



# Grampian Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer

## Public performance report for 2023/24

### 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 and the net expenditure for 2023/24 was £4.536M resulting in an underspend of £0.674M against the budgeted figure for the financial year. The Board has a full-time equivalent of 81 posts distributed between offices in Aberdeen, Banff and Elgin. At 31 March 2024 there were 66 full-time equivalent staff in post. In 2023/24, staff absence due to ill health was 2.4%, a 0.7% increase from 2022/23 but still comparing well to previous years.

### A review of our 2023/24 priorities

The following operational priorities were specifically identified in the management commentary for the year. They must not be considered in isolation as the organisation has a wide range of on-going priorities that relate not only to operational activities 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.

#### ***Implement a full household canvass.***

The annual canvass of households has been the subject of major reform in 2020 and the 2023 canvass was the fourth canvass using the now established method. Data matching is used at the outset to help identify those properties where the residents are more likely to have changed, the initial match being a comparison of the electoral register with information held by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). Canvass Communication letters (CCA) advising who was on the register were issued to around 198,000 households where we held matched data (Route 1) and a response was only required where there were changes - the issue of a CCA concludes the canvass for Route 1 properties. Different Canvass Communication letters (CCB) were issued to around 97,000 households where there was unmatched data (Route 2) and a response was required from these households. If no response was received from these Route 2 properties, follow up action was required, including, potentially, a personal contact. Around 200 properties, including residential homes, were selected for Route 3 whereby information about the occupants was sought from a "responsible person" rather than the occupants themselves. A comparison of the 4 years from 2020 is shown below. Households are still encouraged to use our automated response channels in the first instance as they require less back-office processing and are less costly for the public purse.

Annual Canvass of households	2020	2021	2022	2023
DWP Match Rate	83.11%	83.09%	83.21%	82.91%
Number of Properties in Route 1	191,982	198,279	192,288	197,946
Number of Properties in Route 2	95,095	91,452	99,818	97,074
Route 2 overall response rate (%)	61.40%	60.30%	62.20%	61.50%
Number of Properties in Route 3	271	227	156	220

***Publish revised registers by 1 December 2023.***

The revised registers were published on 1 December 2023. The local government franchise electorate rose from 448,915 to 452,084 between 1 December 2022 and 1 December 2023 with the Westminster franchise electorate increasing slightly from 413,739 to 415,935 over the same period.

Register publication date	Local Government Electorate	Number of households canvassed
1 December 2023	452,084	294,639
1 December 2022	448,915	292,262
1 December 2021	448,607	289,958
1 December 2020	448,331	286,999
1 February 2020	445,960	282,999

***Dispose of the remaining appeals lodged in respect of the valuation roll in force from 1 April 2017***

The deadline for disposal of appeals lodged in respect of the valuation roll in force from 1 April 2017 was extended to 31 December 2024 and the First-tier Tribunal Local Taxation Chamber had a program of disposal which proved to be quite challenging given that the number of outstanding appeals in Grampian stood at around 3,100. However, the majority of these were material change of circumstances appeals, lodged as a result of the pandemic, and we saw ratepayers withdraw these appeals in bulk without any discussions taking place with our valuers.

***Maintain complete and accurate Valuation Rolls and Valuation Lists.***

These two priorities use quantitative target-based performance indicators rather than qualitative measures and as such can be misleading at times as achieving the targets relies partly on the timely receipt of information from the owners and occupiers of dwellings and non-domestic properties. Valuer vacancies again impacted on the organisation's ability to meet the timescales suggested by the key performance indicators for 2023/24.

**Table 1** shows the number of new dwellings added to the Council Tax Valuation 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 Council Tax Valuation List

Year	Number	Within 3 months		Within 6 months	
		Threshold	Actual	Threshold	Actual
2023/24	3,031	94%	65%	97%	82%
2022/23	2,725	94%	71%	97%	94%
2021/22	2,964	94%	83%	97%	95%
2020/21	2,212	94%	61%	97%	80%
2019/20	3,437	94%	90%	97%	97%

**Table 2** shows the number of alterations made to the Valuation Roll over the last 5 years 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 and the correction of errors.

**Table 2** The time taken to alter the Valuation Roll

Year	Number	Within 3 months		Within 6 months	
		Threshold	Actual	Threshold	Actual
2023/24	2,545	65%	36%	85%	53%
2022/23	1,732	65%	30%	85%	50%
2021/22	1,683	65%	39%	85%	72%
2020/21	1,430	70%	30%	85%	49%
2019/20	1,984	70%	59%	85%	77%

### Conclusion

The nature of the services that are provided by the organisation means that we must have the planning and resources in place to address and react to any new priorities and demands as efficiently and timely as possible whilst still delivering the statutory duties required of the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer. The organisation performed well in 2023/24 to fulfil its statutory requirements to maintain the Register of Electors, the Valuation Roll and the Valuation List, particularly when carrying a significant number of vacancies in the valuation section. Colleagues have again shown a high degree of hard work and dedication and the current level of performance is a testament to this. The Management Team is appreciative of their effort.

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