

GRAMPIAN VALUATION JOINT BOARD

FRIDAY 27 OCTOBER 2017

YOUR ATTENDANCE IS REQUESTED at a Meeting of the GRAMPIAN VALUATION JOINT BOARD to be held in the COUNCIL CHAMBERS, MORAY COUNCIL HEADQUARTERS, HIGH STREET, ELGIN on FRIDAY 27 OCTOBER 2017 at 10:30am.

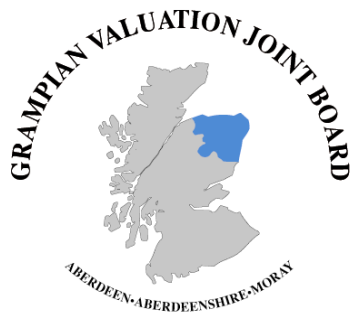
R D Burns
Clerk to the Board

20 October 2017

BUSINESS

1. Sederunt
2. Declaration of Financial and Other Interests*
3. Written Questions**
4. Minute of Meeting of the Board dated 25 August 2017
5. Revenue Budget Monitoring Statement for the Period 1 April – 30 September 2017 - Report by Treasurer to the Board
6. Public Performance Report – Report by The Assessor & ERO
7. Valuation Roll & Council Tax Valuation List – Report by The Assessor & ERO
8. Register of Electors Annual Canvass - Report by The Assessor & ERO
9. IRRV Scottish Conference - Report by The Assessor & ERO
10. Question Time***

Any person attending the meeting who requires access assistance should contact customer services on 01343 563217 in advance of the meeting.



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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 who will arrange for a written answer to be provided within 7 working days.

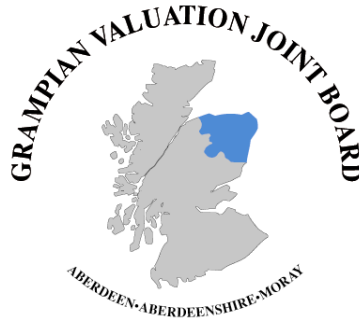


SEDERUNT

COUNCILLOR G LEADBITTER (CONVENER)
COUNCILLOR B CORMIE (DEPUTE CONVENER)
COUNCILLOR C ALLARD
COUNCILLOR C BUCHAN
COUNCILLOR G COWIE
COUNCILLOR A DONNELLY
COUNCILLOR G GRAHAM
COUNCILLOR A KILLE
COUNCILLOR R McKAIL
COUNCILLOR J REYNOLDS
COUNCILLOR M ROY
COUNCILLOR R SHEPHERD
COUNCILLOR S STUART
COUNCILLOR B TOPPING
COUNCILLOR J WHYTE

Contact Person:	Tracey Sutherland
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WRITTEN QUESTIONS



MINUTE OF MEETING OF THE GRAMPIAN VALUATION JOINT BOARD

FRIDAY 25 AUGUST 2017 AT 10.30 AM

COMMITTEE ROOM 1, WOODHILL HOUSE, ABERDEEN

PRESENT

Councillors G Leadbitter (Chair), B Cormie (Depute), C Allard, C Buchan, A Donnelly, A Kille (substituting for Councillor Lonchay), S Macdonald (substituting for Councillor G Graham), R McKail, J Reynolds, M Roy, S Stuart, B Topping and J Whyte.

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Councillors G Cowie, G Graham, D Lonchay and R Shepherd.

IN ATTENDANCE

Mr I Milton, Grampian Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer (ERO), Ms M Bruce, Senior Audit Manager, Audit Scotland, Mrs L Paisey, Head of Financial Services and Mrs L Rowan, Committee Services Officer as Clerk to the Board (both Moray Council).

1. MEMBERSHIP

Councillor Kille advised the Board that Councillor Lonchay had stepped down from membership of the GVJB and that he would be replacing him as GVJB Member. This was noted.

2. DECLARATION OF GROUP DECISIONS AND MEMBERS INTERESTS

In terms of Standing Order 25 and the Councillors' Code of Conduct, Councillors Reynolds, Donnelly and Allard declared an interest in item 6 "Reports to those charged with Governance 2016/17", being on the Aberdeen City Council Pension Committee and Board. There were no other declarations from group leaders or spokespersons in regard to any prior decisions taken on how Members will vote on any item on the agenda or any declarations of Members' interests in respect of any item on the agenda.

3. WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Board noted that no written questions had been submitted.

4. MINUTE OF MEETING OF THE BOARD DATED 30 JUNE 2017

The minute of the meeting of the Board dated 30 June 2017 was submitted for approval.

Councillor Reynolds stated that he was noted as having given his apologies at the meeting on 30 June 2017 however highlighted that he was only made aware of the meeting on the actual day of the meeting.

Councillor Donnelly queried when the Clerk had received notification of the Aberdeen City membership on the GVJB.

