

Report to:	Lanarkshire Valuation Joint Board
Date of Meeting:	7 June 2010
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

2. Recommendation(s)

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

(1) that the content of the report be noted

3. Service Overview and Priorities

3.1. Electoral Registration

3.1.1 Post canvass workload

Electoral workload since the annual canvass has primarily been focused on preparations for the General Election. Firstly, in carrying out promotional work as part of Public Awareness duty and, more recently, in ensuring that:-

- the register for the election was as complete and accurate as possible
- those electors who wished a postal vote were accommodated
- Returning Officers received the information they needed on time and in the preferred format.

3.1.2 Public Awareness Workload

a. Roadshows

Joint Board staff participated in a series of Awareness Roadshows organised by South Lanarkshire Council's Election team:

Hamilton Town Centre	18 February 2010
East Kilbride Town Centre	19 February 2010
Rutherglen Shopping Mall	25 February 2010
Morrison's in Lanark	26 February 2010

b. New Council taxpayers

Letters and rolling registration forms were issued to 6,711 properties where there had been a change of Council Tax payer since 1 December 2009. The residents were encouraged to register for the upcoming election at their new address.

c. No registered electors – Knock Knock campaign

On 31 March 2010 27,032 promotional postcards were issued to houses where there was no registered elector. The card advised the residents that there was no one registered to vote at their address and encouraged them to contact us to get registered. A free phone number was set up for the campaign and will be retained and used for future awareness projects.

d. Attainers

An attempt was made to register as many young people as possible who would be 18 on or before the election and who were not yet registered. 170 young people in North Lanarkshire who fell into this category were identified from data provided by NLC Education Services. They were written to individually and encouraged to register. 28 responded positively and were registered in time for the election. South Lanarkshire Council's Education service had some data protection concerns about releasing similar information. Education Services were provided with 500 registration packs to be distributed to 17/18 year olds in secondary schools. Unfortunately, there were no positive responses. It is proposed to ask the Council's Data Protection officer to review the decision which would allow Electoral Registration Services to contact the young people directly in advance of future elections.

In total, 41,124 cards, letters or application forms were issued. Appendices 1.1 & 1.2 show the resultant changes made to the registers. 13,683 changes were made to the registers between 1 December 2009 and 20 April 2010 which was the closing date for applications for the election registers. While this had only a marginal effect on the total number of people registered (completeness) it improved the accuracy of the registers for use at the election by ensuring that electors were registered in their correct constituency based on their current residence. In addition 2,484 applications to register were received from residents who were already registered at the address applied for.

3.1.3 Postal Voting

In addition to the work done in promoting awareness and processing registration applications, there was a further increase in the number of electors opting to vote by post. Appendix 1.3 shows the increase in the run up to the election with 4,396 additions being made in the period before the election. At the European Election in June 2009 there were 37,072 absent voters. At the General Election there were 45,702, an increase of 8,630 (+23%).

3.1.4 Upcoming Workload

Preparations are already underway for the 2010 Canvass and the 2011 Scottish Parliament elections.

3.1.5 The Completeness and Accuracy of the Lanarkshire Registers

This is the subject of a separate report and will inform future canvass planning and public awareness activity.

3.2. Non-Domestic Rating

3.2.1 2010 Revaluation

This has now been completed and Revaluation Notices were issued on 18 March 2010. The outcome is subject of a separate report.

3.2.2 Valuation Roll entries

During 2009/10, the number of entries in the Valuation Roll has increased from 18,270 to 18,370. The total number of additions, deletions and alterations (including appeal settlements) was 1,254. The net result was an increase in Rateable Value from £687,629,223 to £690,742,527, an increase of just over £3m. This change is generally referred to as the buoyancy of the roll. A detailed breakdown is provided in appendices 2.1 & 2.2.

3.2.3 Valuation Roll time lag

This measure of performance looks at the time taken to make changes to the Valuation Roll (excluding appeal settlements). The number of changes is down on last year and the length of time taken to make changes has fallen back significantly compared to the previous year. This fall reflects a number of factors:

- The decision, for budgetary reasons, to delay the filling of 3 Valuer/Technician vacancies until April 2010.
- The continuing high level of appeal hearings called by the local Valuation Appeal Panel to deal with Council Tax appeals.
- The amount of time allocated to carrying out work associated with the 2010 Revaluation.

Appendix 2.4 provides a detailed breakdown of performance in this area along with a comparison with equivalent performance in 2008/09.

3.2.4 Non-Domestic Appeals

55 Revaluation appeals and 81 Running Roll appeals with a combined Rateable Value of £162m 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. 586 Running Roll appeals were received during 2009/10 and 808 appeals disposed of. Appeals continue to be received against the entries in the 2009/10 Valuation Roll on the grounds that the economic downturn amounts to a material change of circumstances affecting the value of various properties.

3.3 Council Tax

3.3.1 Council Tax entries

2009/10 saw 1,967 new houses added to Council Tax and 176 houses deleted. This resulted in an increase in chargeable dwellings of 1,759. The Band D equivalent increase was 2,013 dwellings. This results in an increased income to the constituent authorities of just over £2.1m. A detailed breakdown of these figures is provided in appendix 3.1.

3.3.2 Council Tax time lag

As in NDR, this measure of performance looks at the time taken to make changes to the Valuation (Council Tax) List. The volume of changes is down over the year and performance in this area has fallen back since last year although not quite as much as in NDR. The factors affecting this fall in performance are the same as mentioned at 3.2.3 above.

Appendix 3.2 provides a detailed breakdown of performance in this area along with a comparison with equivalent performance in 2008/09.

3.3.3 Council Tax proposals

Good progress continues to be made in this area with the outstanding balance of proposals down from 609 at the beginning of the year to 279. In 2009/10, therefore, while 333 new proposals were received, 663 were completely resolved. Although the number of new proposals received continues to be significantly higher than pre 2007 levels, the level has fallen from the 2007 peak. The current year should, therefore, see further significant inroads made into the 279 proposals currently outstanding.

Appendices 3.3 & 3.4 provide a detailed breakdown of progress in this area.

4. Employee Implications/Staffing Issues

- 4.1. In light of the ongoing workload demands, four trainees have been recruited. Two posts remain unfilled.

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

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1. None.

6. Other Implications

- 6.1. None.

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

17 May 2010

Previous References

Progress report 1 March 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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