

HIGHLAND AND WESTERN ISLES VALUATION JOINT BOARD

27 June 2017

Agenda Item	10
Report No	VAL/8/17

Departmental Report

Report by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer

Summary

This report outlines the main business of the office of the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) since the last meeting of the Board.

1. General

The main business of the department since the last meeting of the Board has been the final stages of completion of the 2017 Revaluation and preparation and execution of ERO arrangements for two elections.

2. Electoral Registration

During the period since the last meeting of the Board the registration function has been particularly busy. This has been both in connection with the scheduled Local Government Elections in May and the mid-term General Election that was called for June.

The close proximity of these two elections provided challenges for staff due to overlapping procedures. Both of these elections have passed successfully from the Electoral Registration Officer's perspective, with no clerical errors on the day of either election.

The final Local Government Election registration statistics for Highland were:-

Total Postal Voters – 36067
Total Postal Proxy Voters -32
Total Proxy Voters – 496
Total Number of Voters in Person – 147865 (total includes Proxy Voters)
Total Number of Voters – 183964

The final Local Government Election registration statistics for Comhairle nan Eilean Siar were:-

Total Postal Voters – 4575
Total Postal Proxy Voters -7
Total Proxy Voters – 97
Total Number of Voters in Person – 17229 (total includes Proxy Voters)

Total Number of Voters – 21811

The final General Election registration statistics for Highland were:-

Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross

Total Postal Voters – 9478

Total Postal Proxy Voters - 15

Total Proxy Voters – 317

Total Number of Voters in Person – 37375 (total includes Proxy Voters)

Total Number of Voters – 46868

Ross, Skye and Lochaber

Total Postal Voters – 10472

Total Postal Proxy Voters - 30

Total Proxy Voters – 514

Total Number of Voters in Person – 43136 (total includes Proxy Voters)

Total Number of Voters – 53638

Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey

Total Postal Voters – 17402

Total Postal Proxy Voters - 71

Total Proxy Voters – 599

Total Number of Voters in Person – 59371 (total includes Proxy Voters)

Total Number of Voters – 76844

The final General Election registration statistics for Comhairle nan Eilean Siar were:-

Total Postal Voters – 4728

Total Postal-Proxy Voters – 17

Total Proxy Voters – 219

Total number of Voters in Person – 16556 (total includes Proxy Voters)

Total number of Voters – 21301

The review of electoral registration software has been delayed as a consequence of the mid-term General Election. This has narrowed the window of opportunity, but it is still intended to investigate opportunities and canvass other ERO's to assist in this process over the summer period.

Network issues remain and these will be raised with the new contract providers with a view to satisfactory resolution.

Preparation is now underway for the 2017 electoral canvass.

3. Valuation for Rating

The period since the last Board meeting has involved finalising valuations for the 2017 Revaluation. Valuation Notices were issued in mid-March and valuations for the majority of subjects are available to view on the SAA portal. Initially there was a large volume of enquiry but this has since slowed. Dialogue with ratepayers is ongoing and will continue throughout the summer. The final date for lodging a revaluation appeal is 30 September 2017.

Shootings and deer forests have been reintroduced into the Valuation Roll as part of the Land Reform Act, and work associated with the identification and valuation of these continues. This has involved a large exercise to ingather the necessary information and consultative meetings with representative organisations have also been held. The department takes a leading role in this class of subject. It is anticipated the valuation notices will be issued in September.

Salmon fishings are in the course of valuation for the District Salmon Fishery Boards.

The department also takes a leading role in the valuation of independent hydroelectric generators and this area of valuation continues to attract significant interest from the sector and consultation and discussion continues.

There has been one sitting of the Valuation Appeal Committee and another is scheduled for November. This will ensure that all appeals are disposed of by their statutory deadline.

4. Council Tax

Maintenance of the Council Tax List continues as routine and the general level of activity remains comparatively low. A sitting of the Valuation Appeal Committee is to be arranged over the summer period.

5. Administration

The review of administrative policies continues and further policies will be tabled for the next meeting of the Board. The need to monitor and review existing policies will continue. Elements of the Records Management Plan are being addressed and these activities continue to place further pressures on the Central Admin section. Following discussions with advisors from Human Resources it has been agreed to carry out a review of procedures, workloads and resources within the Central Admin section. This work will be started as soon as possible.

6. Staffing

Further reviews of workloads and resources will be considered with a view to appropriate distribution and management of resources.

7. Office Accommodation

The lease of the Stornoway Office is subject to review and this is in the process of renegotiation. Advice shall be sought in accordance with standing orders prior to agreement.

8. Recommendation

The Board is invited to comment and otherwise note the recent activities of the department as set out in this report.

Designation: Assessor and ERO

Date: 27 June 2017

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