In response, the Assessor and ERO advised that there had been some difficulty in obtaining the names of those Elected Members who would sit on the Board and that he was not exactly sure what date the names from Aberdeen City had been forwarded to the Clerk however would find out and circulate this information to the Board.

Councillor McDonald queried whether the first meeting of the GVJB following a local government election could be scheduled a few weeks after the election to allow for membership to be agreed.

In response, the Assessor and ERO advised that whilst he acknowledged the tight timescales involved in agreeing the membership of the Board following the Local Government Elections, the Board had to meet by the 30 June 2017.

Under reference to paragraph 2 of the Minute, Councillor Allard noted that his name was not listed in those Members who had voted for the motion. In response, the Clerk agreed to amend the Minute accordingly.

Under reference to those indicated as being present in the Minute, Councillor Stuart noted that Councillor Cormie's name should read B and not G. In response, the Clerk agreed to amend the Minute accordingly.

With those amendments being noted, Councillor Topping proposed the Minute as an accurate record. This was seconded by Councillor Stuart.

Thereafter, the Board agreed to approve the Minute as an accurate record of the meeting.

5. ORDER OF BUSINESS

In terms of Standing Order 15, the Board agreed to vary the order of business set down on the agenda and take item 6 "Reports to those Charged with Governance 2016/17" ahead of item 5 "Audited Annual Accounts for Year Ending 31 March 2017".

6. REPORTS TO THOSE CHARGED WITH GOVERNANCE 2016/17

A report by the Treasurer to the Board asked the Board to consider the reports to those charged with governance from the Boards External Auditor for the year ended 31 March 2017.

Following consideration, the Board agreed to note the covering memo and draft Annual report on the 2016/17 audit from the External Auditor as set out in Appendices 1 and 2 of the report.

7. AUDITED ACCOUNTS YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2017

A report by the Treasurer presented to the Board the Audited Accounts Year Ending 31 March 2017 for consideration and approval.

Following consideration, the Board agreed:-

- (a) to approve that the Annual Accounts are signed, having considered the Annual Report from the external auditor earlier at this meeting;
- (b) to note the surplus £235,000 for 2016/17; and
- (c) that £226,000 be returned to constituent authorities leaving a balance on the General Fund of £209,000.

8. REVIEW OF CONSTITUTIONAL DOCUMENTS

Under reference to paragraph 4 of the Minute of this Board dated 25 August 2017, a report by the Treasurer to the Board sought the Board's approval for a revision to the Financial Regulations which control Grampian Valuation Joint Board's financial administration and the introduction of a Scheme of Delegation following the External Auditor's recommendation.

Following consideration, the Board agreed to:

- (i) note that the Standing Orders have been reviewed and that there are no proposed changes;
- (ii) approve the proposed changes to the Financial Regulations as set out in Appendix 1, including the procurement roles and responsibilities as set out in Appendix 2 of the report;
- (iii) approve the introduction of a Scheme of Delegation as set out in Appendix 3, and
- (iv) note that these governance documents will be reviewed at least every two years and any proposed changes reported to the Board for approval.

9. CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

A report by The Assessor and ERO 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 as set out in the Appendix to the report.

10. QUESTION TIME

There were no questions raised.



REPORT TO: GRAMPIAN VALUATION JOINT BOARD ON 27 OCTOBER 2017

SUBJECT: REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING STATEMENT FOR THE PERIOD 1 APRIL TO 30 SEPTEMBER 2017

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 2017.
- 1.2 To consider the Estimated Outturn position for the year 2017/18.

2 RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Board considers the Revenue Monitoring Statement for the period 1 April 2017 to 30 September 2017 and the estimated outturn forecast for the financial year 2017/18.

3. CURRENT POSITION

- 3.1 At its meeting on 27 January 2017 the Board agreed the Revenue Budget for 2017/18 and approved that the requisitions from constituent authorities be set at £4,039,000.
- 3.2 **APPENDIX 1** shows the monitoring position to 30 September 2017. It gives details of the 2017/18 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 2017 is £2,089,000 which results in an underspend against budget to date of £48,000.
- 3.3 To date there is a £56,000 under spend within employee costs, £53,000 of which relates to vacant posts. The ongoing challenge of filling vacancies within the service has previously been highlighted to the Board and at the time of writing this report there are 3.6 FTE vacant posts. The service has recently advertised posts and successful recruitment may incur relocation expenses.

