0.52%	250,349
SLC	243,461	784	433	1,217	0.50%	243,812
LVJB	493,558	1,563	960	2,523	0.51%	494,161

3.1.3 Scottish Parliamentary Election and AV Referendum

Preparations are underway for the Election and referendum which will take place this year on 5th May. One of the major administrative tasks associated with the election will be the handling of the growing number of electors opting to vote by post. Liaison is ongoing with Returning Officers to ensure the smooth and successful completion of this task.

As a result of the 2010 canvass, a further 18,180 electors will be issued with postal vote applications before the elections. The current level of postal voters is summarised in appendix 1.2. This figure tends to grow as an election approaches and in general has gradually increased at each election since postal voting on demand was introduced. Currently, around 8.4% of the electorate have opted for this method of casting their vote.

3.1.4 Promoting Electoral Participation

In advance of the election, a further attempt will be made to register electors at those properties believed to be occupied but with no current elector. Plans are underway to identify the names of Council Tax payers at these properties and to address applications to those named individuals to try to encourage their participation in the election and referendum.

In addition, attainers who will be 18 on or before the 5 May and who have not been added to the register by their parent/guardian will also be targeted and encouraged to register and to vote.

Discussions are also ongoing with SLC Social Work with a view to identifying under represented client groups. It is hoped to agree a process for providing assistance with registration where appropriate.

We are also working with Returning Officers for both of our constituent authorities to ensure that all publicity material is consistent in its message to the public and includes up to date and relevant contact details.

3.2 Non Domestic Valuation

A summary of performance in this area can be found in appendices 2.1 to 2.4.

3.2.1 2005 Running Roll Appeals

A significant number of running roll appeals relating to economic downturn were received during 2010 and at the turn of the year around 1,000 were awaiting disposal. Workload associated with disposal of appeals is subject of a separate report.

3.2.2 2010 Revaluation Appeals

Workload associated with disposal of appeals is subject of a separate report.

3.2.3 Changes to the Valuation Roll in force (Running Roll)

Appendix 2.3 shows that the number of changes made up to 31 December 2010 is significantly up on the same period last year and that the time taken to make these changes has also improved.

3.3 Council Tax

Adding new houses to the Council Tax list and dealing with proposals continue to be the two main areas of workload. Some work is also underway in reviewing the bands of houses which have been extended and subsequently sold. Performance in this area is summarised in appendices 3.1 to 3.4.

3.3.1 New Houses

The number of new houses added to the Valuation List is at a similar level to the same period last year with the time taken to make changes also at a similar level.

3.3.2 Proposals and Appeals

Performance in this area continues to be encouraging. Appendix 3.3 shows that 203 new proposals were received between 1 April 2010 and 31 December 2010 with 315 being fully resolved. This continues a trend of more cases being resolved than received. 125 cases are, however, awaiting disposal by the Valuation Appeal Committee either by hearing or by written representations. Dealing with these hearings will continue to draw on resources during the coming year.

4. Staffing

- 4.1. As part of the budget settlement for 2010/11 and 2011/12, all current vacancies are being held unfilled with a view to carrying forward the resulting savings from 2010/11 into 2011/12. This means we are currently operating with 6 vacancies.

Staff absence levels for the last year are summarised in appendix 4.0. Performance continues to be satisfactory in this area.

Following consultation with staff, it is proposed to close the office on 28, 29 and 30 December 2011. Staff will use 3 days annual leave during this period. Additionally, it is proposed that, to mark the wedding of Prince William and Catherine Middleton, employees be granted a fixed annual leave day on 29 April 2011 where services are not being provided and that for those required to work as part of an essential service, an additional floating annual leave day is given.

5. Employee Implications

- 5.1. See 4.1 above.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1. None.

7. Other Implications

7.1. Car Pool Scheme: Risk to Service Delivery

The proposed move to a Car Pool scheme for all business journeys as an alternative to a car mileage payment has service delivery implication for the Joint Board.

a. Survey workload

Analysis of current usage shows a loss of between 45 minutes and 1 hour per journey from the time available for survey work by use of a car pool car as opposed to use of an employee's own car. This could impact negatively on the time taken to complete changes to the Valuation Roll and to enter new houses in the Valuation List.

b. Door-to-Door canvass

Canvassers are currently paid a mileage allowance for using their own car while carrying out the door-to-door canvass element of the annual canvass of electors. The removal of this reimbursement may make it difficult to recruit canvassers, particularly in the more outlying areas. Canvassers tend to work on an ad-hoc basis in evenings and at weekends and where weather permits. It is difficult to envisage a car pool scheme which could accommodate this model.

Discussions are ongoing with Personnel Services to try to identify a solution to these potential difficulties.

8. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

- 8.1. 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.

9. Privacy Impact Assessment

- 9.1 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

15 February 2011

Previous References

Progress report 29 November 2010.

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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