



## **Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board**

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

<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Venue</b>
Friday, 17 September 2021	14:00	Remotely by MS Teams,

#### **Present**

Councillor Angela Convery, Councillor Annette Ireland and Councillor Charlie Gilbert (all East Renfrewshire Council); Councillor Graeme Brooks, Councillor Colin Jackson and Councillor Tommy McVey (all Inverclyde Council); and Councillor Tom Begg, Councillor Jacqueline Cameron, Councillor Audrey Doig, Councillor Kenny MacLaren, Councillor Mags MacLaren, Councillor John McIntyre, Councillor Jim Sharkey and Councillor Andy Steel (all Renfrewshire Council).

#### **Chair**

Councillor Audrey Doig, Convener, presided.

#### **In Attendance**

K Crawford, Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer, L Hendry, Assistant Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer and J Murgatroyd, Assistant Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer (all Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board); M Conaghan, Legal & Democratic Services Manager, C McCourt, Finance Business Partner, T McGowan, Senior Accountancy Assistant, E Currie and R Devine, both Senior Committee Services Officer (all Finance & Resources, Renfrewshire Council); and M Ferris, Senior Manager and A MacDonald, Senior Auditor (both Audit Scotland).

#### **Recording of Meeting**

Prior to the commencement of the meeting the Convener intimated that this meeting of the Joint Board would be recorded and that the recording would be available to watch on the Council's website.

#### **Apologies**

Provost Fletcher (East Renfrewshire Council) and Councillor Innes Nelson (Inverclyde Council).

## **Declarations of Interest**

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

### **1 Minute**

There was submitted the Minute of the meeting of this Joint Board held on 28 May 2021.

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

### **2 Minutes of Appointments Sub-committee**

There were submitted the Minutes of the meetings of the Appointments Sub-committee held on 9 July and 3 August 2021.

It was noted that Councillor Colin Jackson was detailed as representing East Renfrewshire Council and that this should make reference to Inverclyde Council.

**DECIDED:** That, subject to the above amendment, the Minutes be approved.

## **Sederunt**

Councillor Convery joined the meeting prior to consideration of the following item of business.

### **3 Membership/Appointment of Depute Convener and Appointment of Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer**

The Clerk submitted a report relative to membership of the Joint Board, the appointment of a Depute Convener and the appointment of the Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer.

The report intimated that East Renfrewshire Council had advised that Provost Jim Fletcher had replaced Councillor Paul O'Kane as a member on the Joint Board. As a result of this decision, the Joint Board required to appoint a Depute Convener as the position was held by Councillor O'Kane.

The Convener invited nominations for the position of Depute Convener.

Councillor Sharkey, seconded by Councillor Jackson, moved that Provost Fletcher be appointed as Depute Convener.

Councillor Begg, seconded by Councillor McIntyre, moved that Councillor Brooks be appointed as Depute Convener.

Councillor Ireland, seconded by Councillor Mags MacLaren, moved that she be appointed as Depute Convener.

In terms of standing order 36(b), a vote was taken among all candidates with each member being entitled to vote for only one candidate.

The following members voted for Provost Fletcher: Councillors Gilbert, Jackson and Sharkey.

The following members voted for Councillor Brooks: Councillors Brooks, McVey, Begg and McIntyre.

The following members voted for Councillor Ireland: Councillors Convery, Ireland, Cameron, Audrey Doig, Kenny MacLaren, Mags MacLaren and Steel.

Provost Fletcher received 3 votes, Councillor Brooks received 4 votes and Councillor Ireland received 7 votes. Councillor Ireland was appointed as Deputy Convener of the Joint Board.

It was noted that at the Appointments Sub-committee held on 3 August 2021, Robert Nicol had been appointed as Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer.

**DECIDED:**

(a) That it be noted that Provost Fletcher would represent East Renfrewshire Council on the Joint Board;

(b) That Councillor Ireland be appointed as Deputy Convener of the Joint Board; and

(c) That it be noted that Robert Nicol had been appointed as Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer.

#### **4 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 20 August 2021.

The report intimated that at the end of period 5, the net expenditure of the Joint Board was underspent by £783,000 compared to budget. The Joint Board was projected to underspend by £77,000 by the end of the financial year and details were provided in section 4 of the report.

It was noted that funding had been received from the Scottish Government in February 2021 for the May 2021 election and £156,000 had been carried forward to the current financial year. It was expected that this would be fully spent on employee costs by 31 March 2022.

It was noted that there had been no budget adjustments since the start of the financial year.

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

#### **5 Electoral Update - Canvass 2021**

There was submitted a report by the Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer providing an update on electoral issues facing the Joint Board.

The report intimated that there had been no further legislation changes enacted since the last report considered in May 2021. A UK Elections Bill was out for consultation and would only affect UK Parliamentary Elections and not reserved elections in Scotland. The report detailed the changes affecting electoral registration.