- 3.4 It was reported at budget setting time that a vacancy management provision would be introduced to take into account the anticipated underspend on salary costs. The credit budget of £121,000 is intended to absorb any variance created by vacancies until there is someone recruited and in post. At the half way point of the year this provision is £61,000. When offset against the £56,000 underspend in staffing, this brings the total employee costs to £5,000 over budget.
- 3.5 The 2017/18 pay award of 1.0%, backdated to April 2017, was paid with the September salaries.
- 3.6 Accommodation charges to date are within budget. The underspend of £11,000 relates to an accrual made at the end of 2016/17, the actual invoice charge processed in 2017/18 being less than had been estimated. Energy costs are slightly over budget due to electricity at Banff office and it is anticipated that the overspend will continue to year-end but will be absorbed by other underspends within Property costs.
- 3.7 Transport costs are under budget by £3,000 to date which is a result of vacancies.
- 3.8 The total expenditure on Supplies and Services is £310,000 which is £39,000 underspent against budget to date of £349,000, with minor overspends and underspends across the headings.
- 3.9 Printing and stationery is below budget to date but is expected to be back on budget by year end.
- 3.10 The IT maintenance and support budget shows an underspend to date of £23,000 but is also expected to be virtually on budget by the year end.
- 3.11 The invoices for valuation appeals panel costs are usually submitted for payment towards the end of the year by the panel secretaries. The Board approve the level of remuneration payable to the Grampian Valuation Appeals Panel Secretariat and the current terms were revised with effect from 1 April 2013. The format of remuneration and allowances is a fixed annual retainer fee plus an hourly rate for attending hearings. There has been no provision made specifically for an increase in fees this year but should the remuneration levels be reviewed in the near future this could be contained within the total £56,000 budget, depending on the level of hearings.
- 3.12 The support services charge is processed at 31 March as part of the year end closedown.
- 3.13 Income from government grants and recharges are expected to be below budget. During budget preparations the Assessor assumed the Individual Electoral Registration (IER) grant would be no less than the amount awarded in the previous year: £208,000. The Cabinet Office issued a letter in July 2017 setting out the initial grant allocations to Electoral Registration Officers in Scotland for costs relating to IER for 2017/18. The initial grant awarded to

Grampian VJB is £151,000. Later in the financial year they 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.

3.14 An additional contribution of £26,000 has been approved by the Cabinet Office for IT development work on Electoral Registration relating to e-mailing Invitation to Register applications. The invoice was issued in October and is reflected in the projected year end income figures.

3.15 There are no other significant variances to report at this stage.

4. ESTIMATED OUTTURN 2017/18

4.1 The revenue budget is expected to be underspent by the year end and at this stage the underspend is estimated at £1,000.

4.2 The most significant underspend anticipated is in employee costs, at £17,000. With expected vacancies throughout the year, the estimated variance in salaries, including National Insurance and Superannuation, is £137,000. This underspend is reduced by expenditure on other employee costs which includes staff advertising and possible relocation expenses. There is a vacancy management provision of £121,000, which is intended to absorb the variance created by projected vacancies. With this provision, the overall variance in employee costs is projected to be a £17,000 underspend.

4.3 Property costs are expected to be within budget for the three office locations.

4.4 Supplies and Services are estimated to be on budget in total with minor overspends and underspends within the budget headings.

4.5 Expenditure to date on postages is greater than half of the annual budget at this half way point through the year and the budget is phased to take account of the issue of Household Enquiry Forms (HEF) in July as part of the annual canvass. Canvass forms are delivered to every address in Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire and Moray. Although it depends on how many reminders are needed, spend on postages should be less in the second half of the year and at this stage, the year end expenditure is expected to be within budget.

4.6 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 same level as achieved in 2016/17 which is slightly below budget.

4.7 As stated in paragraph 3.15 the government grant for IER was expected to be no less than the amount received in 2016/17, and the budget was set at £208,000. The grant allocation for 2017/18 is £151,000 with the opportunity to claim for additional IER related costs that have been incurred later in the year. The Assessor is not yet in a position to estimate if there will be a justification led bid this year, or how much, and the estimated outturn for government grants

includes the £151,000 and £26,000 grant for IT development referred to in paragraph 3.16.

4.8 The estimated outturn as shown in Appendix 1 is an underspend of £1,000.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 The total net expenditure as at 30 September 2017 is £2,089,000, an underspend against budget to date of £48,000.

5.2 The estimated outturn is an underspend of £1,000.

5.3 An update on the estimated outturn and anticipated additional funding from the Cabinet Office will be reported to the Board at the meeting in January 2018.

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
Date:	10 October 2017

Signature:

Designation: Treasurer

Name: Lorraine Paisey

Date:

GRAMPIAN VALUATION JOINT BOARD REVENUE MONITORING STATEMENT
FOR PERIOD 1 APRIL TO 30 SEPTEMBER 2017

APPENDIX 1

Item: 5

Page: 5

Line No.	2017-18 Total Budget	2017-18 Budget to Date	Actual 30 Sept 2017	Variance 30 Sept 2017	2017-18 Estimated Outturn	2017-18 Estimated Variance	
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000			
Employee Costs							
1	Salaries	2,490	1,245	1,216	29	2,393	97
2	National Insurance	260	130	125	5	246	14
3	Superannuation	480	240	221	19	454	26
4	Additional Pensions	24	12	11	1	22	2
5	Other Employee Costs	15	8	7	1	20	(5)
6	Training	14	4	3	1	10	4
7	Vacancy Management	(121)	(61)	0	(61)	0	(121)
	Total Employee Costs	3,162	1,578	1,583	(5)	3,145	17
Property Costs							
8	Accommodation Charges	312	168	157	11	305	7
9	Repairs and Maintenance	5	2	1	1	4	1
10	Energy Costs	7	3	4	(1)	8	(1)
11	Cleaning	4	2	2	0	3	1
	Total Property Costs	328	175	164	11	320	8
Transport Costs							
12	Staff Travel and Subsistence	69	35	32	3	63	6
	Total Transport Costs	69	35	32	3	63	6
Supplies & Services							
13	Equipment, Furniture & Materials	7	3	4	(1)	7	0
14	Protective Clothing	1	0	0	0	1	0
15	Text & Reference Books	4	3	3	0	4	0
16	Printing & Stationery	27	13	6	7	27	0
17	Postages	280	177	172	5	280	0
18	Telephones	6	4	4	0	7	(1)
19	Advertising	5	2	1	1	5	0
20	IT Maintenance & Support	159	83	60	23	158	1
21	Canvas Expenses	75	38	39	(1)	75	0
22	Valuation Appeals	56	10	10	0	56	0
23	Fees, Charges & Subs	3	0	0	0	2	1
24	Specialist Services	19	15	11	4	17	2
25	Other Supplies & Services	1	1	0	1	1	0
	Total Supplies & Services	643	349	310	39	640	3
Support Services							
26	Lead Authority Charge	56	0	0	0	56	0
	Total Support Services	56	0	0	0	56	0
	Gross Expenditure	4,258	2,137	2,089	48	4,224	34
Income							
28	Sales and Other Income	(8)	0	0	0	(6)	(2)
29	Government Grant and recharges	(208)	0	0	0	(177)	(31)
30	Interest on Revenue balances	(3)	0	0	0	(3)	0
	Total Income	(219)	0	0	0	(186)	(33)
31	Net Expenditure	4,039	2,137	2,089	48	4,038	1
32	Requisitions	(4,039)	(2,017)	(2,017)	0	(4,039)	0
33	(Surplus)/Deficit for Year	0	120	72	48	(1)	1



REPORT TO: Grampian Valuation Joint Board on 27 October 2017

SUBJECT: Public Performance Report

BY: The Assessor & ERO

1. Reason for Report

1.1 To seek approval for the publication of the sixteenth 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 £3.97M against a budget of £4.20M reflects the fact that significant additional funding was secured from government for the ongoing overhead of IER which is acknowledged to suffer from unsustainable elements such as the current one-size-fits-all format of the annual canvass.

- 4.4 Staffing levels have remained steady over the year with 74 full time equivalent posts filled against an establishment of 78 full time equivalent posts as at 31 March 2017, this compares to the 73 posts filled as at 31 March 2016 and 70 posts filled as at 31 March 2015.
- 4.5 The overall percentage of days lost to ill-health absence shows a significant decline from 3.9% to 1.3%; however the relatively small size of the establishment means that these statistics are vulnerable to the healthiness or otherwise of individual members of staff. Where absences do occur absence management procedures seek to ensure that any absence is effectively managed.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 The priorities and performance levels set out in the public performance report reflect the challenges of what amounts to another unique year in what would normally be an organisation geared to a stable and routine cycle of electoral and valuation based activities. They reflect the versatility and professionalism demonstrated by the employees in order to meet the challenges of maintaining the baseload of routine valuation assessment and registration services whilst responding to the unique demands of the first revaluation of non-domestic subjects for seven years, the return of shooting rights to the assessment process after a period of 22 years, the first Scottish Parliamentary elections since the reduction in the franchise age and an EU referendum called at short notice that in turn delayed the commencement of the annual canvass. Once again, I must express my appreciation to the Board's employees in showing the agility, dedication and commitment that enabled them to meet the demands of 2016/17.

Author of Report: Ian H Milton

Signature:

Date: 17 October 2017

Designation: Assessor & ERO

Name: Ian H Milton

Grampian Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer

Public Performance Report 2016/17

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. Expenditure for 2016/17 was £3.968M against a budget of £4.203M and was net of additional grant funded expenditure of £0.230M 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 78 posts distributed between offices in Aberdeen, Banff and Elgin. As at 31 March 2017 there were 74 full-time equivalent staff in post. In the last year staff absence due to ill health has fallen to 1.3%. This is a significant improvement on the figure of 3.9% for 2015/16. Absence data for a small establishment is sensitive to the misfortune of a small number of employees. 2016/17 has been a good year for employee health and it is hoped that this will continue into future years.

A review of our 2016/17 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.

