



ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT 2018/19

17th June 2019

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report accompanies the 2018/2019 unaudited accounts allowing consideration of organisational performance and budgetary outcome.

The statistical performance information provided reflects upon the statutorily defined elements of the Assessor and ERO's key service delivery areas. Comment is also provided on other aspects of organisational activity.

2.0 ELECTORAL REGISTRATION

2.1 2018 Annual Household Canvass

The 2018 annual household canvass concluded on the 1 December 2018 with the publication of the revised electoral register.

The number of Household Enquiry Forms (HEFs) and (Invitation to Register forms) ITRs issued throughout the canvass period was 744,086 HEFs (429,960 initial, 183,709 1st reminders and 130,417 2nd reminders) and 109,554 ITRs (56,102 initial, 32,917 1st reminders and 20,535 2nd reminders).

The overall HEF return rate achieved was 75% which compares with 70% in 2016 and 74% in 2017.

Throughout the canvass period 79,186 household canvass calls were made.

In respect of electronic response to the annual canvass, 148,463 responses were provided broken down as follows; 119,977 on-line (including e-canvass), 15,444 SMS text, 13,042 telephone.

This compares with 106,361 electronic responses in 2016 and 118,256 in 2017.

2.2 Rolling Registration

The register is maintained throughout the year on a rolling basis with notification of these changes being given by way of monthly updates.

These changes cover a wide range of activities such as new registrations, deletions, name changes, franchise amendments and alterations to opt out preferences. In total 79,050 changes were made to the register during April 2018 to March 2019.

This compares with a total of 99,264 for the April 2017 to March 2018 which included two major electoral events – The Local Council Elections in May 17 and the snap General Election in June 17.

2.3 Electoral Registration Statistical Information

The table below provides by Council area, at Ward level, key information in respect of the Electoral Register.

The following is shown for each ward:-

- HEF Canvass return rate 2017
- HEF Canvass return rate 2018
- Electorate numbers as at 1 December 18 Register Publication
- Electorate numbers as at 16 May 19 (Final Election update)
- Number of Young Persons registered
- Number of households canvassed 2018

CITY OF EDINBURGH

Ward Number and Name	HEF Return% 2017	HEF Return% 2018	1 Dec 18 Electorate	16 May 19 Electorate	YPs – U18s	Number of Households canvassed
1 Almond	76.2	79.4	26105	26535	788	15440
2 Pentland Hills	72.9	64.9	22919	23318	632	16081
3 Drum Brae/Gyle	78.0	80.9	18388	18575	429	11023
4 Forth	66.2	68.6	23299	23723	540	15685
5 Inverleith	76.2	78.5	23631	24114	505	16019
6 Corstorphine/Murrayfield	81.8	83.9	19191	19406	488	11303
7 Sighthill/Gorgie	62.1	63.3	21576	21994	311	16520
8 Colinton/Fairmilehead	80.8	82.2	18892	19048	639	10581
9 Fountainbridge/Craiglockhart	71.9	61.7	16720	17106	283	13593
10 Morningside	72.7	75.8	23034	23985	555	14628
11 City Centre	56.0	46.5	19278	20165	246	21100
12 Leith Walk	62.2	60.9	23727	24462	209	20300
13 Leith	60.6	67.1	17330	18043	222	13033
14 Craightinny/Duddingston	68.5	61.4	22636	23195	367	16269
15 Southside/Newington	70.6	54.4	21097	22183	475	19315
16 Liberton/Gilmerton	75.5	69.6	25740	26234	641	16091
17 Portobello/Craigmillar	73.7	74.7	22993	23563	595	14721

MIDLOTHIAN

Ward Number and Name	HEF Return % 2017	HEF Return% 2018	1 Dec 18 Electorate	16 May 19 Electorate	YPs – U18s	Number of Households canvassed
1 Penicuik	78.0	80.2	11053	11147	296	6291
2 Bonnyrigg	79.4	83.5	13723	13911	420	7501
3 Dalkeith	68.5	74.1	10499	10744	246	6481
4 Midlothian West	77.1	79.8	12288	12469	343	7046
5 Midlothian East	78.3	82.5	11820	12029	306	6748
6 Midlothian South	71.4	76.5	11442	11668	298	6699

