



## **Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board**

### **Minute of Meeting Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Venue</b>
Friday, 23 November 2018	14:00	Council Chambers (Renfrewshire), Council Headquarters, Renfrewshire House, Cotton Street, Paisley, PA1 1AN

#### **Present**

Councillor Angela Convery, Councillor Charlie Gilbert and Councillor Paul O’Kane (all East Renfrewshire Council); Councillor Graeme Brooks, Councillor Tommy McVey and Councillor Colin Jackson (all Inverclyde Council); and Councillor Jacqueline Cameron, Councillor Audrey Doig, Councillor Mags MacLaren, Councillor John McIntyre, Councillor Jim Sharkey, Councillor Andy Steel and Councillor Lisa-Marie Hughes (substitute for Councillor Kenny MacLaren) (all Renfrewshire Council).

#### **Chair**

Councillor Audrey Doig, Convener, presided.

#### **In Attendance**

K Crawford, Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer, J Murgatroyd, Assistant Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer, L Hendry, Assistant Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer and S Carlton, Principal Administrative Officer (all Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board); and A MacArthur, Head of Finance, L Souter, Principal Accountant (Management Accounting) and E Currie, Senior Committee Services Officer (all Finance & Resources, Renfrewshire Council).

#### **Apology**

Councillor Kenny MacLaren (Renfrewshire Council).

#### **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest intimated prior to commencement of the meeting.

## **1 Minutes**

There were submitted the Minute of the meeting of the Joint Board held on 17 August 2018 and the Minute of the special meeting of the Joint Board held on 18 September 2018.

**DECIDED:** That the Minutes be approved.

## **2 Attendance at Joint Board Meetings and Appointment of Depute Convener**

Under reference to item 2 of the Minute of the meeting of this Joint Board held on 17 August 2018, there was submitted a report by the Clerk relative to attendance at Joint Board meetings and the appointment of a Depute Convener.

The report intimated that East Renfrewshire Council had advised that discussions had taken place with both members and it had been impressed on both the importance of fulfilling their role on the Joint Board. Both members had recognised this and had given assurances that they would make every effort to attend meetings in future.

East Renfrewshire Council had also advised, in writing, that all other elected members of their Council could act as a substitute member for the four appointed members on the Joint Board. Councillors Convery and Devlin had been advised of the option of identifying someone to substitute for them at meetings if they were unable to attend.

It was noted that East Renfrewshire Council had confirmed that Councillors Convery and Devlin would continue to represent the Council on the Joint Board, however, whilst continuing as a representative, Councillor Devlin felt he was unable to give the role of Depute Convener the amount of time it deserved and accordingly had tendered his resignation from the post.

The report further intimated that the Valuation Joint Boards (Scotland) Order 1995 stated that 'Each board shall appoint from its membership a Convener and Depute Convener, but the Convener and Depute Convener shall not, at any time, be members of the same constituent authority'. Councillor Audrey Doig, Renfrewshire Council, was Convener of the Joint Board therefore only members from East Renfrewshire and Inverclyde Councils could be considered for the post of Depute Convener of the Joint Board.

Councillor Audrey Doig, seconded by Councillor Hughes, moved that Councillor Paul O'Kane be appointed as Depute Convener of the Joint Board.

Councillor McIntyre, seconded by Councillor Gilbert, moved as an amendment that Councillor Graeme Brooks be appointed as Depute Convener of the Joint Board.

On a vote being taken, 3 members voted for the amendment and 8 members voted for the motion. The motion was accordingly declared carried.

**DECIDED:**

(a) That it be noted that Councillors Convery and Devlin would continue to represent East Renfrewshire Council on the Joint Board;

(b) That it be noted that Councillor Devlin had tendered his resignation from the post of Depute Convener of the Joint Board;

(c) That Councillor Paul O'Kane be appointed as Depute Convener of the Joint Board; and

(d) That it be noted that the remuneration costs for the position of the newly appointed Depute Convener, if required, should be met by the local authority at which the position holder was an elected member.

### **3 Service Review (Part 2)**

Under reference to item 5 of the Minute of the meeting of this Joint Board held on 1 June 2018, there was submitted a report by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer providing an update on the progress of the service review and financial savings to date.

The report intimated that the Joint Board had approved a drawdown from reserves of £66,700 at the end of 2018/19 but that following discussions with the Treasurer the expected drawdown would now be in the region of £33,400, delivering savings of £33,300.

The report detailed the financial risks and potential costs and savings in relation to the Electoral Management System (EMS); the IT Non-domestic and Council Tax computer system; Disaster Recovery Solution; the pay award; the rent review; the level of Joint Board reserves; Individual Electoral Registration (IER); and the Barclay Review.