Complete and accurate registers of electors for the Scottish Parliamentary General Election of 5 May 2016 and the Referendum on membership of the European Union that was held on 23 June 2016

The Scottish Parliamentary election was the first Scotland-wide election where 16 and 17 year olds could vote as a matter of course. Whilst the election calendar is generally more certain with fixed terms for parliaments, the announcement of the EU referendum and the subsequent unplanned extension to the application deadline by 48 hours posed significant challenges to the service. We managed our publicity and engagement activities to focus on school pupils from the age of 14 onwards as this was the first year when they would be able to register to vote as a matter of course and secured media coverage of the work that we were doing. The Electoral Commission's report on both the Scottish Parliamentary election and the EU referendum was extremely positive in terms of the work of officials involved and with particular reference to Electoral Registration Officers' hard work and ability to respond to the registration timetable extension brought about by the technical difficulties experienced by the government digital service's website prior to the referendum.

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

The canvass of 276,438 households achieved a return rate of 79% by 1 December 2016. This was an improvement on the corresponding return rate of 76% as at 1 December 2015. We continued to chase up non-returns and by 31 March 2017 the return rate had risen to 86%. We also managed to increase the proportion of households who respond to the canvass by automated response channels such as online, text or automated telephone options from 64,040 in 2015 to 79,606 in 2016. Automated responses are more efficient as they do not require back-office processing. The two stage nature of the canvass under the IER framework means that canvass related activity extends well beyond the 1 December and registration application activity is now an all year round process with special emphasis around electoral events. By 1 April 2017 the total electorate was 443,150.

Publish revised registers 1 December 2016.

The Electoral Commission reported that all EROs in Scotland met their performance standards. The electorate on the revised registers published by 1 December 2016 was 442,175.

Deliver the 2017 general revaluation of all non-domestic properties.

The Scottish Government required draft values to be made available to them via the shared Assessors Portal (website) by 30 September 2016. The 26,000 non-domestic subjects were revalued on time and the draft values made available to the Scottish Government. The draft values were subsequently made available online to the public in tandem with the Scottish Government's draft budget proposals and the valuation roll formally made up on 15 March 2017 with valuation notices issued to owners and occupiers of each property. From December 2016 through to March 2017 we embarked on a major engagement drive with presentations provided both regionally, locally and also to specific sectors impacted by the revaluation prior to the new rateable values coming into force on 1 April 2017.

Preparation for the reintroduction of shooting rights to the valuation roll.

Since the exemption of shooting rights from non-domestic rates in 1995 there has been no definitive all-Scotland data source that would provide the location and owner/occupier information for shooting rights. This exemption was removed by the Land Reform Act in 2016 and we have been working closely with national agencies such as The Directorate of Agriculture and Rural Economy and Scottish Natural Heritage to obtain address data. Using this data we issued 4,410 questionnaires to land managers and the analysis of the resultant data was at an advanced stage by the end of 2016/17.

Maintain complete and accurate valuation lists and rolls

In both domestic and non-domestic categories we did not reach our target of 94% of new dwellings being banded within 90 days nor 60% of amendments to the valuation roll within 90 days, however, whilst we have not met our targets in terms of speed of turnaround, we have met our objectives of ensuring we have complete and accurate lists and rolls. The reason behind the increase in turnaround time was the diversion of our surveyors to carry out the additional and unique task of reviewing some 1,000 non-domestic assessments to establish whether they required to be sub-divided to reflect a recent Supreme Court decision. The exercise was completed on time and prior to the new roll coming into force on 1 April 2017, ensuring that our survey records and the corresponding rolls were complete and accurately reflecting current law.

In overall terms the organisation met its priorities for 2016/17. The major commitment to Revaluation 2017 along with the requirement to deliver not only the Scottish Parliamentary

elections but also the EU referendum and its associated challenges of a technical problem with the national website challenged our ability to deliver. The organisation has nevertheless responded and delivered, meeting its original priorities regardless.

Data tables

Table 1 shows the number of new dwellings added to the lists in Grampian over the last 10 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
2016/17	3,345	94%	92%	97%	98%
2015/16	3,009	94%	93%	97%	98%
2014/15	2,650	92%	92%	97%	97%
2013/14	2,757	92%	95%	97%	99%
2012/13	2,568	92%	97%	97%	99%
2011/12	2,455	90%	95%	97%	98%
2010/11	2,715	90%	96%	97%	98%
2009/10	2,642	90%	92%	97%	98%
2008/09	2,803	88%	89%	96%	97%
2007/08	2,964	88%	92%	96%	98%

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 2009/10 and 2016/17 are shown in *italics* as these represent years when we are revaluing all non-domestic properties in addition to our routine maintenance of the roll. For this reason our resources have to be diverted to revaluation tasks and our routine maintenance performance threshold adjusted as appropriate.

