

# DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD

Report by Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer

Valuation Joint Board – 14<sup>th</sup> June 2013

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**Subject: Best Value and Performance Management and Planning - Update**

## **1.0 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To update the members of the Joint Board on progress in relation to Best Value and, in particular, to advise on external performance reports for the year 2012/13.
- 1.2 To seek Board approval of the update to the Service Plan for 2011-14, and the Annual Service Calendar for 2013/14.
- 1.3 To advise members of the results from the Customer Consultation process during 2012/13.
- 1.4 To seek Board approval of the new Complaints Procedure.
- 1.5 To advise members of an Audit Plan completed during 2012/13.
- 1.6 To seek Board approval of the Joint Board's updated Risk Register and Action Plan.

## **2.0 Background**

### **2.1 Best Value – General**

By placing a formal requirement on local authorities, including Valuation Joint Boards, to 'secure Best Value', The Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 created a statutory requirement to provide continuous improvement in public services.

### **2.2 Performance Monitoring/Key Performance Indicators**

#### **2.2.1 Performance in Valuation Functions**

Assessors have, for some years now, provided measures of, primarily, Council Tax List and Valuation Roll performance to the Scottish Government. These also form the basis of the Board's Public Performance Reports. The performance targets for 2012/13 were approved by the Board at its meeting on 22nd June 2012.

#### **2.2.1 Performance in Electoral Registration Functions**

During 2008, the Electoral Commission exercised its powers under Sections 9A, 9B and 9C of the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (PPERA), as

inserted by Section 67 of the Electoral Administration Act 2006, to set and monitor performance standards for electoral registration services.

Performance standards for EROs were published in July 2008 and annual self-assessments against these standards are now submitted to the Commission each year.

### 2.3 Service Planning

In 2011 the Board approved a 3-year Service Plan for the period 2011-14.

### 2.4 Customer Satisfaction Survey

A key component of Best Value is consultation with stakeholders. A satisfaction survey of recent users of the Joint Board's services was introduced during 2005/06, and has continued since.

### 2.5 Audit Action

The audit process supports the Joint Board's improvement efforts and management planning.

### 2.6 Risk Management and Planning

Risk Management and Planning form vital parts of the Best Value and Performance Management and Planning process. The Joint Board's Risk Management Policy requires that the Risk Register and Action Plan are revised annually.

## **3.0 Progress**

### 3.1 Performance Monitoring/Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

#### 3.1.1 Performance in Valuation Functions

The KPIs for the Joint Board area for the year 2012/13 have been compiled and are attached (Appendix 1). Although not all of our targets in relation to the Valuation Roll were achieved this arose largely due to hundreds of retrospective requests for new entries to be made in the valuation roll at one particular caravan park. Generally, though, performance was maintained at similar levels to recent years (See Appendix 1(a)) which was creditable, given the focus during the second half of the year on disposal of Revaluations appeals.

In relation to Council Tax, our targets at both 3 and 6 months were achieved and our previous performance levels were exceeded (See Appendix 1(b)), despite my questioning the sustainability of the 2011/12 performance levels.

These statistics along with our targets for the year 2013/14 will be submitted to the Scottish Assessors' Association for collation and onward transmission to the Scottish Government.

### 3.1.2 Performance in Electoral Registration Functions

This year the annual self-assessment, using the Electoral Commission standards, was completed and submitted to the Commission in advance of the annual canvass. The self-assessment covered 10 standards over 4 subject areas:-

- Completeness and accuracy of electoral registration records (Standards 1–3)
- Integrity of the registration process (Standards 4–5)
- Encouraging participation in the registration process (Standards 6–8)
- Planning and organisation (Standards 9–10)

Having been assessed as performing 'Above the Standard' in 6 of the 10 standards and 'At the Standard' in the remaining 4, the Board's own performance was the same as in 2011/12. The total return for the annual canvass increased to 93.74%

For 2013/14 the Commission is reviewing its approach to assessment to take account of the transition to Individual Electoral Registration

### 3.2 Service Planning

A 3-year Service Plan reflecting the strategic aims, operational and legislative requirements of the coming years and the recommendations of a previous Best Value Audit was prepared by the Assessor & ERO in 2011 but this is reviewed annually to take account of changing internal and external demands and duties.

An addendum to the Service Plan has been agreed by the Management Team and is attached for Board Members consideration and approval (Appendix 2). Detailed operations are included in the Annual Service Calendar which lays out the tasks for the current year. 2013/14 Annual Calendar is attached (Appendix 3) for Board approval.

### 3.3 Customer Satisfaction Survey

During the year 2012/13, recent users of the Joint Board's services were randomly sampled and issued with questionnaires seeking their perception of the service provided to them. A review of the sampling methods for 2012/13 provided a much bigger sample size than in previous years. A summary of the results is provided below and these show that:-

- By far the majority of our stakeholders (97%) find us professional, courteous and helpful.
- 55% of queries or transactions are completed at the first point of contact and only 4% of matters are not concluded to the satisfaction of the stakeholder.
- Most users of Joint Board services (96%) are satisfied with the information and/or advice provided to them.
- Overall, very high satisfaction levels are being broadly maintained on a year-to-year basis, as is shown in the summary below.

	Year					
	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Survey Return Rate	26%	28%	25%	25%	23%	28%
Was the person with whom you communicated professional, courteous and helpful?	97%	97%	97%	98%	98%	97%
Was the matter brought to a satisfactory conclusion immediately?	58%	62%	58%	62%	58%	55%
Was the matter brought to a satisfactory conclusion?	95%	98%	97%	98%	98%	96%
Are you satisfied with the quality of the information or advice given to you?	95%	96%	96%	96%	96%	96%

No Customer Satisfaction forms were requested in alternative languages, Braille or other formats.