It was noted that the position of continually drawing-down from reserves was unsustainable. Actions had been taken to reduce costs and release savings where possible and this had been done in an effort to show good governance and accountability to Joint Board members and constituent authorities.

It was proposed that the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer submit a report to a future meeting of the Joint Board once more information on matters such as potential costs and shortfalls become known. This was agreed.

#### **DECIDED:**

(a) That the information in the report be noted;

(b) That it be agreed that the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer purchase the Electoral Management System (EMS);

(c) That approval be given to the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer to further investigate, with a view to entering into a shared IT system, with a further report to follow on progress;

(d) That approval be given to the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer to continue investigations and source a suitable supplier/solution for the provision of a Disaster Recovery Solution (DR); and

(e) That the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer submit a report to a future meeting of the Joint Board once more information on matters such as potential costs and shortfalls become known.

## 4 Financial Outlook 2019/22

There was submitted a report by the Treasurer providing an overview of the ongoing financial challenges and risks that the Joint Board was facing linked to both the ongoing constrained financial environment within which the Joint Board and local government operated and also as a result of potential service changes linked to the implementation of the Barclay review recommendations.

The report intimated that the pressure on public finances would continue for the foreseeable future and the impact of this difficult financial climate on constituent Councils was recognised. As a result, the Joint Board continually sought to generate efficiencies where possible. However, with a significant number of statutory duties to be met, the ability of the Joint Board to meet its financial objectives was increasingly constrained.

The level of reserves had reduced in recent years and would reduce further over the course of 2018/19 in line with the budget position agreed. In order to meet current and future obligations as well as statutory duties, the Joint Board required to modernise through significant investment in ICT infrastructure. The level of reserves available might not be sufficient to meet the one-off costs of the required investment. This investment would deliver recurring savings, however these were unlikely to be offset by increased ICT operating costs.

The underlying financial position of the Joint Board remained challenging with further savings requirements and requisition increases being a feature of the medium-term outlook.

The report provided detail on the Joint Board's current financial position; the level of requisitions and reserves of the Joint Board; Individual Electoral Registration (IER) and the Barclay Review. The report outlined that there were increased risks and costs for the Joint Board in 2019/20 which were not apparent at the start of 2018 and which were not anticipated or included within the indicative financial position outlined when the Joint Board agreed the 2018/19 budget. The Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer and Treasurer would continue to work together to develop a budget proposal for 2019/20 and future years which recognised these unfolding risks and costs and would continue to seek ways in which further efficiencies could be achieved.

### **DECIDED:**

- (a) That the update regarding the Joint Board's current financial position be noted;
- (b) That the financial challenges facing the Joint Board be noted; and
- (c) That it be noted that this report would inform the 2019/20 revenue estimates which would be presented to the Joint Board at the next meeting to be held on 18 January 2019 and that the Treasurer would continue to work with the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer in the coming weeks to develop the budget for 2019/20 as cost pressures were further clarified.

## 5 Revenue Budget Monitoring

There was submitted a revenue budget monitoring report by the Treasurer in respect of the Joint Board for the period 1 April to 12 October 2018.

The report intimated that gross expenditure was currently £21,000 under budget and income was currently £2,000 over recovered resulting in a net underspend of £19,000.

The projected year-end position was a drawdown on reserves of £33,700 against an approved £66,700.

**DECIDED:** That the report be noted.

## 6 Accommodation Update

Under reference to item 13 of the Minute of the meeting of this Joint Board held on 17 August 2018, there was submitted a report by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer relative to the progress made on the split of the Robertson Centre.

The report intimated that a Licence to Occupy had been signed with effect from 1 October 2018 which meant that the Joint Board had surrendered the upper floor and was no longer financially responsible for the rent and rates attributable to that part of the building. The works had now essentially been completed and the upper floor should be occupied in full by January 2019. A new lease would require to be drafted.

A further Licence to Occupy had been signed for premises in Clarke Street, Paisley which Renfrewshire Council had provided free of charge for one year to allow off-site storage for scanned files.

**DECIDED:** That the report be noted and that the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer continue negotiations with Renfrewshire Council on the terms of a new lease.

## 7 Performance Report

There was submitted a report by the Assistant Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer providing an update on the current performance and workload issues facing the Joint Board.

The report detailed the performance in Council Tax and non-domestic valuation against set targets. In relation to Council Tax valuation for the period 1 April to 30 September 2018, it was noted that the addition of new houses to the Valuation List and the deletion of demolished houses remained a priority with the time taken to enter new houses into the Valuation (Council Tax) List exceeding the target of 95% within three months and 99.5% within six months.

The report also detailed the average number of days taken to add a house in each constituent authority area between 1 April and 30 September 2018 and also the number of deletions from the Valuation (Council Tax) List between 1 April and 30 September during 2017 and 2018 by constituent authority area.

The report set out the time taken to make statutory amendments to the Valuation Roll, excluding appeal settlements and amendments to the prescribed entries, between 1 April and 30 September 2018 by constituent authority area, with the target of 80% actioned within three months and 95% actioned within six months being exceeded.

**DECIDED:** That the report be noted.

## **8 Non-domestic Appeals**

There was submitted a report by the Assistant Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer advising on the appeal process and progress on disposal of revaluation appeals and running roll appeals received since the 2017 revaluation.

The report intimated that a five-yearly revaluation process had been introduced by The Valuation and Rating (Scotland) Act 1956 and this required the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer to value, or revalue, all the lands and heritages in the valuation area. These valuations were totally fresh and need bear no relation to the value applied in the preceding years.

The revaluation brought with it a fresh right of appeal which had to be exercised within a six-month period starting from 1 April in the year of the revaluation or within six months of the date of issue of the Valuation Notice, whichever was the later. These appeals must be disposed of within time limits prescribed in the Timetable Order which currently stated by the end of the third year following revaluation, in this case being 31 December 2020.

The report provided information in relation to the right of appeal; negotiation of appeals; the Local Valuation Appeal Committee; revaluation appeals; the disposal of 2017 revaluation appeals; the disposal of running roll appeals; and disposal of other outstanding appeals.

The appendix to the report detailed the number of appeals disposed of; processed and outstanding as at 31 October 2018.

**DECIDED:** That the report be noted.

## **9 Canvass and Electoral Update**

There was submitted a report by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer providing information on the annual canvass 2018.

The report intimated that Household Enquiry Forms (HEF) had been posted to all properties in the Joint Board area. These forms invited those at each property to complete and return the form either online, by telephone, text or post. Due to the introduction of the single occupancy tick box over 3,000 HEFs were removed from this year's canvass and the report detailed the number of HEFs, first reminders and second reminders issued in 2016, 2017 and 2018 by constituent authority area.

The door-to-door canvass of properties where no response had been received, had been undertaken during September to November with canvassers visiting the 42,478 properties. Any names added to the HEF as a result were issued with an invitation to register (ITR) and the report detailed the number of ITRs issued together with details of the relevant changes made to the register during the canvass period by constituent authority area.

Under current legislation local data held by Councils and other bodies could not be used for this canvass and this continued to add to the costs and complexity of the canvass.

The 2018 Review of UK Parliament Constituencies was currently out for consultation until mid-December 2018 and it was noted that any proposed changes would be implemented in conjunction with the three constituent authorities.

This was the fourth 'business as usual' canvass since the introduction of IER and was more expensive than the previous style of canvass. The UK Government had stated that they would fund the extra expense of running the new-style canvass however, this funding would end in 2020/21. The UK Government intended to introduce changes to current legislation which would allow Electoral Registration Officers to carry out various data-matching exercises resulting in reduced costs.

It was noted that there were no scheduled elections for the next year however Joint Board staff would need to be prepared should a snap election or by-election be called at short notice.

**DECIDED:** That the contents of the report be noted.

## **10 Records Management Plan - Progress Update Review Final Report by the Public Records (Scotland) Act Assessment Team**

There was submitted a report by the Assistant Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer relative to the records management plan for the Joint Board.

The report intimated that under the Public Records (Scotland) Act 2011, a named authority was required to prepare and implement a records management plan (RMP) which must set out proper arrangements for the management of its records. The RMP required to be agreed with the Keeper of the Records of Scotland and regularly reviewed. The Joint Board's records management plan had been agreed with the Keeper of the Records of Scotland in January 2016.

To capture and recognise continuous progress with the records management plan, the Keeper introduced a voluntary self-assessment review mechanism, namely a Progress Update Review (PUR). The Joint Board was invited by the Keeper's Assessment Team to submit a PUR and this was submitted on 27 June 2018.

The Progress Update Review Final Report, a copy of which was appended to the report, set out the findings of the Assessment Team in relation to the PUR submitted by the Joint Board.

**DECIDED:**

(a) That the contents of the report be noted; and

(b) That the publication of the Progress Update Review Final Report be authorised.

## **11 Date of Next Meeting**

**DECIDED:** That it be noted that the next meeting of the Joint Board would be held at 2.00 pm on 18 January 2019 within Renfrewshire House, Cotton Street, Paisley.