Table 2 The time taken to alter the Valuation Roll

Year	Number	Within 3 months		Within 6 months	
		Threshold	Actual	Threshold	Actual
<i>2016/17</i>	<i>2,129</i>	<i>60%</i>	<i>56%</i>	<i>85%</i>	<i>75%</i>
2015/16	2,474	77%	61%	90%	78%
2014/15	2,200	77%	68%	90%	85%
2013/14	2,096	77%	75%	90%	88%
2012/13	2,284	70%	75%	85%	89%
2011/12	1,945	70%	69%	85%	86%
2010/11	2,502	70%	66%	85%	81%
<i>2009/10</i>	<i>1,892</i>	<i>50%</i>	<i>57%</i>	<i>75%</i>	<i>73%</i>
2008/09	2,248	50%	70%	75%	86%
2007/08	2,339	50%	65%	75%	85%
2006/07	2,187	50%	59%	75%	82%

Table 3 provides the electorate, the number of electors who have postal votes at the end of the canvass, and the number of electors who have opted out of the Open Register (formerly known as the Edited Register). The Open Register is available for sale at a fixed price set by law to anybody who requests it. Since the introduction of IER once an elector is registered, they stay on the register until we receive information that they have moved on. The former practice of removing electors who do not respond to two consecutive canvass forms no longer applies. A full canvass was not conducted in 2014/15.

Table 3 Electorate details for Grampian

Register	Electorate	Canvass Return Rate	Postal Voters	Electors removed after 2 years	Opt-outs from Open/Edited Register
1 Dec 2016	442,175*	79%*	91,774	n/a	232,457
1 Dec 2015	436,748	75%	87,110	n/a	213,544
27 Feb 2015	444,256	n/a	85,618	n/a	196,359
10 March 2014	445,541	95.4%	70,626	1,336	179,326
1 Dec 2012	430,927	92.2%	78,886	1,556	150,766
1 Dec 2011	427,105	92.6%	71,502	1,667	138,020
1 Dec 2010	411,047	87.9%	66,645	2,315	96,140
1 Dec 2009	406,422	87.9%	54,709	2,718	92,172
1 Dec 2008	406,654	87.8%	49,626	1,579	77,420
1 Dec 2007	405,474	78.3%	49,157	1,930	73,249

*As stated above the canvass process now extends beyond the 1 December, the number of registered electors rose to 443,150 as at 1 April 2017. The final canvass return rate was 86%.

Conclusion

We have adapted to continue to deliver high quality stakeholder focussed registration and valuation services in a cost efficiency driven environment. We have updated our survey records to reflect the recent Supreme Court decision and have revalued over 26,000 properties in addition to maintaining our routine updates to the roll and list, dealing with programmed local government elections and meeting the demands of the snap UK Parliamentary election.

The organisation is however only as good as the people that collectively represent it. In this regard the officers and employees of the Board have continued to demonstrate a commitment and agility that has ensured that service delivery reflects local concerns and conditions. I am extremely grateful to fellow officers and employees for their professionalism and dedication to ensure that the statutory duties of the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer are delivered to the citizens of Grampian.

Ian H Milton
Grampian Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer

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REPORT TO: Grampian Valuation Joint Board on 27 October 2017

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 2017.

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 performance thresholds in June 2017 in order to reflect the completion of the revaluation. Council tax valuation list performance thresholds were last reviewed in June 2015.

4. Current Position

4.1 Valuation Roll

4.1.1 Appendix 1 provides performance information for the first 6 months of 2017/18 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, 78.8% of updates to the roll are made within the initial three-month period and this compares to the performance threshold that was revised upwards in June 2017 of 77%.

- 4.1.2 During the last 6 months demands for the resources of the valuation service have been extremely high, with two activities diverting valuation resources from maintaining and updating the valuation roll.
- 4.1.3 The first activity has been the handling of enquiries from ratepayers regarding the revaluation rateable values that came into effect on 1 April 2017. Interest in the 2017 revaluation has been particularly high and that has resulted in heavy demands on surveyors in terms of dealing with enquiries and checking property details.
- 4.1.4 The second activity has been the valuation of 1,200 shooting rights. The exemption of shooting rights and deer forests from rating that had been in place since 1 April 1995 was removed by the Land Reform Act 2016. This has necessitated a major data capture and analysis exercise by Assessors. Whilst the roll can be updated throughout this year, the target was to have the bulk of the entries for shooting rights added to the valuation roll by 20 September 2017. Whilst this objective was met, surveyors are continuing with further investigation and survey of subjects prior to adding further shooting related subjects to the roll during the remainder of this year.

4.2 **Council Tax Valuation List**

- 4.2.1 Appendix 2 provides the position for the first 6 months of 2017/18 and the previous two whole years. The objective of having at least 94% of new entries added to the valuation list within 3 months of the properties being occupied has proved a challenge to the service. One of the key issues is reporting of completions by developers. Whilst effective reporting arrangements are in place with the volume builders, there is potential to improve reporting from smaller developers and this potential is currently being examined.