EAST LOTHIAN

Ward Number and Name	HEF Return % 2017	HEF Return% 2018	1 Dec 18 Electorate	16 May 19 Electorate	YPs – U18s	Number of Households canvassed
1 Musselburgh	74.9	71.4	15783	16069	420	10403
2 Preston, Seton and Gosford	80.3	82.8	14476	14624	391	8322
3 Tranent, Wallyford and Macmerry	74.1	78.5	14442	14586	385	8373
4 North Berwick Coastal	82.8	83.9	10792	11012	364	6616
5 Haddington and Lammermuir	79.9	82.6	14184	14435	418	8283
6 Dunbar and East Linton	76.8	80.9	11185	11392	371	6735

WEST LOTHIAN

Ward Number and Name	HEF Return % 2017	HEF Return% 2018	1 Dec 18 Electorate	16 May 19 Electorate	YPs – U18s	Number of Households canvassed
1 Linlithgow	82.7	83.8	12311	12427	430	6776
2 Broxburn, Uphall and Winchburgh	75.2	77.9	15500	15728	407	9204
3 Livingston North	70.4	76.8	17681	17867	579	9809
4 Livingston South	70.6	76.8	18091	18356	720	9651
5 East Livingston and East Calder	72.7	75.4	16404	16694	461	9555
6 Fauldhouse and the Breich Valley	70.7	72.5	12089	12214	335	7159
7 Whitburn and Blackburn	70.1	70.7	15667	15980	444	9860
8 Bathgate	71.4	74.8	17540	17769	479	10588
9 Armadale and Blackridge	71.7	71.9	12379	12549	337	7313

2.4 By-Elections

Although these Elections fall out with the April 18 to March 19 period they are worthy of a mention due to the work undertaken in preparation to help deliver them.

Edinburgh Ward 12 Leith Walk By-Election – 11 April 2019

The polling day electorate for this by-election was 24,197.

Turnout was 30.3%.

East Lothian Ward 5 Haddington & Lammermuir By-Election – 9 May 2019

The polling day electorate for this by-election was 14,229.

Turnout was 44.2%

For these by-elections the opportunity was taken to increase our organisational resilience during election periods and use them as training events for less experienced members of the electoral registration and elections team. Working under supervision it allowed additional staff to become more familiar with the specific and detailed process requirements surrounding these events.

2.5 European Parliamentary Elections 23 May 2019

The late announcement that the UK was to take part in the EU Elections created considerable additional pressure. In a very short time frame polling schemes were obtained from Council's in order to create the data for Poll Cards and EU voter registration forms were issued to 40,000 registered EU citizens. If an EU citizen wished to vote at the Elections in this country they had to complete and return this form to us by the closing date for applications on 7 May. These forms were issued by email, if possible, or by post.

8,000 forms were received from EU electors by the closing date. It is not possible to quantify how many EU citizens chose to make arrangements to vote in their own country.

On election-day issues arose, mostly in England, regarding the disenfranchisement of EU citizens due to forms not being received or lack of awareness that an additional form had to be completed.

Whilst a small number of enquiries and complaints regarding the issue of these forms was dealt with, very positive feedback from individual electors and also from the European Movement in Scotland was received.

The electorate figures shown in the table above indicate the increase from register publication in December to the final election update on 16 May. The number of postal

voters rose from around 114,000 following the annual absent vote personal identifier update in January to 119,424 on polling day. Over 1000 telephone calls to our call centre on the day of the poll were handled and our election managers also dealt with around 130 calls directly from polling station staff.

The overall turnout in Scotland was 39.9%.

The turnout figures for our four constituent councils were –

The City of Edinburgh 50.2% (The highest in the UK)

East Lothian 42.9%

Midlothian 38.2%

West Lothian 38.5%

The turnout, particularly in Edinburgh, confirms that this was a significant test of our election procedures and processes. Post-election reviews are underway identifying areas where improvements can be made.

3.0 ELECTORAL REGISTRATION ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITY

In order to improve the profile of the organisation and its activities the appointment of a dedicated Engagement Officer has allowed a greater focus on engagement with the general public, drawing attention to the accessibility of the online registration process, particularly in underrepresented sections of the electorate.

3.1 By-Elections

Working in partnership with the Communications departments of each of the four constituent councils, useful contacts and potential opportunities for holding registration events throughout the year have been identified. These relationships prove particularly important in the lead up to election events such as recent by-elections in Leith Walk and Haddington & Lammermuir, where a consistent message can be developed between the council's elections team and the ERO using both traditional and online marketing techniques. Additionally, local registration events were organised to promote voter registration in the lead up to closing dates for those by-elections.