Of the returns which indicated the relevant equality group, 3.16% of service users were non-white, 49% were male, 51% were female and 4.81% were disabled. The age profile of service users was as shown below:-

Age	<16	16-24	25-29	30-29	40-49	50-59	60-74	75+
Total	0	2	3	6	22	24	32	4
% age	0%	2.2%	3.2%	6.5%	23.7%	25.8%	34.4%	4.3%

Sample sizes within the various equalities groups were too small to draw firm conclusions, and in some cases the information proved contradictory, but satisfaction levels within minority groups and across the equalities strands were largely as positive as the overall averages. There a number of areas of service provision across the equalities strands which will be considered further to ensure that we are carrying out our functions in a fair and equal manner.

### 3.4 Audit

#### 3.4.1 Internal Audit of the Joint Board

There were no planned audits of the VJB planned for 2012/13

#### 3.4.2 External Audit of the Joint Board

The finances of the Joint Board for 2012/13 will be audited by Audit Scotland who completed initial investigations into systems, including governance, during the year. An Audit Plan (see Appendix 4) was completed which identified areas of risk to include:

- **Reserve Strategy** - An agreement has been reached with the Board that they can disclose a general fund reserve as of 2012/13 however this requires a formal reserves strategy to be approved by the Board
- **Service Level Agreement(s)** - There are no SLAs in place to define the support services provided to the Board by West Dunbartonshire Council

- **Running Roll Appeal** - An increase in the number of running roll appeals is considered likely to impact on the workload of valuation staff.

The following actions or planned actions have been taken in response to these risks:-

- A Reserve Strategy was approved by the Valuation Joint Board at its meeting in November 2012.
- Progress has been made both in drafting a Service Level Agreement for the support services provided by West Dunbartonshire Council
- Significant inroads have been made into the disposal of running roll appeals and further VAC Hearings have been scheduled to complete the task.

3.4.3 Also as part of the review of the 2012/13 year, a recent audit of our Valuation Roll and Council Tax Lists change procedures was completed in the Campbeltown office. It concluded that:

- Relevant properties are identified & included in the valuation roll.
- Properties included on the valuation roll are given the correct rateable value.
- Only valid amendments are made to the valuation roll.
- All relevant data from the valuation roll is promptly and correctly transferred to the assessment roll.

As the audit did not identify any control weaknesses no formal report will be forthcoming.

### 3.5 Risk Management and Planning

The Management Team reviewed the existing Risk Register and Action Plans during February 2013 and the revised versions are presented (See Appendices 5(a) and 5(b)) for approval today.

## 4.0 **Next Steps**

### 4.1 Performance Monitoring/Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

- 4.1.1 In the period to December 2013, much of the technical staff will be focussing on disposal of Revaluation and subsequently submitted appeals but the real commitment to maintaining performance in relation to both the Council Tax List and the Valuation Roll will remain an area for attention. The proposed targets for 2013/14 are presented today for approval (see Appendix 1). Performance will remain a regular item for consideration and scrutiny at Management Meetings.
- 4.1.2 The above KPIs will be included in our Public Performance Reports which will be further developed and refined before being posted on our web site.
- 4.1.3 The Electoral Commission will continue to work with Electoral Registration Officers to improve the service they provide to electors. The Joint Board will participate in

any such improvement activity and will continue to seek ways of improving performance in our Electoral Registration service. The ERO will also be involved in consultations on proposed changes to the Electoral Commission's suite of performance indicators.

#### 4.2 Service Planning

The Management Team will use the Service Plan and Annual Calendar to plan resources and will regularly monitor progress against it.

#### 4.3 Customer Satisfaction

Results of the Customer Satisfaction Survey will be used by the Management Team to identify further improvement action.

In November 2012 the Joint Board approved a new Complaints Procedure which is in line with the requirements of the Scottish Public Sector Ombudsman's Model Complaints Procedure and the Management Team implemented it with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013. The new Procedure is attached (Appendix 6) for Members' information.

#### 4.4 Audit Action

A Service Level Agreement covering the support services provided by West Dunbartonshire Council will be finalised and brought to the Board for approval in due course.

Progress in relation to Revaluation and running roll appeals are provided elsewhere for today's meeting and further reports will be presented to the Board as a matter of course.

#### 4.5 Risk Management and Planning

The Management Team will continue to review changes to the risks and risk levels contained in the Risk Register and will monitor progress against any outstanding actions on an ongoing basis.

A specific Risk Register to deal with the transition to, and implementation of, Individual Electoral Registration, will be prepared in the coming months.

### **5.0 Recommendations**

Members are asked to:

(a) Note the performance in relation to the Valuation Roll and Council Tax List KPIs for 2012/13.

(b) Approve the KPI targets for 2013/14.

- (c) To note the performance in relation to the annual electoral canvass during the 2012.
  - (d) Approve the addendum to the Service Plan for 2011-14 and the Annual Service Calendar for 2013/14.
  - (e) Note the positive results from the Customer Satisfaction Survey.
  - (f) To note implementation of the new Complaints Procedure.
  - (g) To note the Internal Audit Plan completed during 2012/13.
  - (h) To note the clear audit in respect of our Valuation Roll and Council Tax Lists change procedures
  - (i) To approve the Risk Register and Action Plan for 2013/14.
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