4.3 **Developments**

- 4.3.1 The Barclay Review Group published its report and recommendations for the enhancing and reforming the rating system on 22 August. Its remit that was set by government in 2016 was to 'make recommendations that seek to enhance and reform the business rates system in Scotland to better support business growth and long term investment and reflect changing marketplaces'. The group recognised that the current structure of Assessors 'provides a good model of efficiency and has a key strength in its local knowledge'. Accordingly the group made no recommendations for major structural change. It also reported 'It is also a strength of the system that Assessors are independent of Government and value property based on market evidence without political interference.'
- 4.3.2 The Scottish Government has accepted most of the Barclay recommendations including a move to triennial revaluations with the next revaluation in 2022 and then three yearly thereafter.

- 4.3.3 The Scottish Assessors Association has also agreed and published an action plan to seek to improve the service already offered by Assessors. This action plan reflects the government's response to the Barclay recommendations which will have short, medium and long term resource implications for the Board. Short term implications relate to improvements to the website to enable greater functionality. In the medium term the provision of estimated values may increase staffing requirements and the longer-term move to triennial revaluations will place further demands on IT infrastructure and personnel. The precise impact has not been quantified pending the publication of the government's implementation plan that is anticipated in December 2017.
- 4.3.4 The first two major tranches of work have now been completed in relation to the return of shooting rights and deer forests to the valuation roll; these being the analysis of values and then the application of that analysis to the majority of land holdings where it has been established that shooting rights exist. The third tranche of work that is currently underway is the more detailed investigation of larger estates where pertinents such as larders and other buildings may require to be assessed along with the shooting right or deer forest. The objective is to have the remainder of entries in the valuation roll by 31 March 2018.
- 4.3.5 The deadline for lodging revaluation appeals passed on 30 September 2017. The number of properties under appeal has varied over successive revaluations as shown in the table below:-

Revaluation	Entries in the valuation roll	Entries under appeal	Percentage
2000	22,852	8,076	35%
2005	22,868	5,287	23%
2010	23,481	7,154	30%
2017	26,036	10,001	38%

- 4.3.6 The service is currently dealing with a significant volume of running roll appeals that have been lodged following a decision of the Aberdeen Valuation Appeal Committee relative to offices where it was claimed that rateable values should be reduced from 1 April 2015. The appeal was upheld in part and is now subject to appeals by all parties to the Lands Valuation Appeal Court.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 The service is continuing to seek to meet its performance thresholds for routine maintenance of the valuation rolls and lists albeit that the outcome in terms of performance must be reviewed against a background of other major tasks that the valuation service is undertaking.

Author of Report: Ian H Milton

Signature: _____

Date: 16 October 2017

Designation: Assessor & ERO

Name: Ian H Milton

Valuation Roll Performance Indicators as at 30 September 2017

	Time Period	2017/2018 (part year)	2016/2017	2015/2016
Amendments within Time Periods	0 - 3 Months	954	1197	1513
The number of amendments made to the valuation roll during the year as a result of material change of circumstances and new subjects.	%	78.8%	56.2%	61.2%
	<i>Threshold %</i>	77.0%	60.0%	77.0%
	3 - 6 Months	199	401	421
	%	16.4%	18.8%	17.0%
	<i>Threshold %</i>	13.0%	25.0%	13.0%
The time period is the period between the effective date of the amendment and the date the corresponding Valuation Notice is issued.	Over 6 Months	58	531	540
	%	4.8%	24.94%	21.8%
	<i>Threshold %</i>	10%	15.0%	10.0%
Number of Amendments		1211	2,129	2,474
Total Number of Entries	At 1 April	26,036	25,267	24,803
Total Rateable Value	At 1 April	£987.11M	£804.15M	£772.20M

Appendix 2

Council Tax Valuation List Performance Indicators as at 30 September 2017

	Time Period	2017/2018 (part year)	2016/2017	2015/2016
New Entries within Time Periods	0 - 3 Months	1,509	3,070	2,783
The time period is the period between the effective date of the amendment and the date the corresponding Banding Notice is issued.	%	90.3%	91.8%	92.5%
	<i>Threshold %</i>	94.0%	94.0%	94.0%
	3 - 6 Months	103	210	156
	%	6.2%	6.3%	5.2%
	<i>Threshold %</i>	3.0%	3.0%	3.0%
	Over 6 Months	60	65	70
	%	3.6%	1.9%	2.3%
	<i>Threshold %</i>	3.0%	3.0%	3.0%
Number of New Entries Added		1672	3,345	3,009
The Actual number of new dwellings added to the Valuation List during the year.				
Total Number of Entries		287,336	284,435	282,009
The actual number of properties shown in the Valuation List as at 1 April annually.				
Adjusted to Band "D" Equivalent		298,888*	281,036	278,000

**The Council Tax (Substitution of Proportion) (Scotland) Order 2016 altered the ratio between Band A and Band H from 1:3 to 1:3.675 with effect from 1 April 2017. Had the ratio remained at 1:3, the corresponding Band D equivalent would have been 284,132*



REPORT TO: Grampian Valuation Joint Board on 27 October 2017

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 2017 canvass is the third full canvass since the introduction of individual electoral registration (IER) and involves a two-stage process of issuing household enquiry forms to the 277,741 dwellings in Grampian as at 15 July 2017 and carrying out follow-up activity once a return is made. Last year the canvass commencement was delayed to 15 August to allow for the post-EU referendum updates to be implemented prior to printing the canvass forms. The planned commencement date of the 2017 canvass was 1 July 2017 however the Extraordinary UK Parliamentary General Election of 8 June 2017 necessitated a delay in the canvass to 15 July 2017.

3.2 IER requires each new elector notified on the returned household canvass form to be supported by an individual application to register. If a new potential elector does not apply to register independently, the ERO is required to issue an invitation to register by post. Since 15 July the service has issued 10,582 invitations to register and processed 9,023 additions to the register.

3.3 Where an elector has moved out and has been crossed out on the household canvass form, IER requires further verification that the person is no longer resident before the ERO can remove an elector's name from the register. If an ERO cannot verify that the person in question has moved out a review must be carried out. 9,135 reviews have been initiated for the period from 15 July to date.

3.4 The 2017 return statistics as at 17 October are provided in the table:-

Year	Issued	Returned		Method of Return (%)			
		Number	%	Post/Other	Phone	Online	Text
17 Oct 2017	279,280	217,341	78%	58%	7%	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%

The corresponding return information prior to publication of the revised register for the previous two canvasses are provided for comparison purposes.

3.5 These statistics show that moving forward the canvass commencement date has created the opportunity for canvass follow-up activities to continue for an additional 4 weeks prior to publication of the revised registers by 1 December. The shift from posting forms back to automated response channels is a welcome and continuing trend. Messaging in 2017 canvass materials has been used to inform the citizen of the financial benefits of using automated channels.

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

Year	Number of automated responses	% of total canvass
17 Oct 2017	90,752	42%
21 Nov 2016	73,379	35%
23 Nov 2015	63,041	30%

4. Edited Register

4.1 At the start of the canvass 241,805 electors were opted out of the Open Register that is made available to any individual or organisation on payment of a set fee. This represents 54% of the 448,383 electors registered in Grampian and compares to a total of 232,457 electors or 53% of the electorate who had opted out when the registers were revised for 1 December 2016.

5. Postal Votes

5.1 Prior to the canvass there were 95,021 postal voters in Grampian, this compares to 91,774 as at 1 December 2016.

6. December Register

6.1 The Electoral Register will be published on 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.

6.2 The IER canvass consists of two distinct phases and extends beyond 1 December with follow-up registrations continuing to be made on a year-round basis. This raises an issue over the continuing relevance of revising registers on 1 December. In addition, the current IER canvass model has been recognised as 'unsustainable' by the Electoral Commission and EROs are working with the Commission and Cabinet Office to develop and test more efficient data-driven and focussed canvass techniques. In this respect alternative canvass models are being conducted in pilots across GB with two in Scotland in Dumfries & Galloway and Glasgow. Research is also underway in Grampian that seeks to establish the benefit of using existing data in both the public and private domain to identify households where more focussed canvass resources should be applied.

7.0 Conclusion

7.1 The 2017 canvass is benefitting from an earlier commencement date and a continuing trend towards automated response channels. Both are welcome moves but legislative change will be required to move from the current unsustainable model to a more focussed and resource effective canvass.

Author of Report: Ian H Milton

Signature:

Date: 17 October 2017

Designation: Assessor & ERO

Name: Ian H Milton



REPORT TO: Grampian Valuation Joint Board on 27 October 2017

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's 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 The Convenor, Councillor Topping, the Assessor and an Assistant Assessor attended the conference.

3.3 Five qualified chartered surveyors attended the valuation workshops as day delegates gaining valuable professional development training that all valuers must acquire to maintain their chartered designation.

4. The 2017 Conference

4.1 The 2017 conference provided a total of 24 sessions focussing on a wide range of subjects relevant to valuation for local taxation, revenues, benefits, universal credit and shared service delivery models.

- 4.2 Derek Mackay MSP and Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Constitution gave the keynote speech and with the support of a speaker from the Scottish Government's local taxation team set out the priorities for the government with particular reference to the recently published report by the Barclay Review Group.
- 4.3 Board members and employees attended sessions that included the future of the council tax, budget challenges, new legislation for valuation appeals, harmonisation of valuation principles across different jurisdictions, self assessment for local taxation purposes, Brexit and the Scottish property market, 2017 revaluation, the Barclay report, valuation roll updates and valuation methodology.
- 4.4 Without exception the sessions provided a valuable insight into the processes, challenges and benefits of property taxation. They also provided extremely useful training and continuous professional development for employees.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 The conference provided an opportunity for surveyors and members to familiarise themselves with current thinking on a variety of relevant topics and gave them access to government representatives and experts in the field of valuation, revenues and benefits. As such it was extremely useful to all of the Board's attendees.

Author of Report: Ian H Milton

Signature:

Date: 17 October 2017

Designation: Assessor & ERO

Name: Ian H Milton

QUESTION TIME