3.2 Social Media

The popularity of social media in today's society continues to shape the way that people communicate and obtain information. To this end the launch and development of both the redesigned website and new twitter feed for the ERO is an opportunity for the organisation to improve its online presence, providing a platform for electors to engage in meaningful dialogue with the ERO whilst allowing greater control of online engagement messaging.

3.3 Schools

Working with schools to promote voter registration is one of the main drives of the engagement role. Electoral registration staff visited a higher number of schools than in the previous year, allowing pupils of the participating schools the opportunity to register to vote. The average registration rate of schools that accepted the invite of a visit increased at a higher rate than those who did not. In addition to conducting school visits, every pupil not already registered has been issued with registration forms using data mining programs. An additional letter has been issued to non-respondents to encourage registration through the gov.uk website. For details of registration rates across the four constituent councils see the table below.

Constituent Council	Eligible Students	Total Registered	% Registered	% Increase
City of Edinburgh	8132	6729	82.75	23.19
East Lothian	2432	2116	87.01	22.58
Midlothian	2031	1610	79.27	22.63
West Lothian	4678	4073	87.07	24.15
Total	17273	14528	84.11	23.14

3.4 Universities

With 4 universities in the Edinburgh and East Lothian council areas, registration of students provides a unique challenge for electoral administrators. Working closely with the Students Associations, electoral registration staff attended Fresher's week events and other events throughout the year at the University of Edinburgh and Queen Margaret University to register new students at term-time addresses and provide information on any other matters relating to electoral registration. Additionally, an e-mail was issued to all students appearing on lists provided by each of the universities, inviting those who had not already done so to register to vote via the gov.uk website. Engagement activities throughout the year have contributed to an increased electorate in wards such as the City Centre and Southside/Newington, areas with a high number of student properties.

3.5 Other Engagement Activities

Throughout the year a range of other engagement activities are carried out in order to further support the overarching commitment to provide a complete and accurate Electoral Register, an example of these activities are detailed below:-

- Registration of newly qualified electors at British Citizenship Ceremonies – 434 new electors.
- TV and social media advertising campaigns to promote National Democracy Week and encourage return of annual canvass forms.

- ITR's issued to new council tax payers using data mining program (approx. 45,000 potential electors identified).
- Online & print advertising using a range of various websites and publications – e.g. ESPC website & weekly newspaper.
- Registration events held in each of the council areas to allow people to check their registration status and update their details as necessary.
- Worked in partnership with ELREC to promote voter registration in the BME community.
- Attendance at Glencorse Barracks Information Day to provide information on armed forces registration, and other available options, such as absent voting.

3.6 EU Parliamentary Election

Electoral events provide a natural focal point for the electorate's engagement with the registration process. Whilst the recent European elections fall outwith the reporting period, the short time-scale for preparation and challenges surrounding registration of EU citizens for the election provided a significant test of the ERO's engagement channels. In this regard a positive response was received with the European Movement commending the clear messaging on the website and turnout in each of the council areas exceeding the UK average (37%). Although, due to the limited timeframe, engagement event opportunities were restricted, we worked in partnership with Edinburgh University Student Association's Communities Officer to provide a pop-up registration stall at the Main Library in George Square in the week leading up to the closing date for registration.

4.0 NON-DOMESTIC RATING 2018/19

4.1 2017 Revaluation Appeal Disposal

During the 2018/19 financial year a total of 4,652 revaluation appeals were disposed of, along with 351 running roll appeals. The tables below gives a more detailed breakdown of the revaluation appeals that have been resolved during this period.

Council	Type	Total No.	WID	%	ADJ	%	Dismissed	%
C.E.C.	RV	3,536	2,598	73.5%	832	23.5%	106	3.0%
Midlothian	RV	113	73	64.6%	39	34.5%	1	0.9%
West Lothian	RV	750	599	79.9%	128	17.1%	23	3.0%
East Lothian	RV	242	193	79.7%	44	18.2%	5	2.1%
Total	RV	4,641	3,463	74.6%	1,043	22.5%	135	2.9%

Of the total number of 4,641 resolved the types of property included;

Offices & Car Parks/Spaces	2717
Shops	179
Industrial	404
Public Houses	345

For information a further 1,208 appeals have been resolved between 1st April and 31st May 2019.

To the 1st June 2019 the total loss on appeal set against the total rateable value of all appealed subjects is 1.85%.

The total number of outstanding 2017 appeals, both revaluation and running roll, stands as at 3rd June 2019;

Edinburgh	3,887
Midlothian	750
West Lothian	1,522
East Lothian	637
Total	6,796

The target is to resolve a further 4,500 appeals before the end of 2019.

4.2 Non-Domestic Running Roll

For the period 1st April 2018 to 31st March 2019 3,227 amendments were made to the Valuation Roll. With regard to inserts, amendments to existing entries and deletions the split between the 4 authorities are shown below.

01/04/18 – 31/03/19	Inserts	Amends	Deletions
City of Edinburgh	908	1,496	744
Midlothian	67	123	45
West Lothian	172	339	222
East Lothian	115	137	50

For comparative purposes the last 5 years cumulative figures for Lothian and the associated performance levels are shown below.

	Total	< 3 mths	%	3-6 mths	%	> 6 mths	%
2018/19	3,227	1,867	57.86	705	21.85	655	20.30
2017/18	4,127	2,501	60.60	779	18.48	847	20.52
2016/17	4,200	1,960	46.67	933	22.21	1,307	31.12
2015/16	3,098	2,234	72.11	476	15.36	388	12.52
2014/15	3,489	2,644	75.78	469	13.44	376	10.78

Moving forward the aim is to improve the performance with regard to running roll despite the change to 3 yearly revaluations and the challenges that in itself will bring. Existing work practices have recently been amended seeking to establish a more

proactive approach to this activity. The target being to achieve 70-75% of amendments to the roll being implemented within 3 months of the date of completion.

Looking ahead the new St. James Centre is scheduled to open in October 2021. A mixed use development, it shall comprise of approximately 85 retail units, 30 licensed subjects, a hotel, serviced apartments, a cinema and 1,600 public car spaces. Initial discussions have taken place with the developer and we are hopeful that pre agreement can be reached with regard to the 2022 Revaluation.

Also the Edinburgh tramway extension works will add to our workload over the next 2-3 years. Discussions are ongoing with the City of Edinburgh Council communications and marketing team and we intend where possible to be proactive in dealing with ratepayers concerns. There is, however, likely to be increased appeal activity associated with the tram way extension.

4.3 Commercial Rental Evidence (CRE)

During 2018/19 we introduced an automated CRE form issue process. Previously the issue of CRE forms was an annual bulk process. This led to considerable pressures on resources required to undertake the necessary application and analysis of returned forms. This automation is proving to be very successful allowing the CRE process to be incorporated into business as usual activity. This shall support one of the key NDR Reform deliverables as it shall take less time to assess rental property values movements at any point in time.

Since the 1st April 2018 we have issued 15,463 forms with an additional 4,931 reminders. Of these 6,444 have been returned and analysed. There remains the issues around low levels of return, however further engagement with ratepayers, supported by possible legislative changes, is aimed at promoting the need to return information.

5.0 COUNCIL TAX

For the period 1st April 2018 to 31st March 2019 the number of entries added to the council tax list is shown below. These figures include self-catering units reverting back to domestic use which totalled 328 for 2018/19 of which 288 related to Edinburgh, 8 to Midlothian, 7 to West Lothian and 25 to East Lothian.

Band	Edinburgh	Midlothian	West Lothian	East Lothian	Total
A	229	5	47	0	281
B	514	12	117	28	671
C	412	118	155	114	799
D	719	137	263	127	1,246
E	552	97	158	127	934

Band	Edinburgh	Midlothian	West Lothian	East Lothian	Total
F	329	152	151	111	743
G	371	140	76	214	801
H	59	8	3	6	76
Total	3,185	669	970	727	5,551

The table below shows the total number of new houses and of Point of Sale Band Changes over the last 5 years.

Valuation List	New Houses	Point of Sale Band Changes
2018/19	5,551	250
2017/18	5,715	281
2016/17	4,826	254
2015/16	4,688	270
2014/15	4,409	257

The table below shows performance over the past 5 years

Year	< 3 months	3-6 months	> 6 months
2018/19	93.75%	5.31%	0.94%
2017/18	95.93%	2.93%	1.14%
2016/17	93.86%	4.25%	1.89%
2015/16	96.46%	2.98%	0.56%
2014/15	95.73%	2.77%	1.50%

6.0 OTHER ORGANISATIONAL INFORMATION

6.1 Transformation & Cultural Change Programme (TCCP)

Following the first phase of the TCCP a new organisational structure was implemented effective from 1st April 2018. It took until September 2018 for all the necessary staff adjustment and recruitment to be completed.

This change has been supported by an increased level of communication with staff aimed at increasing involvement with the ongoing process of change both at an organisational level and in respect of efficiencies within service delivery. Emphasis has also been placed upon leadership, empowerment, change and performance.

During 2018/19 the organisation moved into the second phase of the TCCP. While the overall objectives remain the same, this phase is being driven by the challenges resulting from major legislative change.

The second phase is dominated by 6 main projects. Two major ICT projects aimed at supporting the delivery of key NDR Reform requirements, another focused on

improving ratepayer engagement, and 3 projects underpinning the organisational modernisation and change process. All projects progressed in accordance with their implementation plan during 2018/19 and shall remain active throughout 2019/20 and beyond.

These projects are in essence multi-functional as regards the desired outcomes. While delivering on essential legislative change they also provide focus on modernisation, efficiency, improved ways of working and changing attitudes.

6.2 2018/19 Budget & Associated Risks

Primarily as a result of part year recruitment the 2018/19 unaudited accounts indicate a year end budget under spend of £100k.

The 1st phase of the TCCP resulted in the 2018/19 allocated budget reflecting a 4.4% reduction from the 2017/18 allocation. Throughout 2018/19 expenditure restraint has been exercised with every opportunity taken to identify possible savings opportunities within non-employee expenditure. This action shall continue throughout 2019/20 in addition to identifying opportunities for savings arising from the 2nd phase of the TCCP which may impact on future year's budget requirement.

During 2019/20 a budget strategy aimed at identifying sustainable savings opportunities shall continue to be developed.

Notwithstanding this, and as previously advised to the Board, it is anticipated that the 2019/20 year end budget position, due to inescapable growth, shall reflect an over spend of circa £170k. As an early expedient to mitigate this position it is recommended that the identified 2018/19 underspend be set aside specifically within the reserve fund to partially offset this expected budget out turn.

During 2018/19 a number of major risks have been identified and the Board has received regular reports on these issues. The most major of these relate to changes to key service areas and include the NDR Reform programme, changes to the annual electoral registration household canvass, the impact of unexpected or multiple electoral events, and the ongoing uncertainty surrounding Council Tax. For both NDR Reform and Electoral Registration preparations are underway to ensure that risks are being identified and mitigated. As possible changes to the Council Tax system remain unclear no action can be taken at present.

6.3 Human Resources

HR throughout 2018/19 have been active in supporting the recruitment process following the introduction of the revised organisational structure. As a number of positions were filled by internal candidates this created an additional recruitment requirement which contributed to the overall time taken to complete the installation of the new structure.

An Absence Management Policy operates within the organisation with HR providing guidance to staff and management as appropriate. Noted below are the absence levels recorded for 2018/19 compared to the previous year.

Long term absence is defined as a continuous period of 22 days or more.

Year	Short Term Absence Days	Short Term Absence %	Long Term Days Absent	Ong Term % Absent Rate
2016/2017	391	1.53%	141	0.55%
2017/2018	463	1.82%	355	1.39%
2018/2019	419	1.55%	430	1.59%

During 2018/19 the provision of HR Policies on the staff intranet was reviewed leading to a restructuring of the material provided allowing easier identification and access for staff. In addition a schedule for the review of all policies was commenced and is currently ongoing. Any significant changes to policy shall be subject to Trade Union consultation prior to Board approval. In this regard both the Lone Working Policy and Flexible Working Hours Scheme are currently under review and discussion.

The HR Manager is also responsible for building maintenance as supported by the Facilities Management contract. During 2018/19 various issues have arisen including repairs to the air conditioning system, the installation of back-up heating in part of the office to tackle cold temperatures, measures to tackle water ingress from the roof, and the replacement of the gas boiler providing heat to toilets and communal areas.

Certain types of enquiries are recorded either as a legislative requirement or to ensure timeous replies are provided. Below is a note of the numbers received during 2018/19 in the different categories;

Complaints: 3 (2 Council Tax, 1 Electoral)

Freedom of Information/Data Protection: 11 (2 Council Tax, 4 Electoral, 3 Valuation Roll, 2 Other)

VIP (elected members): 22 (11 Council Tax, 4 Electoral, 7 Valuation Roll)

1 Complaint passed to the Scottish Ombudsman

7.0 RECOMMENDATION

7.1 The Board is asked to note the content of this report.

Graeme Strachan
ASSESSOR & ERO