The report provided updates in connection with the 2021 Canvass; future elections; the publication of registers; and ongoing projects. The appendices to the report detailed the total number of Canvass Forms issued for the period 2016 to 2021 and the number of households where it was anticipated would require a personal visit, door-to-door for the Joint Board area and by constituent authority.

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

## 6 **Barclay Update**

Under reference to item 7 of the Minute of the meeting of this Joint Board held on 28 May 2021, there was submitted a report by the Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer relative to developments and expenditure arising from the Barclay Review.

The report intimated that The Non-Domestic Rates (Scotland) Bill was now law and had been partially implemented in April 2020 with full implementation to follow at various times over the next couple of years. The report detailed the six main Barclay recommendations reflected in the Bill.

The report advised that the Scottish Assessor's Association (SSA) had regular contact with the Scottish Government to ensure a consistent approach. Assessors would continue to work jointly to ensure delivery of all new duties and would support ongoing development of the SSA Portal which provided information to ratepayers and their agents. Assessors had submitted plans to the Scottish Government detailing the actions being taken to ensure that all Barclay recommendations would be fully implemented and delivered within legislative timelines. These plans had now been approved.

The Scottish Government had agreed to fund the extra costs to facilitate this work and funding had flowed through councils to the Joint Board as shown in the financial reports submitted to the Joint Board over the last few years. Due to recruitment issues, it was noted that not all funding had been spent in the year in which it had been allocated, resulting in an increasing reserve balance.

The report provided an update in relation to recruitment and restructure; the next Non-domestic Revaluation; COVID appeals; information gathering powers; the IT Valuation System; and the Internal Barclay Project Group/2023 revaluation.

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

## 7 **Performance Report**

There was submitted a report by the Assistant Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer providing an update to the reporting of performance for the first three months of the rating year and 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 June 2021, 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 by achieving 99.59% and exceeding the target of 97% within six months by achieving 100%.

The report also detailed the average number of days taken to add a house in each constituent authority area between 1 April and 30 June 2021 and also the number of deletions from the Valuation (Council Tax) List between 1 April and 31 March during 2020/21 and 2021/22 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 to 30 June 2021 by constituent authority area exceeding the target of 50% to be actioned within three months by achieving 93.65% and exceeding the target of 75% within six months by achieving 96.82%.

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

## 8 **Non-domestic Appeals**

There was submitted a report by the Assistant Assessor & 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 & 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 seven 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 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, this being 31 December 2020. However, the Scottish Government had extended the disposal date for 2017 revaluation appeals until 31 December 2021.

The report provided an update 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 the disposal of other outstanding appeals.

Appendix 1 to the report detailed the number of revaluation appeals received, disposed of and outstanding by constituent authority and the Joint Board area as at 30 June 2021. Appendix 2 to the report detailed the number of running roll appeals received on or after 1 March 2020, outlining those dealt with in each constituent authority and the Joint Board area as at 30 June 2021.

The disposal of appeals was a major component of the work undertaken by the Assessor's valuation staff and was work that could be stressful due to the strict legislative timetables and the adversarial nature of the negotiations. The unexpected results of the current pandemic had resulted in staff continuing to conduct negotiations whilst adhering to guidelines with regard to social distancing.

The report congratulated staff in getting the 2017 revaluation appeals to a level where the small numbers outstanding were dependent upon national agreements being concluded and thanked them for their commitment and professionalism in rising to this challenge and successfully delivering the service.

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

9 **Corporate Risk Register**

There was submitted a report by the Assistant Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer relative to the Joint Board's Corporate Risk Register, a copy of which was appended to the report.

The report intimated that the Corporate Risk Register had been reviewed in line with the Joint Board's agreed review cycle.

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

10 **Trade Union Facility Time Reporting**

There was submitted a report by the Assistant Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer relative to trade union facility time reporting.

The report intimated that The Trade Union (Facility Time Publication Requirements) Regulations 2017 required public sector employers who had full time equivalent employee numbers of more than 49 to publish information relating to facility time taken by union representatives.

Although the Joint Board was not, at present, legally required to publish this information, as the number of full-time equivalent staff was below the required level, it had been considered appropriate to voluntarily publish the information in the interests of transparency.

Data had been collated under the new regulation and information relating to facility time for 2019/20 and 2020/21 was appended to the report.

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

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 19 November 2021.

**Valedictory**

The Convener intimated that this would be Kate's last Joint Board meeting. She thanked Kate for all her assistance to her since being first elected as a Councillor and being appointed as Convener of the RVJB. On behalf of the RVJB she wished Kate best wishes for the future.

Members of the Joint Board paid tribute to Kate for her contribution to the work of the Joint Board and wished her well in her forthcoming retirement.

Kate thanked the Convener, members of the Joint Board and the staff of the Joint Board and Renfrewshire Council for their assistance to her during her period, firstly as Depute Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer and then as Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer.