



Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board

Notice of Meeting and Agenda Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board.

| Date | Time | Venue |
|----------------------|-------------|--|
| Friday, 10 June 2022 | 14:00 | Council Chambers (Renfrewshire), Council Headquarters, Renfrewshire House, Cotton Street, Paisley, PA1 1AN |

MARK CONAGHAN
Clerk

Membership

Councillor Annette Ireland, Councillor Andrew Morrison, Provost Mary Montague and Councillor David Macdonald (East Renfrewshire Council); Councillor Graeme Brooks, Councillor Paul Cassidy, Councillor James Daisley and Councillor Innes Nelson (Inverclyde Council); and Councillor Graeme Clark, Councillor Audrey Doig, Councillor John Hood, Councillor Sam Mullin, Councillor Bruce MacFarlane, Councillor Kenny MacLaren, Councillor Mags MacLaren and Councillor Andy Steel (Renfrewshire Council).

Hybrid Meeting

Please note that this meeting is scheduled to be held in the Council Chambers, Renfrewshire House. However, it is a hybrid meeting and arrangements have been made for members to join the meeting remotely should they wish.

Further Information

This is a meeting which is open to members of the public.

A copy of the agenda and reports for this meeting is available online <http://renfrewshire.cmis.uk.com/renfrewshire/CouncilandBoards.aspx>

For further information, please either email democratic-services@renfrewshire.gov.uk or telephone 0141 618 7111.

Members of the Press and Public

Members of the press and public wishing to attend the meeting should report to the customer service centre where they will be met and directed to the meeting.

Items of business

The Clerk to the Joint Board will preside prior to the election of the Convener

Apologies

Apologies from members.

Declarations of Interest

Members are asked to declare an interest in any item(s) on the agenda and to provide a brief explanation of the nature of the interest.

- 1 Appointment of Convener**
- 2 Appointment of Depute Convener**
- 3 Membership of the Joint Board** **5 - 6**
Report by Clerk.
- 4 Who we are and what we do** **7 - 16**
- 5 Minute** **17 - 24**
Minute of meeting of the Joint Board held on 25 February 2022.
- 6 Unaudited Annual Accounts 2021/22** **25 - 28**
Report by Treasurer. (Appendix 2 to follow)
- 7 Internal Audit Annual Report 2021/22** **29 - 40**
Report by Chief Auditor.
- 8 Internal Audit Engagement - Records Management** **41 - 46**
Report by Chief Auditor.
- 9 Electoral Update Report** **47 - 50**
Report by Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer.
- 10 Strategic Service Plan 2021/24 - Annual Update** **51 - 70**
Report by Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer.
- 11 Performance Report** **71 - 80**
Report by Assistant Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer.

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| 12 | Non-domestic Rates Reform Update | 81 - 84 |
| | Report by Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer. | |
| 13 | Non-domestic Appeals | 85 - 98 |
| | Report by Assistant Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer. | |
| 14 | Accounts Commission Report on Orkney and Shetland Valuation Joint Board | 99 - 114 |
| | Report by Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer. | |
| 15 | Timetable of Meetings | 115 - 116 |
| | Report by Clerk. | |



Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board

To: Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board

On: 10 June 2022

Report
by
Clerk

Joint Board Membership

1. Summary

- 1.1 At the statutory meetings of the constituent authorities the undernoted members and substitutes were appointed to the Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board:-

East Renfrewshire Council

Provost Mary Montague and Councillors Andrew Morrison, David Macdonald and Annette Ireland.

No substitute members appointed as yet.

Inverclyde Council

Councillors Paul Cassidy, James Daisley, Innes Nelson and Graeme Brooks.

Councillors Michael McCormick, Elizabeth Robertson, Sandra Reynolds and David Wilson have been appointed as substitute members.

Renfrewshire Council

Councillors Bruce MacFarlane, Audrey Doig, Kenny MacLaren, Mags MacLaren, Andy Steel, Sam Mullin, John Hood and Graeme Clark.

Councillors Jennifer Adam, Michelle Campbell, Lisa-Marie Hughes, John McNaughtan, Jim Paterson, Chris Gilmour, Jamie McGuire and Iain McMillan have been appointed as substitute members.

2. **Recommendation**

2.1 That the appointments be noted.

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Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board



Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board

Serving:- East Renfrewshire, Inverclyde and Renfrewshire

Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer
The Robertson Centre, 16 Glasgow Road, Paisley PA1 3QF

Who we are and what we do

Introduction

Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board was established by the Valuation Joint Boards (Scotland) Order 1995 to carry out the valuation functions of Renfrewshire, East Renfrewshire and Inverclyde Councils. It came into existence on 1 April 1996 and was also given the responsibility of carrying out Electoral Registration on behalf of the three constituent authorities.

The composition of the membership of the Board is determined by the above Order and consists of 8 Councillors representing Renfrewshire Council and 4 each representing East Renfrewshire and Inverclyde Councils.

In order to carry out the valuation and registration functions, the Joint Board is required by law to appoint an Assessor who is an independent statutory official and who will also be a Chartered Surveyor. The Assessor has also been appointed by the three constituent councils as Electoral Registration Officer. In pursuit of these duties the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer is answerable to the Courts in terms of valuation or registration decisions.

The Joint Board, through the office of the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer and his staff, carry out three main functions:

1. To produce and maintain the Valuation Roll which sets out the rateable values of all *"lands and heritages"* (except where excluded by statute) for rating purposes.
2. To prepare and maintain the Register of Electors.
3. To produce and maintain the Valuation List which sets out the banding of all dwellings for Council Tax.

The Board has a staff complement of 43.3 on a Full time Equivalent basis.

The valuation staff employed by the Assessor are Chartered Surveyors or property assistants and the clerical staff are expected to have a thorough working knowledge of electoral law and procedures and a working knowledge of valuation and council tax procedures; some staff have or are currently pursuing a formal qualification via the Association of Electoral Administrators.

Additionally, the Assessor and his senior staff are members of the Scottish Assessors' Association (SAA). The Association was instituted in 1975 at the time of local government reorganisation and is the successor body to the Association of Lands Valuation Assessors of Scotland. A voluntary organisation, the Association aims to facilitate, through a series of Committees and associated Working Parties, a consistency of approach in the administration of the valuation, council tax and electoral registration services. With volunteers in each office writing Practice Notes to cover all types of Non domestic property which will be used across Scotland to ensure a consistency of approach in our methods of valuation for each Revaluation.

The SAA also liaises, through regular harmonisation meetings, with the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) in England and Wales, the Northern Ireland Valuation and Lands Agency (NIVLA) and the Republic of Ireland's Valuation Office (RIVO). This allows, where appropriate, a unified approach to matters of common interest.

The Association has allowed all fourteen Assessors to work together efficiently towards improving service delivery; an example being the SAA Web-Portal that allows ratepayers, taxpayers and the public at large to view Non-Domestic Valuations, Council Tax Bands and background information. There is also the facility to lodge appeals or make returns of rental information to the Portal.

The Portal also has a “private” area which has restricted access but is available to central and local government plus organisations such as General Registrar for Scotland and Registers of Scotland. The information contained in this private area is proving increasingly valuable in assisting these bodies in delivery of their services.

The Valuation Roll

The Valuation Roll is a public document which contains an entry for all non-domestic properties in the Assessor’s area except those specifically excluded by law. Each entry in the Roll includes the names, as appropriate, of the proprietor, tenant and occupier, the Net Annual Value which has been set by the Assessor and the Rateable Value. The Rateable Value is derived from the Net Annual value and, as legislation currently stands, for the majority of properties, Rateable Value and Net Annual Value are the same. Rateable Value is statutorily defined and is, in broad terms, the rent that the property might reasonably achieve on the open market at a given date or “tone” date (currently, 1st April 2015) based on a full repairing and insurance letting.

Since 1st April 2010, the Assessor has the additional responsibility of being the “Designated Assessor” in terms of the valuation of fixed-line or fibre network telecommunications (other Assessors are Designated for other utilities such as Electricity and Water). This means that, for the companies named in the Order, a single entry for their Scottish operations is made in the Valuation Roll for Renfrewshire Council and this replaces the various local valuations that existed prior to that date. The companies include British Telecommunications plc, Cable & Wireless and Virgin Media etc.

In recent years Non-Domestic Rating has been subject to various reforms, many of these are now in place and others are in the process of being implemented. Values are established at a Revaluation, the next one will take effect from 1st April 2023. Revaluation results in the production of a new Valuation Roll which contains revised values for all non-domestic properties in the Assessor’s area. The coming Revaluation will be the first where the “tone” date will be one year before the Revaluation date, rather than two years. This should ensure that valuations more readily reflect market conditions at the Revaluation but will present a major challenge for Assessors to deliver.

Generally Revaluations have taken place every 5 years, however the Non-Domestic Rates (Scotland) Act 2020 has now changed this to every 3 years, therefore the next Revaluation following 2023 will be in 2026.

After a Revaluation, new values will generally remain unchanged until the next Revaluation unless the property is altered or other changes take place. New properties are added to the Roll as they become occupied and entries for demolished buildings are deleted. Such changes will be reflected in what is known as the “Running Roll” or a series of updates to the Valuation Roll in force. The Assessor is required to notify proprietors, tenants and occupiers of all changes which he makes to the Valuation Roll by issuing a Valuation Notice.

As at 1 April 2022, the number and value of properties in the Board area was as follows:

| Council Area | Number of Properties | Total Rateable Value |
|-------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| East Renfrewshire | 1,817 | £41,435,189 |
| Inverclyde | 2,443 | £54,854,630 |
| Renfrewshire | 10,052 | £285,804,553 |
| Board Area | 14,312 | £382,094,372 |

Appeals:

Ratepayers and others with an interest in the property can lodge appeals if they disagree with the level of value. This process is due to be significantly revised from 1st January 2023, however as at May 2022 the details of the new system are still going through the Parliamentary process and once this has been finalised members will be updated.

As at May 2022 the law allows an appeal to be lodged at any time although there are restrictions on when such appeals will be considered competent:

1. Within six months of becoming proprietor, tenant or occupier of a property.
2. If there has been a material change of circumstances that affects value.
3. If there has been an error.

A major part of the Assessor's work relates to the disposal of these appeals which are governed by statutory deadlines that must be adhered to. The largest proportion of appeals results from the revaluation cycle although "Running Roll" appeals will also be lodged against changes to Valuation Roll between each revaluation or if there is a perceived material change of circumstances.

The vast majority of these appeals are dealt with by negotiation. The remainder will be decided by the Local Valuation Appeal Panel or, in a small number of complex cases, by the Lands Tribunal for Scotland. All appeal outcomes can be further appealed - by both parties - to the Lands Valuation Appeal Court which is part of the Court of Session.

The Chartered Surveyors employed by the Assessor are required to act as expert witnesses in any appeal hearing and more senior staff may be required to lead these appeals which will involve examination of their own witnesses and cross-examination of appellant or appellant's witnesses. In the event that appeals are heard by the Lands Tribunal or Lands Valuation Appeal Court, the senior staff may be required to brief legal counsel employed to conduct the case.

The revaluation carried out in 2017 resulted in 3,542 entries in the Valuation Roll being under appeal. The vast majority of these appeals were settled without the necessity of an appeal hearing, with most of these appeals being settled without adjustment to value. The forthcoming 2023 Revaluation is likely to take place with a two stage proposal and appeal process the details of which are not known as at May 2022.

We are the authors of a number of Practice Notes for the SAA, covering such subjects as Petrol Filling Stations, Churches and Stand Alone Restaurants to name a few. As authors of these Practice Notes which are used nationally throughout Scotland we will be expected to take the lead in any appeals which may proceed against properties valued using any of these practice notes we have authored.

In addition to the revaluation appeals outlined above, there are also running roll appeals that require to be disposed of. In the normal course of events, around 2-300 Running Roll appeals are typically received in any one year and these are disposed of throughout the year by discussion and where agreement cannot be reached by proceeding to the Local Valuation Appeal Panel. However due to the Coronavirus pandemic during 2019/20 and 2020/21 we received significantly higher levels of appeals in those years than the norm and there are currently 5634 Running Roll appeals outstanding. Legislation is currently going through the Scottish Parliament which may impact on whether these appeals are competent and Board members will be updated once the legislation is finalised.

The Council Tax Valuation List

The Assessor is responsible for the preparation and maintenance of the Council Tax Valuation List, which places each domestic subject or ("dwelling") in one of eight valuation bands.

The band that the dwelling is allocated to reflects the Assessor's opinion of the property's open market value as at 1 April 1991, but taking account of its physical state and its locality as at 1 April 1993.

For any new dwellings entering the List, the date of valuation remains 1st April 1991 although account is taken of the current physical state and location of the property.

All valuations are subject to a number of important statutory assumptions such as:

- Available for sale on open market with willing buyer and seller
- In a state of reasonable repair

Dwellings

In general and provided it is used as such, any kind of house or flat will count as a dwelling including second homes that are not let on short term basis as holiday homes. Self-Catering establishments will be entered in the Valuation Roll as commercial subjects provided they are actually let and available for let for a defined minimum number of weeks per annum.

Any dwelling exempt from the Council Tax List will appear in the Valuation Roll.

Some properties may be "apportioned" between the Council Tax List and the Valuation Roll. An example might be a Boarding House where part of the building is reserved for the operator's own use. In such an example, the Boarding House portion will enter the Valuation Roll and the operator's own accommodation will be in the Council Tax List

Caravans count as dwellings if they are someone's main home.

Certain properties in multiple occupation, where facilities are shared, may count as one or more dwellings depending on the detailed occupation arrangements.

The number of dwellings in each Band is as follows (April 2022):

| Band | A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | Total |
|-------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------|---------|
| East Renfrewshire | 1,334 | 5,258 | 4,110 | 6,789 | 8,458 | 6,604 | 6,883 | 769 | 40,205 |
| Inverclyde | 18,968 | 6,253 | 3,739 | 3,447 | 3,684 | 1,923 | 1,439 | 219 | 39,672 |
| Renfrewshire | 13,503 | 25,880 | 15,123 | 12,972 | 11,472 | 6,826 | 4,108 | 216 | 90,100 |
| Total | 33,805 | 37,391 | 22,972 | 23,208 | 23,614 | 15,353 | 12,430 | 1,204 | 169,977 |

Alterations to Bands

In the normal course of events, the band allocated to a dwelling will not change even although the sale price of the house might rise or fall. There are exceptions to this:

Material Reduction:

This may result from the demolition of any part of the dwelling, any change in the physical state of its locality or any adaptation of the dwelling to suit a person who is physically disabled.

Material Increase:

This may result from building, engineering or other works carried out on the dwelling. Any change in the Council Tax band following on a material increase in value will only take effect after the property is next sold and only if the effect of the works would have placed the house in a different band in 1991.

Appeals and Proposals:

This is currently slightly different from Valuation Roll appeals in that there is no statutory timeline in terms of their disposal. However as with Valuation Roll appeals the process will be changing in January 2023. At the moment the first stage is a "Proposal" to alter the band is made by the taxpayer or owner of the property. Once a proposal is lodged, the Assessor will contact the taxpayer in order to discuss the matter. As with Valuation Roll appeals, any appeal that cannot be settled by negotiation will be heard by the Valuation Appeal Committee and any further appeals (on points of law only) will be heard by the Court of Session.

New Houses / Demolitions:

The bulk of the work carried out in relation to Council Tax is the maintenance of the Valuation List to reflect addition of new houses and the demolition of houses.

Renovation work carried out by Housing Associations may also require changes to be made if, for example, 3 houses are made into 2.

It is important to note that any new houses being added are allocated to a band that reflects the price that the Assessor estimates that the house would have achieved on the market in 1991, taking into account the physical and geographic, etc. features of the property to be valued with those of houses which actually sold around the valuation date. In other words, the Assessor uses a comparative method of valuation.

Indices are not used in arriving at this valuation. There is a popular misconception that indices such as the “Nationwide House Price Index” provide an accurate method of backdating a current sale. This is not the case; the use of indices to backdate sale prices is fraught with difficulty. Unless the index takes account of the specific features of the local market conditions prevailing at the relevant dates, price adjustment in this way will be inaccurate.

The Register of Electors

The Register of Electors contains details of everyone who has registered to vote. It is used to determine who can vote at elections while the Register is in force. A new Register is published at least once a year, no later than 1st December. A revised version may be published at other times if, for example, major changes are made to the Register in the course of the year.

The Electoral Registration Officer

It is the duty of the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) to prepare and maintain the Register of Electors. The ERO is appointed by each of the local authorities that comprise Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board.

Maintenance of the Electoral Register:

The Register comes into force on 1st December in any given year and is updated monthly to reflect changes in people’s circumstances as they occur.

Since 2020 changes were introduced to how the electoral canvass can be undertaken. During the early part of the summer the ERO via the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUC) undertakes a data matching exercise.

Where all members of a household are matched against DWP data these are a green match and these households, known as route 1, can either be sent a letter or email informing them who is registered. Where a letter is sent no action is required by the recipient unless the information requires to be updated. If an email is sent, then a confirmation that there are no changes is required.

Where a household does not fully match at DWP the ERO can undertake further local data matching against other records such as Council Tax to satisfy themselves if the household matches. If the ERO is satisfied that there is a match then these can be treated as route 1, if however there remains doubt about the household this is known as Route 2 and the ERO will send a letter informing them who is registered, this communication requires a response.

The final stage of the electoral canvass is for households where a response was required, and none has been received even after a reminder has been issued. In this instance the ERO is required to make a personal contact with the property this can be done either by telephone or a visit to the property.

There is a special provision for certain types of properties where a number of people may be resident such as care homes or student residences. In this situation the ERO can contact a responsible person and canvass the property in that manner.

It is important to note that where a return identifies that there are people resident that aren’t registered, the canvass return does not add them to the register a further application to be registered has to be completed.

Rolling Registration:

During the year the register is updated each month to reflect new applicants and people who have moved. This is done by undertaking reviews of registration and issuing Invitations to Register. The ERO utilises several different sources of information to identify possible changes including, House sales, Tenancy lists, Council Tax information, Schools lists and information from other EROs.

Postal Voting:

There is an increasing appetite for the use of the Postal Vote facility. Electors must apply individually and in writing and can have a Postal Vote for one election or in perpetuity. The number of electors with postal votes at the recent Local Government Election was 67,453 (24.28% of the electorate). This does impose additional overheads on the Board's business, particularly in the run-up to an election when a considerable number of applications are made. This is further complicated by the number of overseas electors who may be eligible to vote at certain elections as we have the responsibility of ensuring their applications are processed in time to allow them to participate.

The Future:

The UK Parliament legislates on electoral matters that affect the UK Parliamentary Elections. The Elections Act recently received Royal Assent and will introduce changes in the coming months on areas such as Voter ID, Overseas Electors, and changes to Postal Voting.

The Scottish Parliament legislates on electoral matters that affect the Scottish Parliament and Local Government Elections and are likely to consult later this year on possible changes to these areas.

Governance

The Valuation Joint Board is a separate authority from the constituent authorities and as such has its own Governance arrangements. Renfrewshire Council via a Service Level Agreement provide services and advice on areas such as Finance, Personnel, Internal Audit and Health and Safety. The Joint Board has its own policies and procedures and while they generally align with Renfrewshire Council it is for the Board to decide these. As well as the Valuation and Electoral Registration functions the Board is also subject to other duties such as Freedom of Information, Public Records, Data Protection and Public Sector Equalities duties and reports are regularly presented to the Board to these and other topics.

The main Officers of the Board are the Assessor & ERO, the Clerk and the Treasurer and each of these work within scope of the scheme of delegation, standing orders and financial regulations approved by the Board

Contacts/Links:

| | |
|-------------------------------|---|
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| Scottish Assessors Web Portal | www.saa.gov.uk |



Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board

Minute of Meeting Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board.

| Date | Time | Venue |
|--------------------------|-------|-----------------------|
| Friday, 25 February 2022 | 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 Tommy McVey and Councillor Innes Nelson (all Inverclyde Council); and Councillor Tom Begg, Councillor Jacqueline Cameron, Councillor Audrey Doig, Councillor Kenny MacLaren, Councillor Mags MacLaren, Councillor John McIntyre and Councillor Andy Steel (all Renfrewshire Council).

Chair

Councillor Audrey Doig, Convener, presided.

In Attendance

R Nicol, Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer and L Hendry, Assistant Assessor & Electoral Registration Officers (both Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board); C McCourt, Corporate Finance Manager, T McGowan, Senior Accountancy Assistant, E Currie, Senior Committee Services Officer and D Cunningham, Assistant Committee Services Officer (all Finance & Resources, Renfrewshire Council); and M Ferris, Senior Audit Manager (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 Jim Fletcher (East Renfrewshire Council) and Councillor Jim Sharkey (Renfrewshire 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 19 November 2021.

DECIDED: That the Minute be approved.

Sederunt

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

2 Governance Arrangements

Under reference to item 9 of the Minute of the meeting of this Joint Board held on 19 November 2021, there was submitted a report by the Clerk relative to the protocol for hybrid meetings.

The report intimated that at the meeting of the Joint Board held on 19 November 2021 it was decided that future meetings of the Joint Board be hybrid meetings and that arrangements be made to hold these meeting in the Council Chamber in Renfrewshire House, allowing members to either attend meetings 'in person' or join remotely using Microsoft Teams. Further, that the Clerk, in consultation with the Convener and Depute Convener, be requested to develop a protocol for the conduct of hybrid meetings. The protocol for hybrid meetings was appended to the report.

The report advised that Ken Graham, Head of Corporate Governance, and Clerk to the Joint Board retired from Renfrewshire Council on 28 February 2022 and that Mark Conaghan had been appointed as Head of Corporate Governance with effect from 1 March 2022 and would be Clerk to the Joint Board from that date. Further, that Alan Russell, Treasurer to the Joint Board, had been appointed to the position of Chief Executive, Renfrewshire Council, on 12 November 2021 and that Alastair MacArthur had been appointed as Director of Finance & Resources and would be Treasurer to the Joint Board with effect from 16 February 2022.

DECIDED:

(a) That the protocol for hybrid meetings, as appended to the report, be approved; and

(b) That it be noted that Mark Conaghan would be Clerk to the Joint Board with effect from 1 March 2022 and that Alastair MacArthur would be Treasurer to the Joint Board with effect from 16 February 2022.

3 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 2021 to 4 February 2022.

The report intimated that at the end of period 11, the net expenditure of the Joint Board was a net underspend of £649,000 compared to budget. The Joint Board was projected to underspend by £92,000 by the end of the financial year and details were provided in section 4 of the report. It was noted that there had been no budget adjustments since the start of the financial year.

The report advised that funding had been received from the Scottish Government in 2020/21 for the May 2021 election and that £156,000 had been carried forward to this current financial year. It was expected that this would be fully spent on employee costs and supplies and services to fund the issuing of household notification letters by 31 March 2022.

The report noted that the forecast year-end position was a contribution to reserves of £92,000. The report proposed that £24,000 of reserves be earmarked for use in 2022/23 for economic modelling work related to fixed line telecommunications valuation. This was agreed.

DECIDED:

(a) That the report be noted; and

(b) That it be agreed that £24,000 of reserves be earmarked for use in 2022/23 for economic modelling work related to fixed line telecommunications valuation.

4 Revenue Estimates 2022/23 to 2024/25

There was submitted a report by the Treasurer presenting the revenue estimates for the Joint Board including the requisition of constituent authorities for the financial year 2022/23 and indicative planning figures for 2023/24 and 2024/25.

The appendix to the report detailed the revenue estimates 2022/23 to 2024/25 for the Joint Board and the total requisitions payable by constituent authorities.

The report intimated that the Scottish Budget statement delivered on 10 December 2021 included further resources relating to specific ongoing pressures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and was for a single financial year only, adding some uncertainty to financial forecasts. However, it was recognised that over the short to medium-term, local government in Scotland was likely to face a challenging recovery and could face further contraction in available resources relating to the provision of revenue grant from the Scottish Government. In this context, the Joint Board would continue to seek operational savings to ensure financial sustainability.

The report provided information on the assumptions that the budget had been based on and a financial overview for the Joint Board.

At the meeting of the Joint Board held on 29 May 2020, it was agreed that the allocation of the requisition across constituent authorities would be based on the percentage proportions of GAE constituents used in 2019/20 which arose from the distorting effect of a large self-storage facility based in Renfrewshire which skewed the GAE figures. It was further agreed that this position be reviewed annually and the Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer had confirmed that the position was no longer considered to be a temporary anomaly, therefore, the requisition allocation for 2022/23 and beyond would now be based on the actual 2021/22 GAE figures.

The proposed overall 2022/23 requisition level for constituent authorities was £2,342,180, an increase of 1.0% on 2021/22 requisition levels. The individual constituent authority requisition levels were detailed in the table in paragraph 6.2 of the report and these indicative figures incorporated draft requisition increases of 1.5% for 2023/24 and 2.0% for 2024/25. The total requisitions payable by constituent authorities, including the full pass-through of Barclay funding, were detailed in the table in paragraph 6.4 of the report.

DECIDED:

(a) That the 2022/23 revenue estimates, as detailed in the appendix to the report, be approved;

(b) That the recommendations with regards requisitions for constituent authorities, as detailed in section 6 of the report, be approved; and

(c) That the indicative estimates for 2023/24 and 2024/25 be noted.

5 Audit Plan 2021/22 Update

There was submitted a report by the Treasurer providing an update in relation to the audit plan for 2021/22.

The report intimated that Audit Scotland submitted the annual audit plan, which outlined the timescales and planned activity by Audit Scotland, to the Joint Board in February of each year. Owing to delays caused by the past two years' audit timetables, the audit plan for 2021/22 was not yet ready for publication and would therefore miss the Joint Board's reporting cycle.

The report advised that the annual audit plan for 2021/22 would be circulated to members of the Joint Board when available.

The report further intimated that, given the local government elections in May of this year, the unaudited annual accounts 2021/22 would be presented to the meeting of this Joint Board to be held on 10 June 2022.

DECIDED: That the report be noted.

6 Electoral Update

There was submitted a report by the Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer relative to the current position in relation to electoral registration.

The report intimated that the new canvass had been completed with the new register being published on 1 December 2021 with copies distributed to those entitled to receive it. It was noted that this was the second year of the reformed canvass and, as previously reported, the main changes allowed Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) to decide on different routes for canvassing households. The route chosen for each household was based on whether the household matched with the DWP when a copy of the register was issued to them for matching. The report provided detail on the Route 1, Route 2 and Route 3 canvass communications. It was noted that the door-to-door canvass was undertaken this year by Joint Board staff using newly purchased tablet devices which carried all the information electronically enabling the information to be uploaded to the Electoral Management System in real time.

The report advised that preparations were well underway for the forthcoming local government elections. The Electoral Management Board for Scotland had issued a number of directions to Returning Officers and Electoral Registration Officers to ensure consistency of approach across Scotland. Meetings had taken place with the Returning Officers' teams for the three constituent authorities and agreements reached on the key dates and actions required to ensure the smooth transfer of the Electoral Registration and Absent Vote information. It was noted that a series of meetings were scheduled between now and polling day with the Returning Officers to monitor progress with the election. This election and its preparations were being held within the context of COVID and most EROs within Scotland had issued Household Notification Letters in late January/early February which, amongst other things, advised on the action to be taken if the information required to be updated and how to apply for a postal vote. To coincide with this letter being issued, all Scottish EROs contributed to a TV advertising campaign aired during the first two weeks in February. To date 2,000 applications for a postal vote had been received since the letters were issued and the RVJB had received just over 3,800 applications to be registered. The report detailed key dates for the issue of poll cards and deadlines for registering to vote and for postal vote applications.

The report provided information in relation to the Renfrewshire Ward 6 By-election intimating that the identifiable additional costs for the Joint Board were around £165.

In relation to the Elections Bill, the report advised that it was currently going through the parliamentary process with the current timetable suggesting that it would not receive Royal Assent before May. This Bill was likely to impose additional duties on the ERO and the Joint Board would be kept informed of the progress of implementing the various requirements.

DECIDED: That the contents of the report be noted.

7 **Non-domestic Rates Reform Update**

Under reference to item 5 of the Minute of the meeting of this Joint Board held on 19 November 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) Act 2020 and associated Regulations were the main legislative means for introducing the non-domestic rates reforms recommended by the Barclay Review. The report listed the six main Barclay recommendations reflected in the Act.

The report further intimated that the Scottish Assessor's Association (SAA) 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 SAA 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 and covered the period up to 2025 by which time all the recommendations of the Barclay review would be in place.

In relation to staffing, the report advised that three valuers had been recruited; the Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer was currently considering options regarding filling the role previously undertaken by the Assistant Assessor, Jackie Murgatroyd, who retired at the end of 2021; and that the successful progression through training and Assessment of Professional Competence of trainees would be a key factor in the ability

to successfully implement non-domestic rates reform in the coming years.

The report advised that the next non-domestic revaluation was due in April 2023 and that work was underway to ensure that local systems were in place to assist the valuation staff in undertaking the analysis of rental information and the revaluation of the 14,000 non-domestic subjects within valuation rolls of the Joint Board area; that work was ongoing to ensure that the Scottish Government received the estimated values for approximately 10% of the valuation roll by mid-March and also to identify lands and heritages within public parks that were exempt from entry in the valuation roll due to section 19 of the Local Government (Financial Provisions) (Scotland) Act 1963 that might no longer be exempt once section 5 of the Non-domestic Rates (Scotland) Act 2020 comes into force on 1 April 2023. Further that the Assessor continued to contribute to and benefit from working with other Assessors throughout Scotland via the Scottish Assessors Association (SAA) to establish values for properties where the valuation evidence was national rather than local. It was anticipated that the draft 2023 revaluation values would be available to the public via the SAA website towards the end of 2022.

The report noted that the transfer of the Local Appeal Committees into the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service was due to take place from 1 January 2023. The outcome of the Scottish Government consultation on this together with the consultation on the draft regulations to introduce a two-stage appeals system was awaited and a report on the outcomes would be submitted to a future meeting of the Joint Board.

It was noted that the Assessor now had new powers to issue Assessor Information Notices (AINs) which, if not responded to, could lead to the Assessor issuing a Civil Penalty to the non-responder(s). The issuing of these AINs had begun and return of these would be closely monitored with Civil Penalties being issued where necessary. Renfrewshire Council's sundry debt team would assist in the collection of any Civil Penalties with the revenue raised due to be paid to the Scottish Government's Consolidated Fund, net of costs. These processes would be kept under review and the Scottish Government kept advised of any monies due to them.

The report further intimated that development of the IT valuation system continued with the aim of going live during 2022/23.

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 31 December 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 31 December 2021.

The report advised that 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 and preparing for and attending virtual VAC hearings.

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.

It was noted that the Valuation and Rating (Coronavirus) (Scotland) Order 2021 came into force on 1 December 2021 and sought to remove the impact of Coronavirus from being a material change of circumstances from 1 April 2021. Further that the Non-domestic Rates (Coronavirus) (Scotland) Bill was introduced to the Scottish Parliament in December 2021 and was currently being examined by the Local Government, Planning and Housing Committee. This Bill sought to ensure that no account could be taken of any matter occurring on or after 2 April 2020 whether directly or indirectly attributable to Coronavirus.

On behalf of the Joint Board, the Convener thanked staff for the work undertaken in dealing with non-domestic appeals.

DECIDED: That the report be noted.

9 **Performance Report**

There was submitted a report by the Assistant Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer providing an update to the ongoing reporting of performance for the first nine 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 31 December 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 98.37% and exceeding the target of 97% within six months by achieving 99.56%.

The report also detailed the average number of days taken to add a house in each constituent authority area between 1 April and 31 December 2021 and also the number of deletions from the Valuation (Council Tax) List between 1 April and 31 December during 2020 and 2021 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 31 December 2021 by constituent authority area which narrowly missed the target of 50% to be actioned within three months by achieving 44.77% and met the target of 75% within six months by achieving 75.15%.

The report indicated that the non-domestic market was not recovering to the same extent as the domestic market. Performance targets were continuously monitored and evaluated by the management team and the performance targets for non-domestic rating might require to be reviewed to reflect the effects of the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic, the impact on working practices and how services were delivered to stakeholders.

On behalf of the Joint Board, the Convener thanked staff for the work undertaken in achieving these performance figures.

DECIDED: That the report be noted.

10 **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. It was noted that the format of the Corporate Risk Register was currently being reviewed and future registers would reflect residual risk.

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 10 June 2022.

RENFREWSHIRE VALUATION JOINT BOARD

To: Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board

On: 10 June 2022

Report by: The Treasurer

Heading: Unaudited Annual Accounts 2021/22

1. Summary

- 1.1. The Annual Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2022 will be submitted to Audit Scotland in advance of the statutory deadline of 30 June 2022 and a copy is attached for consideration at Appendix 2.
 - 1.2. The Joint Board has ended the 2021/22 financial year with a small overspend of £3k.
 - 1.3. The Management Commentary within the accounts provides an overview of the Board's financial performance during 2021/22, along with a summary of risks and the outlook for the future.
-

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The Joint Board is asked to:
 - a) Consider the Unaudited Annual Accounts for 2021/22;
 - b) Approve the Annual Governance Statement (pages 10-12); and
 - c) Note the final budget monitoring and reserves position for 2021/22.
-

3. Background

- 3.1. The Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014 require the Board to prepare and publish a set of accounts, including an annual governance statement, by 30 June each year.
- 3.2. The unaudited accounts are then required to be formally considered by the Board no later than 31 August and the Annual Governance Statement should also be formally approved at this time.

- 3.3. In accordance with the Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014, the Unaudited Annual Accounts only require to be signed by the Treasurer as proper officer.
- 3.4. The accounts are then subject to external audit by the Board's appointed auditor, Audit Scotland, by 30 November 2022. The 2021/22 Audited Annual Accounts are scheduled to be presented to the Board on 18 November 2022 for approval and signing by the Convener, the Assessor and the Treasurer, in accordance with the regulations.
- 3.5. The Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement on page 15 shows an accounting Deficit on the Provision of Services of £413k and the Expenditure and Funding Analysis on page 18 shows how this differs from the budgetary deficit of £3k, due to accounting adjustments for pension costs, capital charges and the statutory employee leave accrual.
- 3.6. Underspends were experienced across many budget lines during the year most significantly on Employee costs due to in-year vacancy management. The reasons for other variances are detailed in the Management Commentary within the accounts.
- 3.7. As a result of these underspends, the budgeted drawdown from reserves of £80,000 was not required. The final Usable Reserves balances at 31 March 2022 was £672k. This includes a sum of £24k newly earmarked to fund one-off spend in 2022/23 on economic modelling related to Fixed Line Telecommunications, as outlined in the Revenue Estimates 2022/23 to 2024/25, reported to the Board in February 2022.
- 3.8. The Balance Sheet on page 17 of the Annual Accounts shows an increase in net worth of £2,072k compared to last year, which is largely driven by the movement in the pension liability. This is explained further in the Management Commentary within the accounts.
- 3.9. The figures shown in Appendix 1 include total spend of £159k on preparation for the local government election, for which £156k of funding was carried forward as an earmarked reserve from 2020/21.

RENFREWSHIRE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING STATEMENT 2021/22
1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022

| Description | Revised Annual Budget | Full Year Actual (incl ERO) | Full Year Variance (Adverse) / Favourable (incl ERO) |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| £000 | £000 | £000 | £000 |
| Employees | 2,126 | 2,066 | 60 |
| Premises Related | 187 | 198 | (11) |
| Supplies and Services | 428 | 411 | 17 |
| Support Services | 97 | 97 | (0) |
| Transfer Payments | 23 | 8 | 15 |
| Transport Related | 20 | 5 | 15 |
| Capital Charges | 0 | 20 | (20) |
| Gross Expenditure | 2,881 | 2,805 | 76 |
| Contributions from Local Authorities Core | (2,319) | (2,319) | (0) |
| Contributions from Local Authorities Barclay | (455) | (455) | (0) |
| Other Income | (27) | (28) | 1 |
| Transfer from Reserves | (80) | 0 | (80) |
| Gross Income | (2,881) | (2,802) | (79) |
| TRANSFER (TO)/FROM RESERVES | 0 | 3 | (3) |

RENFREWSHIRE VALUATION JOINT BOARD

To: Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board**On: 10 June 2022**

Report by: Chief Auditor

Heading: INTERNAL AUDIT ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Public Sector Internal Audit Standards require the Chief Auditor to prepare a report, at least annually, to senior management and the Board on the internal audit activity's purpose, authority, and responsibility, as well as performance relative to its plan.
- 1.2 The annual report must also provide an annual audit opinion on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board's internal control environment.
- 1.3 The Annual Report for Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board is attached at Appendix 1 and outlines the role of Internal Audit, the performance of the Internal Audit Team, the main findings from the internal audit work undertaken in 2021/22 and contains an audit assurance statement.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Members are invited to consider and note the contents of the Annual Report.
-

Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board Internal Audit Annual Report 2021-2022

**Renfrewshire Council
Internal Audit**

June 2022

Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board
Internal Audit Annual Report 2021/2022

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**Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board
Internal Audit Annual Report**

1 April 2021 – 31 March 2022

1. Introduction

1.1 As host Authority, Renfrewshire Council provides an internal audit service to Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board. This includes:

- The compilation of an annual audit plan following consideration and evaluation of those areas of greatest risk in the organisation's operation, and consultation with the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer, Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board;
- Delivery of the planned audit assignments;
- Follow up of previous audit recommendations;
- Provision of any ongoing advice and support on audit and risk management related matters;
- Provision of an Annual Report and Assurance Statement, and presentation to elected members at the board of Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board.

1.2 The Service operates in accordance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards which defines Internal Audit's role as:

".....an independent, objective assurance and consulting activity designed to add value and improve an organisation's operations. It helps an organisation accomplish its objectives by bringing a systematic, disciplined approach to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of risk management, control and governance processes."

1.3 In line with the Standards, the purpose of this Annual Report is to report on:

- The outcome of the planned Internal Audit reviews 2021/22 relating to Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board;
- The outcome of Internal Audit reviews of supporting Renfrewshire Council corporate systems;
- Internal audit performance;
- Planned audit work for 2022/23;
- The annual assurance statement which provides an opinion on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the Board's internal control environment.

2. Responsibilities of Management and Internal Audit

- 2.1 It is the responsibility of management to ensure that the areas under their control are adequate and effective and that there is a sound system of internal control which facilitates the effective exercise of the organisation's functions and which includes arrangements for the management of risk.
- 2.2 Internal Audit is not a substitute for effective control exercised by management as part of their responsibilities. Internal Audit's role is to independently assess the adequacy of the risk management, internal controls and governance arrangements put in place by management and to undertake sufficient work to evaluate and conclude on the adequacy of those controls for the period under review.

3. Internal Audit Activity during 2021/2022

- 3.1 One specific engagement was undertaken during 2021/22, which related to the internal controls in operation over records management. The main findings in relation to this review is summarised in table 1 below:

Table 1

| Audit Area | Conclusion |
|--------------------|---|
| Records Management | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Substantial Assurance <p>The audit identified that satisfactory arrangements are in place which ensure adequate progress of the Records Management Plan.</p> |

- 3.2 The Annual Report for 2020/2021 was submitted to the Authority on 28 May 2021.
- 3.5 The implementation rate of audit recommendations is a measure of operational culture and effectiveness. During 2021/22, 3 recommendations were followed up and all were found to be fully implemented.
- 3.5 Internal Audit also carried out reviews of the main corporate systems operating within Renfrewshire Council which support the Board's activity. The main findings in relation to these are summarised in Table 2 below and Renfrewshire Council management have agreed to implement the audit recommendations made in relation to each review:

Table 2

| Audit Area | Conclusion |
|------------------------|---|
| Payroll - Overpayments | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reasonable Assurance • Although there is a Salary Adjustment Policy in place, recovery action does not always strictly comply with the policy and recommendations were made to strengthen controls in this area. • There are satisfactory arrangements in place to ensure that employees and managers are aware of their responsibilities in relation to payroll processing and salary overpayments. • The introduction of monthly overpayment reports to services to inform them of employee overpayments has enabled services to address any issues that may lead to further overpayments. A dedicated team within the Council has been established to concentrate on overpayment recoveries. |
| Supporting Attendance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reasonable Assurance • The audit review identified that, the level of sickness absence monitoring in place was found to be adequate and that management are provided with adequate information to ensure that the supporting attendance policy is being followed. |
| Budgetary Controls | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substantial Assurance • The audit identified that there were clear budgetary control roles and responsibilities for accounting staff and budget holders. Budget holders get the information they need from accounting staff. • The main findings from the review were in relation to having formal procedures i.e. an updated Budget Holders Manual and council specific budget monitoring procedures for accountants. |

4. Review of Internal Audit Performance

- 4.1 Internal Audit produces regular reports on its performance during the year to the Renfrewshire Council, Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Board, against a range of measures set annually by the Director of Finance and Resources. These targets are set for all internal audit engagements and include Renfrewshire Council and other associated bodies, for which the team provides internal audit services. Table 3 shows the actual performance against targeted performance for the year.

Table 3

| Internal Audit Performance 2021/22 | | |
|---|----------------|----------------|
| Performance measure | Target 2021/22 | Actual 2021/22 |
| % of audit assignments completed by target date | 95% | 98.4% |
| % of audit assignments completed within time budget | 95% | 96.8% |
| % completion of audit plan for the year* | 95% | 92.1% |

* this measures the completion percentage as at 31 March. 100% of the plan is ultimately delivered through the finalisation of the outstanding elements in the new financial year.

- 4.2 The percentage completion of the audit plan is slightly below the target set for the year. This was due, in the main, to a higher than anticipated level of unplanned absence. It should be noted that this had no effect on the planned reviews for the RVJB for 2021/22 which are 100% complete. The actual performance for the year for the two other indicators, is above the target performance level.
- 4.3 The Chief Auditor is required to develop and maintain a quality assurance and improvement programme that covers all aspects of internal audit including conformance with the PSIAS. The review did not identify any areas of non-conformance that require to be addressed.
- 4.4 External Audit
- External Audit's review of the internal audit service concluded that overall the service operates in accordance with the PSIAS.
- 4.5 Risk Management
- The internal audit service through the Risk Manager, provides advice and support to the RVJB officers, as required.

5. Planned Work for 2022/23

- 5.1 Following a risk based assessment of the activities of the Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board, the audit plan for 2022/2023 provides for a review of risk management processes and ad-hoc internal control advice, reactive investigative work, follow-up of previous audits and risk management advice.

6. Audit Assurance Statement

- 6.1 Internal Audit has performed its work in accordance with the role defined in paragraph 1.2. The audit work performed has been reported to the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer, and to the Board. Where areas for improvement in internal control have been identified appropriate recommendations have been made and accepted for action by management.
- 6.2 In view of the continued challenges common to all public bodies, there will be a requirement for the council and the bodies for which it is host authority to exercise very close scrutiny over expenditure over financial management and compliance with overarching governance arrangements, and this area will continue to receive due internal audit attention.
- 6.3 It is not feasible for the system of internal control to be without any weakness. It is important to balance the risks involved in accepting systems limitations with the consequences if a problem emerges. Internal Audit recognises this and assesses this in its reporting mechanism.
- 6.4 The audit plan is always intended to be flexible and contingency time was utilised to undertake additional work on areas of emerging risk. Additionally, the gross operational internal audit days were reduced by 14% overall due to unplanned absence and no audit engagements were outsourced as was planned due to the pandemic. In this context, it is considered that reasonable assurance can be placed upon the adequacy and effectiveness of the Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board's internal control, risk management and governance arrangements, as evidenced by:-
- The results of the audit work in 2021/22 in relation to the corporate systems which supported the Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board's activities, and to specific work carried out in relation to those activities.
 - Management action in response to audit recommendations.
 - Management's self assessment of internal control, risk management and governance arrangements.
 - The regular review and updating of the Local Code of Corporate Governance by the Council in accordance with the CIPFA/SOLACE framework for corporate governance requirements, and of the corporate governance arrangements within Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board.

Signed

Asst. Chief Auditor

Date 10 June 2022

RENFREWESHIRE VALUATION JOINT BOARD

To: Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board

On: 10 June 2022

Report by: Chief Auditor

Heading: Internal Audit Engagement – Records Management

1. Summary

- 1.1 In line with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards, Internal Audit must communicate the results of each engagement to the Board.
 - 1.2 The Chief Auditor will report summaries of completed audit engagements to the Joint Board on the conclusion of each engagement for formal consideration by members in line with the best practice referred to above.
 - 1.3 This report provides detail of the audit engagement completed in April 2022 with the overall assurance rating and the number of recommendations in each risk category. The detailed board summary for the report is also attached.
-

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are invited to consider and note the summary for the internal audit review of records management plan processes.
-

For further information please contact Karen Campbell, Asst Chief Auditor on 07763854651

Or via e-mail at karen.campbell@renfrewshire.gov.uk

Renfrewshire Council

Internal Audit Service

Update for Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board on the Audit Engagement concluded in April 2022

| Category | Engagement | Assurance Rating | Recommendation Ratings | | | |
|------------|--------------------|------------------|------------------------|-----------|---------------|---------------------|
| | | | Critical | Important | Good Practice | Service Improvement |
| Governance | Records Management | Substantial | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |

| Assurance Level | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Substantial Assurance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a sound system of internal control designed to achieve the objectives of the area being reviewed. The control processes tested are being consistently applied. |
| Reasonable Assurance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The internal control processes are generally satisfactory with some areas of weakness being identified that could put some objectives of the area being reviewed at risk There is evidence that the level of non-compliance with some of the control processes may put some of the objectives of the area being reviewed at risk. |
| Limited Assurance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weaknesses in the system of internal controls are such as to put the objectives of the area being reviewed at risk. The level of non-compliance puts the objectives of the area being reviewed at risk. |
| No Assurance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Control processes are generally weak with significant risk to the achievement of the objectives of the area being reviewed. Significant non-compliance with control processes leaves the processes/systems open to error or abuse. |

| Recommendation Rating | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Service Improvement | Implementation will improve the efficiency / housekeeping of the area under review. |
| Good Practice | Implementation will contribute to the general effectiveness of control. |
| Important | Implementation will raise the level of assurance provided by the control system to acceptable levels. |
| Critical | Addresses a significant risk, impacting on the objectives of the area under review. |

Internal Audit Report

Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board

Records Management (B0005/2022/001)

Date: April 2022

BOARD SUMMARY

Audit Objectives

The objectives of the review were to ascertain that:

1. There is adequate management/board oversight and that progress against the records management plan is reviewed regularly.
2. The plan has agreed timescales for actions and these are being met accordingly.
3. Progression is monitored through the identification of targets/milestones and actual progress can be adequately evidenced and is reported on.
4. Deviations from the plan and timescales can be easily identified and there is evidence of remedial action being agreed at an appropriate level in the organisation.

Audit Scope

1. Interviewed the relevant officers to ascertain the arrangements in place for records management and obtained a copy of the record management plan.
2. Prepared and undertook a series of tests to ascertain the progress in completing the actions contained within the record management plan.

Key Audit Assurances

1. There is adequate management/board oversight and progress against the records management plan is reviewed regularly.
2. Timeous progression of actions and developments is monitored through regular progress reviews which are adequately evidenced and reported on.
3. Although there have been no deviations from the plan to date, any variations could be easily identified through the progress reviews and confirmation was obtained that any remedial action required would be agreed at an appropriate level in the organisation.

Key Risks

There were no key risks identified during the audit.

Overall Audit Opinion

The audit identified that satisfactory arrangements are in place which ensure adequate progress of the Records Management Plan.

Management Commentary

N/A as no key risks were identified.



Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board

Report to: Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board
Meeting on: 10th June 2022
Subject: Electoral Update Report
Author: Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer

1. Introduction

This report is to inform board members of any updates to Electoral Registration legislation and report to the Board on any electoral events.

2. Local Government Election - 5th May 2022

- 2.1 This election was planned and delivered in the context of COVID and the various restrictions and guidance that were in place during the months leading up to election day. During this period there was a combination of office and remote working. The successful delivery of this election was made possible by robust internal preparations such as project planning, carrying out risk assessments, updating our election specific risk register, holding regular meetings with our three Returning Officer's (RO) teams and attending Election Board meetings.
- 2.2 The worsening position with COVID during late December / Early January led me and most EROs within Scotland to take the decision to issue Household Notification Letters (HNLs) in the early part of 2021. These letters were issued to households throughout the area showing who was registered to vote within the household and whether they currently had a postal vote. The letter also gave guidance on the action to be taken if the information required to be updated and how to apply for a postal vote. To coincide with the letter going out all Scottish EROs contributed to a TV advertising campaign which was aired during the first two weeks of February.
- 2.3 Regular contact was maintained with the ROs throughout the process with plans and timetables agreed between the ERO, ROs and third party suppliers. All deadlines for the supply of data to allow the issue of Poll Cards and Postal Voting Packs were achieved.
- 2.4 On Election Day itself the office was staffed throughout the hours of the poll. There were a total of 13 Emergency Proxies issued on election day, mainly due to COVID isolation. There were also 6 clerical errors corrected on election day.

2.5 As at 27th April the Final Electorate and Postal Vote statistics are shown below:

East Renfrewshire Council

| Ward | Total Electorate | Of which are Postal Voters | PV as a %of total electorate |
|---|------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Ward 1 - Barrhead, Liboside and Uplawmoor | 14,548 | 3,284 | 22.57% |
| Ward 2 - Newton Mearns North and Neilston | 12,455 | 3,454 | 27.73% |
| Ward 3 - Giffnock and Thornliebank | 13,011 | 3,863 | 29.69% |
| Ward 4 - Clarkston, Netherlee and Williamwood | 16,586 | 4,333 | 26.12% |
| Ward 5 - Newton Mearns South and Eaglesham | 18,286 | 5,515 | 30.16% |

Inverclyde Council

| Ward | Total Electorate | Of which are Postal Voters | PV as a %of total electorate |
|----------------------------------|------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Ward 1 - Inverclyde East* | 8,808 | 2,199 | 24.97% |
| Ward 2 - Inverclyde East Central | 8,065 | 1,888 | 23.41% |
| Ward 3 - Inverclyde Central | 7,787 | 1,595 | 20.48% |
| Ward 4 - Inverclyde North | 10,353 | 2,539 | 24.52% |
| Ward 5 - Inverclyde West | 8,773 | 2,253 | 25.68% |
| Ward 6 - Inverclyde South West | 9,531 | 2,151 | 22.57% |
| Ward 7 - Inverclyde South | 7,877 | 1,768 | 22.45% |

*Note this ward was uncontested

Renfrewshire Council

| Ward | Total Electorate | Of which are Postal Voters | PV as a %of total electorate |
|---|------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Ward 1 - Renfrew North and Braehead | 13,717 | 2,878 | 20.98% |
| Ward 2 - Renfrew South and Gallowhill | 9,357 | 2,057 | 21.98% |
| Ward 3 - Paisley Northeast and Ralston | 9,141 | 2,260 | 24.72% |
| Ward 4 - Paisley Northwest | 13,728 | 2,726 | 19.86% |
| Ward 5 - Paisley East and Central | 10,103 | 2,039 | 20.18% |
| Ward 6 - Paisley Southeast | 9,546 | 2,498 | 26.17% |
| Ward 7 - Paisley Southwest | 11,998 | 2,990 | 24.92% |
| Ward 8 - Johnstone South and Elderslie | 13,298 | 3,016 | 22.68% |
| Ward 9 - Johnstone North, Kilbarchan, Howwood and Lochwinnoch | 11,956 | 2,711 | 22.67% |
| Ward 10 - Houston, Crosslee and Linwood | 12,758 | 3,118 | 24.44% |
| Ward 11 - Bishopton, Bridge of Weir and Langbank | 13,065 | 3,291 | 25.19% |
| Ward 12 - Erskine and Inchinnan | 13,097 | 3,027 | 23.11% |

3. 2022 Canvass

- 3.1 The 2022 canvass will start on Monday 4th July 2022, with publication of the revised register due to take place by 1st December 2022.
- 3.2 As a precursor to the start of the canvass National Data Matching of the register to the records of DWP is scheduled to take place on Monday 6th June 2022, with local data matching following. These matching stages help identify the appropriate form of communication to be issued to each household.
- 3.3 Where an email address is held then the initial contact will be by email, and if there is no response then the appropriate letter will be issued to the household. In other cases the initial contact will be by letter. Where a response is required then there will be a range of options for the elector to utilise including internet, phone and mail.
- 3.4 The final stage of the canvass is a visit to the household for those households where a response was required and none received. This stage is due to begin at the end of August.

4. Future Elections

- 4.1 At the time of writing there are no other elections scheduled, however, as always this will be kept under review and should circumstances require, our staff will be able to deliver.

5. Elections Act 2022

- 5.1 The Elections Act 2022 received Royal Ascent on 28th April 2022. The provisions of the Act come into force at various times and elements of it are subject to further Regulations. The main provisions that will impact the Board are the requirement for Voter ID for UK Parliamentary Elections, this is due to come into force on 1st December 2022, Changes to Postal Voting application process for the UK Parliamentary Elections and changes to the eligibility to be registered as an Overseas Elector.
- 5.2 As the details and requirements begin to become clearer I will be working towards implementing the various requirements and will continue to keep the Board informed of progress.

6. General Conclusions

- 6.1 I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the staff for delivering another successful election in the most trying of circumstances, all credit to their professionalism and “can do” attitude which ensured we delivered our part in this election process.

7. Recommendations

- i. The Board notes the contents of this report.

Robert Nicol
Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer
30th May 2021

For further information please contact Robert Nicol 07483921232
Or via e-mail at Robert.nicol@renfrewshire-vjb.gov.uk



Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board

Report to: Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board
Meeting on: 10th May 2022
Subject: Strategic Service Plan 2021-24 – Annual Update
Author: Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer

1.0 Introduction

The attached report is the 2022/23 annual update of our three yearly Strategic Service Plan which covers the years 2021-2024.

It is being presented to the Board for information purposes.

2.0 Recommendation

The Board notes this report.

Robert Nicol
Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer
30th May 2022

For further information please contact Robert Nicol at [07483921232](tel:07483921232)
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RENFREWSHIRE VALUATION JOINT BOARD



STRATEGIC SERVICE PLAN APRIL 2021 TO APRIL 2024

Annual Update – April 2022

BACKGROUND

Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board (RVJB) is committed to a three-year Service Planning Schedule. The most recent Strategic Service Plan approved by the Joint Board covers the period 2021-2024.

As the environment in which the Board operates is constantly changing, there is a need to review the Service Plan annually. Rather than produce a fully revised Plan, however, this 'Update' includes such changes and new tasks as have occurred or been identified since approval of the main document. It should therefore be read along with the main 2021-24 Strategic Service Plan. All references and numberings contained within this document refer to the original Plan.

PART ONE – SERVICE FUNCTION

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Assessor is responsible for the valuation of non-domestic properties (The Valuation Roll) and the valuation of domestic properties (The Valuation List) and also in their role as Electoral Registration Officer, the compilation of the Electoral Register.

The Assessor is normally required to complete a 5-yearly Revaluation of all non-domestic properties within the Valuation Roll. As a result of recommendations from the Barclay Review of Non-Domestic Rates, legislation has now been enacted by the Scottish Government to facilitate the move to 3 yearly revaluations from 1st April 2023.

1.1 VALUATION ROLL

The total rateable value as at 31st March 2022 was approximately £382m and the total number of subjects in the Valuation Rolls for the Joint Board area was 14,312.

1.2 VALUATION LIST

As at the 31st March 2022 there were 169,977 properties in the Council Tax Valuation Lists for the Joint Board area.

1.3 REGISTER OF ELECTORS

The Revised Register is updated by a canvass of all households. As at 27th April 2022 the number of electors for Local Government Elections was 277,844.

PART TWO - CORE OBJECTIVES

2.1 THE VALUATION ROLL

- 2.1.1 The maintenance of the Valuation Roll, dealing with non-domestic appeals and preparing for the delivery of the 2023 Revaluation are the main tasks with the Valuation Roll
- 2.1.2 As at the 31st March 2022, we have disposed of 97.12% of the number of subjects under appeal from the 2017 Revaluation.
- 2.1.3 The Assessor continues to prepare and implement the various changes introduced by the Non-Domestic Rates (Scotland) Act 2020 and associated change Regulations.

2.2 THE VALUATION (COUNCIL TAX) LIST

- 2.2.1 The maintenance of the Valuation List and dealing with council tax proposals and appeals are the main tasks with the Council Tax list.

2.3 THE REGISTER OF ELECTORS

- 2.3.1 As at the 27th April 2022, the number of electors for Scottish or Local Government Elections is 277,844 over the three constituent authorities.
- 2.3.2 The Electoral Registration Officer has been preparing for the 2022 Annual Canvass
- 2.3.3 The Electoral Registration Officer will be preparing to implement the changes brought about by the Elections Act 2022.

2.4 CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

- 2.4.1 A Corporate Risk Register is maintained and reviewed every 6 months and reported to the Board on a biannual basis. The revised Corporate Risk Register was presented to the Board Meetings held on the 17th September 2021 and 25th February 2022. Following feedback from members a review of the presentation of the Corporate Risk Register will take place in 2022.
- 2.4.2 With regard to RVJB's Records Management Plan (RMP), which was agreed by the Keeper of the Records of Scotland in January 2016, RVJB was invited to submit a Progress Update Review (PUR) in January 2022 in relation to the RMP. The PUR process is entirely voluntary and RVJB responded to the Keeper's Assessment Team to confirm RVJB would submit a PUR. The PUR was submitted on 7th April 2020, a response is awaited from the Keeper's Assessment Team.

2.5 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

- 2.5.1 RVJB monitors Equalities in line with our Public Sector Equalities Duty and the report for 2021-23, was published on our website in April 2021 in accordance with legislation.

2.6 STAFFING AND PERSONNEL MATTERS

- 2.6.1 Staff retention and recruitment has proven challenging for all VJB's in recent times with several rounds of recruitment taking place.

2.7 FINANCE AND BUDGETING

- 2.7.1 Efficiency savings are continuously being sought through streamlining our services in conjunction with reviewing posts within RVJB's structure.

2.8 INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

- 2.8.1 A review of the telephony system has taken place and a suitable replacement has been identified, this is scheduled to go live during August / September 2022
- 2.8.2 A managed changeover of the servers operating systems is taking place to ensure that the versions used remain in support. PCs and Laptops will also be upgraded to Windows 11.

- 2.8.3 Due to the ending of the Public Services Network this part of the Service Plan has been renamed Cyber Security and tasks within the plan updated to reflect this.

2.9 INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

- 2.9.1 In line with data protection legislation the Privacy Notices for both Joint Board staff and stakeholders were reviewed by RVJB's DPO and with regard to the Privacy Notice for stakeholders, published on our website.
- 2.9.2 Information Security Training tailored to the three functions of the Joint Board was delivered by RVJB's DPO.
- 2.9.3 To ensure continued compliance with data protection legislation, any new or amended data sharing agreements are reviewed by RVJB's Data Protection Officer prior to being signed by RVJB.

PART THREE

KEY ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES

Key To Business Objectives

The codes in the table below relate each Activity and Outcome contained in Part Three of the Service Plan to the relevant Business Objective(s) within RVJB's **Mission, Vision and Commitments** Statements.

| Number | Business Objective |
|---|--|
| 1 | Compile the Valuation Roll |
| 2 | Compile the Council Tax Valuation List |
| 3 | Compile the Electoral Register |
| 4 | Maintain the Valuation Roll |
| 5 | Maintain the Council Tax Valuation List |
| 6 | Maintain the Electoral Register |
| All of the above are underpinned by the aim of providing these services in a high quality, effective and responsive manner. | |
| 7 | Listening and responding to Stakeholders needs |
| 8 | Valuing staff and providing them with opportunities to develop and contribute |
| 9 | Reacting innovatively to change |
| 10 | Treating all stakeholders in a fair, consistent manner and in accordance with equal opportunities requirements |
| 11 | Striving for continuous improvement in all aspects of service delivery |
| 12 | Ensuring that we are accessible and accountable to stakeholders |
| 13 | Pro-actively planning workloads and deploying resources |
| 14 | Using 'plain English' |

3.1 THE VALUATION ROLL

3.1.1 Maintenance of the 2017 Valuation Roll – As per 2021 - 24 Service Plan

3.1.2 Revaluation 2017 - Settlement of Appeals – As per 2021 - 24 Service Plan

3.1.3 Running Roll Appeals – As per 2021 - 24 Service Plan

3.1.4 Revaluation 2023 (to include Telecoms as designated assessor)

| Item | Description | Objective(s) | Ownership | Date/Recurrence |
|-------------|---|----------------------|---|------------------------|
| (a) | Issue Assessor's Information Notices (AIN's) | 1,4,7,10,11,12,13,14 | Divisional Assessors & Data Manager | As required |
| (b) | Manage returns of above in accordance with the RVJB procedures/clerical Instructions. | 1,4,7,10,11,12,13,14 | Data Manager | On return |
| (c) | Manage issuing of Civil Penalties for Non Return of information | 1,4,7,10,11,12,13,14 | Data Manager | As required |
| (d) | Inform RC of any non returns to allow pursuit of fees (per agreed protocol) | 1,4,7,10,11,12,13,14 | Data Manager | As required |
| (e) | Analyse VORC returns and Bulk Upload returns to Portal | 1,4,7,10,11,12,13,14 | Divisional Assessors/All staff | As required |
| (f) | Analyse rentals of 'bulk class' subjects as agreed within established Working Groups and in accordance with SAA rental analysis guidance. Facilitate same, using Valuation System | 1,4,10,11,12,13 | Divisional Assessors | As required |
| (g) | Analyse local land sale information for use in contractor's valuations. | 1,4,10,11,12,13 | Divisional Assessors | As required |
| (h) | Draft Narratives and rates to be applied in valuations, where appropriate. | 1,4,10,11,12,13,14 | Divisional Assessors | As required |
| (i) | Approve Narratives and rates to be applied in valuations, where appropriate | 1,4,10,11,12,13,14 | Assessor / Assistant Assessors/Divisional Assessors | As required |
| (j) | Provide information as required to SAA Practice Note authors, working groups and Category Committees. | 1,4,10,11,12,13 | Assistant Assessors / Divisional Assessors | April 21 – May 22 |
| (k) | Draft and present SAA Practice Notes for approval by Committees | 1,4,10,11,12,13 | SAA members | As required |
| (il) | Make comment on and provide input to draft/proposed Practice Notes. | 1,4,10,11,12,13,14 | Assistant Assessors/Divisional Assessors | As required |
| (mj) | Adopt and issue amended practice notes for use within RVJB (Make available through SAA on Web Portal) | 1,4,7,10,11,12,13,14 | Assistant Assessors/Divisional Assessors | As required |
| (n) | Value subjects for Revaluation purposes in accordance with local schemes of valuation, SAA Practice Notes and RVJB targets for completion. | 1,10,11,12,13 | Divisional Assessors | As required |
| (o) | Authorise proposed Rateable Values (RVs) | 1,10,11,12,13 | Assistant Assessors/Divisional Assessors | As required |
| (p) | Ensure proposed NAVs/ RVs shown correctly on Valuation System | 1,10,11,12,13 | Data Manager | As required |

| | | | | |
|-----|--|-------------------|--|-----------------------|
| (q) | Check and authorise all such amendments in accordance with RVJB procedures, making changes or referring back as appropriate. | 1,4,10,11, 12, 13 | Data Manager | Weekly |
| (r) | Export proposed NAVs/RVs (including summary valuation data where appropriate) to Assessors portal via Valuation System | 1,4,10,11 | Data Manager/IT Manager | Weekly from July 2022 |
| (s) | Publish draft Revaluation Roll and Issue Draft Notices | 1,4,7,10,12, | Assessor/ Assistant Assessor/ Divisional Assessors | November 2022 |

3.1.6 Telecoms Valuations - As per 2022 – 24 Service Plan

3.1.7 Review of Tribunals System - As per 2021 – 24 Service Plan

3.2 THE COUNCIL TAX VALUATION LIST

3.2.1 Maintenance of the Council Tax Lists - As per 2021 – 24 Service Plan

3.2.2 Amendments to Bands following Alteration and Subsequent Sale - As per 2021 – 24 Service Plan

3.2.3 Proposals and Appeals - As per 2021-24 Service Plan

3.2.4 Council Tax Revaluation - As per 2021-24 Service Plan

3.3 THE ELECTORAL REGISTER

3.3.1 Annual Register of Electors - As per 2021-24 Service Plan

3.3.2 Maintenance of Register of Electors (Rolling Registration) – As per 2021-24 Service Plan

3.3.3 Elections/Electoral Events – For each Election, individual timetables will be agreed with ROs and other interested parties. Regard will be had to directions and advice from Elections Management Board and Electoral Commission.

3.3.4 Absent Voters – Collection/Refresh of Personal Identifiers – As per 2021 - 24 Service Plan

3.3.5 Anonymous registration - As per 2021 – 24 Service Plan

3.3.6 Changes in Legislation

| Item | Description | Objective(s) | Ownership | Date/Recurrence |
|-------------|---|---------------------|---|----------------------------|
| (a) | Actively participate in SAA and AEA Committees etc to maintain awareness of likely change | 7,8,9,11,13 | ERO/Assistant ERO's/ Senior Clerical Manager | Ongoing |
| (b) | Receive all relevant draft legislation and input to all relevant consultations | 7,9,11,13 | ERO/Assistant ERO's/ Senior Clerical Manager | Ongoing |
| (c) | Implement changes to practices and procedures | 3,6,7,9,11,13 | Senior Clerical Manager | As required |
| (d) | Prepare for the implementation of voter ID | 6,7,9,10,11,13 | ERO & Senior Clerical Manager | December 2022 |
| (e) | Prepare for the changes to absent voting and overseas electors | 6,7,9,10,11,13 | ERO & Senior Clerical Manager | Possibly Quarter 2 2023 |

3.3.7 Boundary Changes - As per 2021-24 Service Plan

3.3.8 ER Data Standards – As per 2021-24 Service Plan

3.4 CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

3.4.1 Joint Board Meetings - As per 2021 – 24 Service Plan

3.4.2 Probity and Propriety - As per 2021 – 24 Service Plan

3.4.3 Service Plans - As per 2021 – 24 Service Plan

3.4.4 Corporate Governance, Defalcation Procedures and Fraud Prevention - As per 2021 – 24 Service Plan

3.4.5 Strategic Management - As per 2021 – 24 Service Plan

3.4.6 Performance Management, Planning & Reporting - As per 2021 – 24 Service Plan

3.4.7 Internal Working Groups - As per 2021 – 24 Service Plan

3.4.8 Personnel, Policies and Procedures - As per 2021 – 24 Service Plan

3.4.9 Internal and External Audit - As per 2021 – 24 Service Plan

3.4.10 Risk Management

| Item | Description | Objective(s) | Ownership | Date/Recurrence |
|-------------|---|---------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------|
| (a) | Review Risk Management Strategy | 1-6,9,11,12,13 | Assessor /Assistant Assessors | During 2022 |
| (b) | Implement and review Corporate Risk Register in accordance with the methodology contained in Policy | 1-6,9,11,12,13 | Management Team | Bi-Annually |
| (c) | Implement/Amend Risk Action Plan | 1-6,9,11,12,13 | Management Team | Annually in April |
| (d) | Monitor progress against Action Plan | 11,13 | Management Team | Monthly |

| | | | | |
|-----|--|-------------|-------------------------------|----------|
| (e) | Review Business Continuity/Disaster Recovery Plan | 1-6,12,13 | Assessor /Assistant Assessors | Annually |
| (f) | Liaise with RC Legal advisors to review all insurances | 1-6,8,11,13 | Assessor | Annually |

3.5 ACCOUNTABILITY

3.5.1 Annual Accounts - As per 2021 – 24 Service Plan

3.5.2 External Audit - The timetabling of, and resource allocation to, External Audits are out with the direct control of the Assessor and are subject to annual agreement.

3.5.3 Audit Plan - As per 2021 – 24 Service Plan

3.5.4 Performance Monitoring and Reporting - As per 2021 – 24 Service Plan

3.5.5 Management Team Meetings - As per 2021 – 24 Service Plan

3.6 BEST VALUE

3.6.1 Performance Monitoring and Measurement - As per 2021 – 24 Service Plan

3.6.2 Trends and Comparisons - As per 2021 – 24 Service Plan

3.6.3 Public Performance Reporting - As per 2021 – 24 Service Plan

3.6.4 Stakeholder Consultation - As per 2021 – 24 Service Plan

3.6.5 Customer Complaints - As per 2018 – 21 Service Plan

| Item | Description | Objective(s) | Ownership | Date/Recurrence |
|------|---|------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| (a) | Issue Customer Complaints forms in accordance with reviewed policy | 1-6,7,9,10,11,12,13,14 | All staff | As required |
| (b) | Collate Customer Complaints responses and prepare reports for Management Team | 1-6,7,9,10,11,12,13,14 | Assistant Assessor | Quarterly, Annually |

| | | | | |
|-----|--|-----------------|--------------------|-----------|
| (c) | Review Customer Complaints Policy | 7,9,11,12,13 | Management Team | Annually |
| (d) | Publish Complaints information as required by policy | 7,8,10,11,12,14 | Assistant Assessor | Quarterly |

3.7 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

3.7.1 Encouraging Equal Opportunities and Ensuring Compliance - As per 2021 – 24 Service Plan

3.7.2. Policy Review Timetable - As per 2021 – 24 Service Plan

3.7.3 Equalities Reporting to be summarised - As per 2021 – 24 Service Plan

3.7.4 Promotion and Training - As per 2021 – 24 Service Plan

3.8 STAFFING AND PERSONNEL MATTERS

3.8.1 Development and Review of Personnel Policies - As per 2021 – 24 Service Plan

3.8.2 Training and Development Policy - As per 2021 – 24 Service Plan

3.8.3 Co-operation with Renfrewshire Council - As per 2021 – 24 Service Plan

3.8.4 Health and Safety Policy - As per 2021 – 24 Service Plan

3.9 FINANCE AND BUDGETING

3.9.1 Financial Regulations and Standing Orders

| Item | Description | Objective(s) | Ownership | Date/Recurrence |
|------|--|--------------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| (a) | Review Financial Regulations | 12,14 | Treasurer/Assessor | During 2022 then 3-yearly |
| (b) | Review Standing Orders | 12,14 | Clerk/Assessor | During 2022 then 3-yearly |
| (c) | Review procedural guidance to staff to reflect financial regulations | 12,14 | Assessor | During 2022 then 3-yearly |

3.9.2 Budget Preparation - As per 2021 – 24 Service Plan

3.9.3 Financial Procedures - As per 2021 – 24 Service Plan

3.9.4 Training - As per 2021 – 24 Service Plan

3.9.5 Financial Monitoring Reports - As per 2021 – 24 Service Plan

3.9.6 Annual Accounts - As per 2021 – 24 Service Plan

3.9.7 Payroll Checks - As per 2021 – 24 Service Plan

3.10 INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

3.10.1 Planning Forum - As per 2021 – 24 Service Plan

3.10.2 Business Systems Support - As per 2021 – 24 Service Plan

3.10.3 Public Services Network (PSN) - Renamed Cyber Security

| Item | Description | Objective(s) | Ownership | Date/Recurrence |
|-------------|---|---------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|
| (a) | Review IS Strategy and initiate relevant development project(s) | 1-6,7,8,9,11,12,13 | Assessor | Annually |
| (b) | Prepare Cyber Incident Response Plan | 3,6,9,11,12,13 | Assessor / Senior IT Manager | September 2022 |
| (c) | Prepare and organise ITHC | 3,6,9,11,12,13 | Assessor / Senior IT Manager | Annually December |
| (d) | Implement Actions identified in ITHC | 3,6,9,11,12,13 | Assessor / Senior IT Manager | After ITHC |

3.10.4 Asset Refresh - As per 2021 – 24 Service Plan

3.10.5 Assessors 'Progress' System - As per 2021 – 24 Service Plan

3.10.6 Satellite Systems - As per 2021 – 24 Service Plan

3.10.7 Assessors Portal Project - As per 2021 – 24 Service Plan

3.10.8 Web Site - As per 2021 – 24 Service Plan

3.11 DATA PROTECTION - As per 2021 – 24 Service Plan

3.12 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

3.12.1 Freedom of Information Policy - As per 2021 – 24 Service Plan

3.12.2 Freedom of Information functionality - As per 2021 – 24 Service Plan

3.12.3 Publication Scheme and Guide to Information - As per 2021 – 24 Service Plan

3.12.4 Freedom of Information Procedures - As per 2021 – 24 Service Plan

3.12.5 Codes of Practice - As per 2021 – 24 Service Plan

3.13 KEY PARTNERSHIPS

3.13.1 Support Services – Renfrewshire Council - As per 20121 – 24 Service Plan

3.13.2 Constituent Councils - Recipients of Operational Outputs - As per 2021 – 24 Service Plan

3.13.3 Scottish Assessors Association - As per 2021 – 24 Service Plan

3.13.4 Scottish Assessors Association Partners - As per 2021 – 24 Service Plan

3.13.5 Association of Electoral Administrators - As per 2021 – 24 Service Plan

3.13.6 The Electoral Commission - As per 2021 – 24 Service Plan

3.13.7 External Suppliers

| Item | Description | Objective(s) | Ownership | Date/Recurrence |
|-------------|---|----------------------|--|------------------------|
| (a) | Liaison with canvass form printing and mailing contractor | 3,7,9,10,11,13,14 | Assistant EROs/Senior Clerical Manager | As required |
| (b) | Invite Tender Bids for printing of canvass stationery, printing and mailing | 3,10,11,12,13 | Assistant EROs | As per agreed contract |
| (c) | Meetings/Liaison with I Mail Services | 3,6,7,10,11,13 | Assistant Assessors/Senior Clerical Manager | As required |
| (d) | Meetings/Liaison with suppliers of fixtures and fittings, including photocopier, water supplies etc | 7,11,13 | Assistant Assessors | As required |
| (e) | Liaise with Laserfiche Account Manager | 3,6,7,8,9,10,11,13 | Assistant Assessors/ Senior IT Manager | Ongoing/As Required |
| (f) | Liaise with Democracy Counts Account Manager | 3,7,9,10,11,12,13,14 | Assistant EROs/Senior Clerical Manager/ IT Manager | Ongoing/As Required |
| (g) | Attend and contribute to Elector8 user group | 3,6,7,9,10,11,13 | Senior Clerical Manager / IT Manager | As scheduled |
| (h) | Attend and contribute to Elector8 Governance group | 3,6,7,9,10,11,13 | ERO | As scheduled |

3.14 RECORDS MANAGEMENT

| Item | Description | Objective(s) | Ownership | Date/Recurrence |
|-------------|--|-----------------------|---------------------|---|
| (a) | Submit Records Management Plan to National Registers of Scotland | 1-6,7,8,9,11,12,13,14 | Assistant Assessors | When called by the Keeper |
| (b) | Consider whether to submit annual PUR and do so if appropriate | 1-6,7,8,9,11,12,13,14 | Assistant Assessors | When offered by NRS, annually usually Quarter 1 |
| (d) | Implement Plan locally, including data storage protocols, retention policies, destruction policies etc | 1-6,7,8,9,11,12,13,14 | Assistant Assessors | Ongoing |
| (e) | Staff Training for above | 1-6,7,8,9,11,13,14 | Assistant Assessors | Ongoing |

3.15 MISCELLANEOUS

3.15.1 Consultations - As per 2021 – 24 Service Plan

3.15.2 Local Authority and Electoral Boundary Changes - As per 2021 – 24 Service Plan

3.15.3 Corporate Address Gazetteers – As per 2021-24 Service Plan

RENFREWSHIRE VALUATION JOINT BOARD

ASSESSOR AND ELECTORAL REGISTRATION OFFICER **SERVICE PLAN APRIL 2018 - APRIL 2021**

PART FOUR **PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT**

The following section sets out the statutory framework governing the core duties, services and areas of activity of the Valuation Joint Board, along with the approach to performance planning, establishment of standard, target setting, performance monitoring and performance reporting related to these tasks.

1.1 THE VALUATION ROLL - As per 2021 – 24 Service Plan

1.2 THE (COUNCIL TAX) VALUATION LIST As per 2021 – 24 Service Plan

1.3 REGISTER OF ELECTORS - As per 2021 – 24 Service Plan



Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board

Report to: Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board

Meeting on: 10th June 2022

Subject: Performance Report

Author: Assistant Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer

1.0 Introduction

This quarter's performance report provides an update to the ongoing reporting of performance and is intended to keep members informed of current performance and workload issues facing the Board. As this is the first report following the end of the financial year, the statistics for Valuation Roll and Council Tax look at the entire year from April 2021 to March 2022.

A summarised report designed for publication on the internet is appended and the Board's approval to publish is recommended.

2.0 Council Tax

The main work involved in Council Tax at the moment remains the addition of new houses to the Valuation List and the deletion of demolished houses. I include a summary of new additions to the Council Tax List for information.

2.1 Time taken to enter new houses into the Valuation (Council Tax) List

Period 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022

| Council Area | No. Added | Within 3 months | %age of total added | Between 3 and 6 months | %age of total added | Added within 6 months | More than 6 months | %age of total added |
|--------------------|-------------|-----------------|---------------------|------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Renfrewshire | 971 | 953 | 98.15% | 13 | 1.34% | 99.49% | 5 | 0.51% |
| East Renfrewshire | 481 | 471 | 97.93% | 3 | 0.62% | 98.55% | 7 | 1.45% |
| Inverclyde | 515 | 505 | 98.06% | 6 | 1.17% | 99.23% | 4 | 0.77% |
| RVJB totals | 1967 | 1.929 | 98.07% | 22 | 1.12% | 99.19% | 16 | 0.81% |

This performance exceeds our targets of 95% of new houses entering the list within three months and 97% within 6 months, with our performance being 98.07% and 99.19% respectively. Given the restrictions imposed by the pandemic over most of 2021/22 and the approximately 60% uplift of houses being added compared with 2021, staff are to be congratulated on achieving this level of service.

The number of new houses added to the Council Tax List in the past 3 years were:

| | |
|---------|-------|
| 2019/20 | 1,463 |
| 2020/21 | 1,233 |
| 2021/22 | 1,967 |

This year's figure is sitting approximately 60% higher than last year and is a significant increase on the long-term norm of between 1200 to 1300 houses per annum added to the Council Tax List.

In the period from 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022, the average number of days taken to add a house was as follows:

| Council Area | No. Added | Average No. of Days |
|--------------------|-------------|---------------------|
| Renfrewshire | 971 | 23.81 |
| East Renfrewshire | 481 | 33.14 |
| Inverclyde | 515 | 18.58 |
| RVJB Totals | 1967 | 24.72 |

This measure is well below our target of 38 days.

2.2 Information on Deletions from the Council Tax List

The main reasons for deleting a property from the valuation list would be where the property is demolished, where a house is now being used for non-domestic purposes or where two or more houses are combined to form one house.

2.2.1 Number of Deletions from the Valuation (Council Tax) List between 1st April and 31st March during 2020/21 and 2021/22

| Council Area | No. Deleted 2020/21 | No. Deleted 2021/22 |
|-------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Renfrewshire | 67 | 21 |
| East Renfrewshire | 10 | 14 |
| Inverclyde | 9 | 87 |
| RVJB Total | 86 | 122 |

3.0 Non-domestic Valuation

One of the main areas of work in non-domestic valuation over the last year was the maintenance of the Valuation Roll. I include a summary below outlining the number of amendments undertaken for information.

3.1 Time taken to make statutory amendments to the Valuation Roll (excluding appeal settlements and amendments to prescribed entries)

Period 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022

| Council Area | No. of Alt'ns | Within 3 months | %age of total added | Between 3 and 6 months | %age of total added | Added within 6 months | More than 6 months | %age of total added |
|--------------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------------|------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Renfrewshire | 329 | 126 | 38.30% | 77 | 23.40% | 61.70% | 126 | 38.30% |
| East Renfrewshire | 80 | 44 | 55.00% | 13 | 16.25% | 71.25% | 23 | 28.75% |
| Inverclyde | 147 | 67 | 45.58% | 46 | 31.29% | 76.87% | 34 | 23.12% |
| RVJB totals | 556 | 237 | 42.63% | 136 | 24.46% | 67.09% | 183 | 32.91% |

The above alterations to the Valuation Roll are value changes only and do not reflect alterations where overall value is unchanged, changes to occupancy details or other administrative changes.

The performance targets of 50% to be actioned within 3 months and 75% within 6 months have not been met.

In relation to the performance targets, the Board's COVID health and safety protocols to protect staff and the general public combined with the COVID safety measures put in place by each occupier, has had an impact on service delivery over 2021/22. Throughout most of this financial year there has been limits on how many non-domestic inspections can be carried out within a day as well as the time taken to complete the actual inspection which has had an impact on workload.

The valuation of non-domestic properties also does not lend itself as readily to remote inspections and valuations as domestic properties. For example, a new house type in a housing development can be surveyed externally and valued for council tax purposes with the resultant council tax band being used for the same house type, if there are no alterations, throughout the housing development. For non-domestic subjects, each property must be inspected to ensure the correct valuation is entered into the valuation roll.

Valuation staff have also been heavily involved in preparing estimates of non-domestic values for the 2023 Revaluation as required by the Scottish Government. This involved collecting the relevant information, analysing the evidence, and subsequently valuing a wide range of subjects in each of the 3 constituent authorities' valuation rolls. This has been extremely resource intensive for the valuation team but staff met the deadline of the 15th March to provide these estimates to the Scottish Government.

4.0 General Conclusions

The performance targets for statutory amendments in relation to the Valuation List for Council Tax have been exceeded. Staff are to be commended for managing to achieve this level of service with a record number of dwellings being added to the Valuation List for Council Tax despite the constraints imposed as a result of the Pandemic.

However, the Valuation Roll performance is substantially less than our normal standard. The Senior Management Team (SMT) outlined concerns to the Board at various points throughout 2021 that given we were sitting with core vacancies and the restrictions in our ability to provide our normal level of service as a result of the Covid-19 restrictions, as well as preparing for the 2023 Revaluation, the targets set in relation to alterations to the Valuation Roll may not be met and this situation has occurred.

5.0 Performance Targets – 2022/23

The ongoing Coronavirus pandemic has and will continue to have an impact on Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board in the short term. However, as most restrictions have been lifted, normal service delivery for all 3 functions will resume although there are a large number of competing demands placed on our service which are ever increasing, and the Management Team are continuously reviewing processes and systems to improve efficiency and service delivery.

In this context the SMT propose to retain the 2021/22 performance targets for 22/23 for both Council Tax and Non-Domestic Valuation.

The performance targets may require to be reviewed as the impact of changes which affect our service are known e.g., the transfer of the Valuation Appeal Committees to the Scottish Tribunal Service from the 1st January 2023 which will affect the disposal of both council and non-domestic proposals/appeals as well as the valuation of subjects situated within public parks which have been legislated to enter the Valuation Roll with effect from 1st April 2023.

Staff will also have to dispose of approximately 6,000 Running Roll appeals lodged as a result of the pandemic as well as the competing demand of revaluing approximately 14,000 non-domestic subjects for the 2023 Revaluation which is the first Revaluation with a one-year tone date, with draft values to be completed by Autumn 2022. This is all against the backdrop of our day-to-day workload of maintaining the Valuation List for Council Tax and the Valuation Roll for each constituent authority.

For your ease of reference please see the table below with the KPIs proposed for 22/23.

| Amendments Within Time Periods | Valuation List for Council Tax | Non-Domestic |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------|
| 0-3 Months | 95% | 50% |
| Between 3 and 6 Months | 2% | 25% |
| More than 6 Months | 3% | 25% |

6.0 Recommendations

- i. The Board note the contents of this report.
- ii. The Board approve the performance targets for financial year 2021/22.
- iii. The Board authorise publication of the attached summary report.

Lindsey Hendry
Assistant Assessor and ERO
18th May 2022

For further information please contact Lindsey Hendry at 0141-618-5927 or via email at lindsey.hendry@renfrewshire-vjb.gov.uk

Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board



Summary of Performance Returns

2012/13 – 2021/22

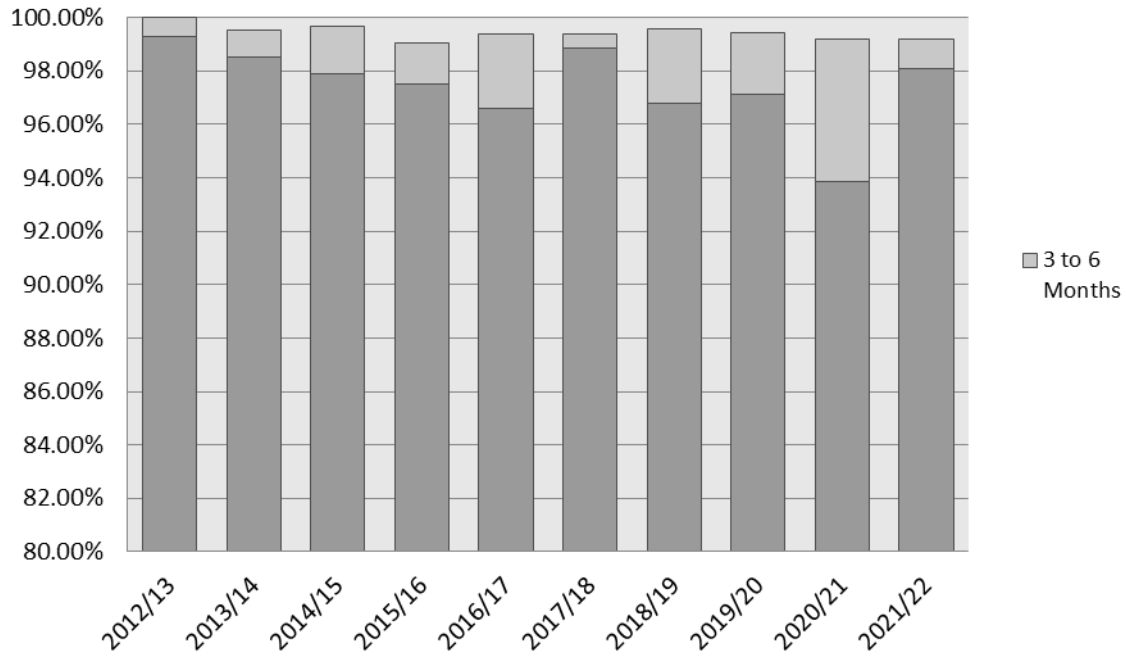
The Following data and charts summarise the Assessor's performance in relation to targets set over the past 10 years for alterations and amendments to the Council Tax List and the Valuation Roll. Please note that the delivery of our services for the Period 2020/21 and 2021/22 have been conducted under Government restrictions due to the Covid 19 Pandemic.

1.0 Addition of New Houses to the Council Tax List

The main, ongoing work in relation to Council Tax is the addition of new houses to the Council Tax List. This year the number of houses added to the Council Tax List is approximately 60% higher than last year and is a significant increase on the long-term norm of between 1200 and 1300 per annum. This performance exceeds our targets of 95% of within three months and 97% within 6 months.

| Council Tax - New Houses Added | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| | 2012/13 | 2013/14 | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | 2020/21 | 2021/22 |
| Achievement | | | | | | | | | | |
| Within 3 Months | 99.30% | 98.53% | 97.89% | 97.51% | 96.60% | 98.84% | 96.81% | 97.13% | 93.84% | 98.07% |
| Between 3-6 Months | 0.70% | 0.98% | 1.79% | 1.53% | 2.78% | 0.54% | 2.75% | 2.32% | 5.33% | 1.12% |
| Within 6 Months | 100.00% | 99.51% | 99.68% | 99.04% | 99.38% | 99.38% | 99.56% | 99.45% | 99.17% | 99.19% |
| Over 6 Months | 0.00% | 0.49% | 0.32% | 0.96% | 0.62% | 0.25% | 0.25% | 0.55% | 0.81% | 0.81% |
| Target | | | | | | | | | | |
| Within 3 Months | 95.00% | 95.00% | 95.00% | 95.00% | 95.00% | 95.00% | 95.00% | 95.00% | 95.00% | 95.00% |
| Within 6 Months | 99.50% | 99.50% | 99.50% | 99.50% | 99.50% | 99.50% | 99.50% | 99.50% | 97.00% | 97.00% |

New Houses added to Council Tax List

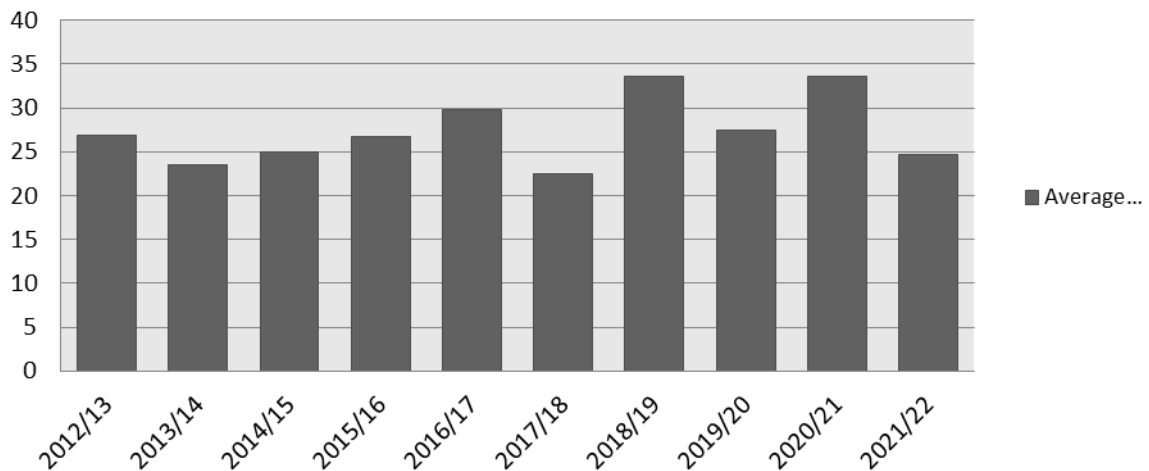


The Assessor also measures the average number of days taken to add a new house. The table below shows the average number of days between the effective date of change to the Council Tax List and the date of issue of a Council Tax Notice.

| Council Tax - New Houses Added Average No. of Days | | | | | | | | | |
|--|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 2012/13 | 2013/14 | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | 2020/21 | 2021/22 |
| 26.9 | 23.48 | 24.90 | 26.68 | 29.85 | 22.47 | 33.62 | 27.46 | 33.61 | 24.72 |

The average number of days taken to add a new house has continued to remain below the target set of 38 days throughout the 13 years this measure has been in place.

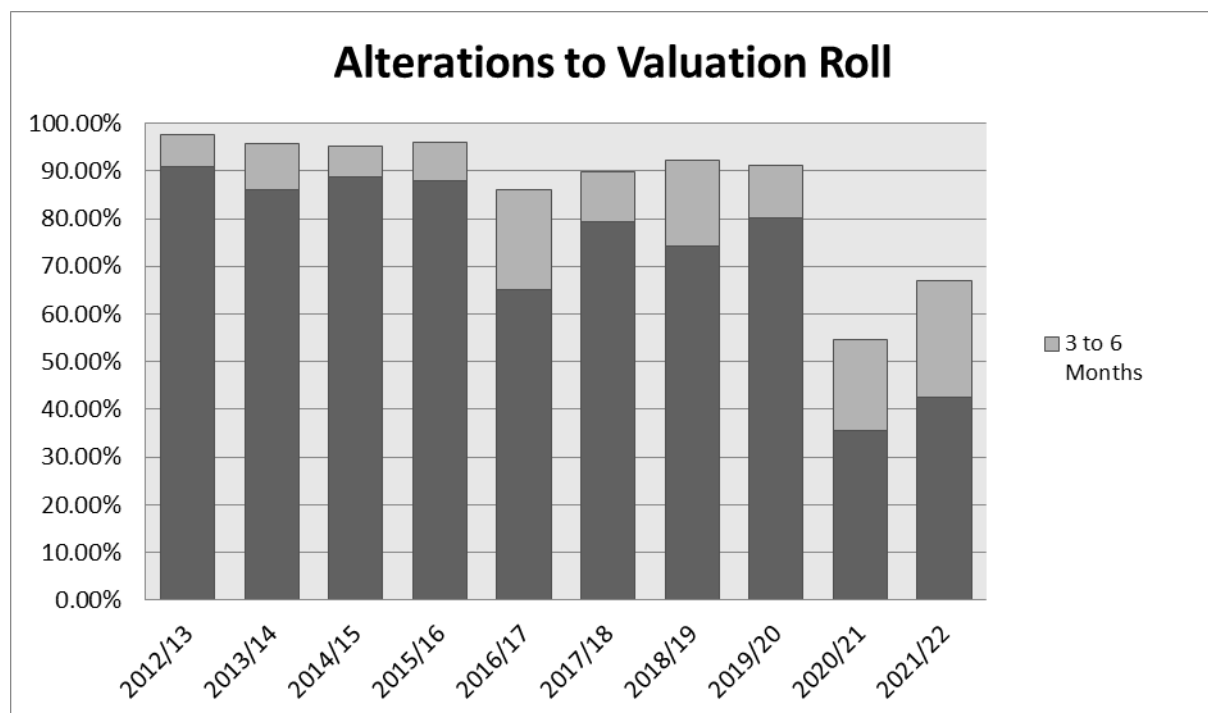
Average Days taken to add New Houses



2.0 Amendments to the Valuation Roll.

The following table provides a summary of how long it has taken to amend the Valuation Roll following changes to Lands and Heritages (excluding appeal settlements and changes to prescribed entries).

| Non Domestic Alterations to the Valuation Roll | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| | 2012/13 | 2013/14 | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | 2020/21 | 2021/22 |
| Achievement | | | | | | | | | | |
| Within 3 Months | 90.90% | 86.02% | 88.77% | 87.92% | 65.21% | 79.45% | 74.21% | 80.04% | 35.54% | 42.63% |
| 3-6 Months | 6.80% | 9.76% | 6.44% | 8.06% | 20.75% | 10.28% | 18.04% | 11.09% | 19.16% | 24.46% |
| Within 6 Months | 97.70% | 95.78% | 95.21% | 95.98% | 85.96% | 89.73% | 92.25% | 91.13% | 54.70% | 67.09% |
| Over 6 Months | 2.30% | 4.21% | 4.79% | 4.02% | 14.04% | 10.27% | 7.75% | 8.87% | 45.30% | 32.91% |
| Target | | | | | | | | | | |
| Within 3 Months | 80.00% | 80.00% | 80.00% | 80.00% | 80.00% | 80.00% | 80.00% | 80.00% | 80.00% | 50.00% |
| Within 6 Months | 95.00% | 95.00% | 95.00% | 95.00% | 95.00% | 95.00% | 95.00% | 95.00% | 90.00% | 75.00% |



The performance targets of 50% to be actioned within 3 months and 75% within 6 months have not been met. In relation to the performance targets, the Board's COVID health and safety protocols to protect staff and the general public combined with the COVID safety measures put in place by each occupier, has had an impact on service delivery over 2021/22. Throughout most of this financial year there has been limits on how many non-domestic inspections can be carried out within a day as well as the time taken to complete the actual inspection which has had an impact on workload.

Valuation staff have also been heavily involved in preparing estimates of non-domestic values for the 2023 Revaluation as required by the Scottish Government. This involved collecting the relevant information, analysing the evidence, and subsequently valuing a wide range of subjects in each of the 3 constituent authorities' valuation rolls. This has been extremely resource intensive for the valuation team but staff met the deadline of the 15th March to provide these robust estimates to the Scottish Government.

The ongoing Coronavirus pandemic has and will continue to have an impact on Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board in the short term. However, as most restrictions have been lifted, normal service delivery for all 3 functions will resume although there are a large number of competing demands placed on our service which are ever increasing, and the Management Team are continuously reviewing processes and systems to improve efficiency and service delivery

Lindsey Hendry Assistant Assessor & ERO



Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board

Report to: Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board

Meeting on: 10th June 2022

Subject: Non-Domestic Rates Reform Update

Author: Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer

1. Background

It was agreed that the Board should be updated at each meeting on developments and expenditure arising from the Barclay Review.

The Non-Domestic Rates (Scotland) Act 2020 and associated Regulations are the main legislative means for introducing the Non-Domestic Rates reforms recommended by the Barclay Review

There are six main Barclay recommendations which are reflected in the Act, these are listed below:-

- i. The change of the revaluation cycle from 5 yearly to 3 yearly (starting 2023)
- ii. New property markers to be shown against properties in the Valuation Roll (April 2021)
- iii. Changes to valuation of properties within a Park (April 2023)
- iv. From the 2023 Revaluation going forward access will be given to a list of comparative subjects used to value a particular entry in the Valuation Roll
- v. The existing Appeals system to be changed to a two-stage appeal system (Likely January 2023)
- vi. Information Gathering powers to be strengthened with Assessors issuing Civil Penalties to those who do not respond (April 2021)

The Scottish Assessor's Association (SAA) has had regular contact with the Scottish Government and has replied to consultations and appeared at committees as appropriate to ensure a consistent approach. Assessors will continue working jointly to ensure delivery of all these new duties and will also support ongoing development of the SAA Portal which provides information to ratepayers and their agents.

Assessors were asked to submit plans showing what actions and preparations Assessors were planning to carry out to ensure all the Barclay recommendations were fully implemented and delivered within the legislative timelines. These plans have been submitted and approved by the Scottish Government and they cover the period up to 2025 by which time all the recommendations of the Barclay review will be in place.

2. Staffing

At the last meeting I reported that we had recruited three Valuers / Senior Valuers, since that meeting a Senior Surveyor has left for a promoted post at another Valuation Joint Board, a Senior Valuer has resigned and two Property Assistants have intimated their intention to retire at the end of June. We have successfully recruited replacements for the Property Assistants, two valuers have been promoted to Senior Valuer and recruitment to replace the Senior Surveyor post will begin shortly.

Recruitment and retention of staff has proven difficult for all Valuation Joint Boards recently and members will be aware that in response to these difficulties we have a number of trainees and their successful progression through their training and Assessment of Professional Competence will be a key factor in our ability to successfully implement Non-Domestic Rates Reform in the coming years.

3. Update on next Non-Domestic Revaluation

The next Non-Domestic Revaluation is due in April 2023, with a Tone Date of April 2022. The Tone date is the date to which all valuations are tied, to ensure all non-domestic properties are valued at the same point in time.

Work has been undertaken to ensure that local systems are in place to assist the Valuation staff in undertaking the analysis of rental information and the revaluation of the approximately 14,000 Non-Domestic subjects within the Valuation Rolls of East Renfrewshire, Inverclyde and Renfrewshire.

On the 6th May the Valuation Timetable Amendment Order 2022 came into force, this order added the requirement to publish a draft Valuation Roll on 30th November in the year preceding a Revaluation, in addition The Non-Domestic Rates (Valuation Notices) (Scotland) Regulations 2022 have been laid before the Scottish Parliament. If enacted then these Regulations will place a new duty on the Assessor to issue draft Valuation Notices after 30th November and that these notices must, for certain categories of subject, include information on comparisons used to derive the basic valuation rate. Several other Orders and Regulations are due to be published in the near future and via the SAA the Assessor has contributed to the consultation process on them.

Work is currently ongoing to identify Lands and Heritages within public parks that were exempt from entry in the Valuation Roll due to S19 Local Government (Financial Provisions) (Scotland) Act 1963 that may no longer be exempt once S5 of the Non-Domestic Rates (Scotland) Act 2020 comes into force on 1st April 2023.

We continue to contribute to and benefit from joint working with the other Assessors throughout Scotland via the SAA as we work to establish values for properties where the valuation evidence is national rather than local. Examples of this would be Cinemas, Petrol Filling Stations, Hospitals etc. Joint working is also taking place with Valuation Officers in other jurisdictions for example the Valuation Office Agency on Telecommunication subjects.

4. Changes to the Appeals System

The transfer of the Local Appeal Committees into the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service is due to take place from 1st January 2023. A Scottish Government consultation on the draft Regulations to allow this to take place closed on 28th November 2021 and the outcome of this is awaited and I will update members on this at future meetings.

In addition to the above there was also a consultation on the draft regulations to introduce a two-stage appeals system, this consultation closed on 15th December 2021 and the outcome of this is awaited and I will update members on this at future meetings.

The Judicial Appointments Board for Scotland is current recruiting thirty-nine Ordinary Members and has recently recruited Legal and Surveyor members to allow the Tribunals to operate from 1st January 2023.

Ms Jacqui Taylor who is currently the Secretary of the Renfrewshire Valuation Appeal Panel has been appointed as the temporary President of the Local Taxation Chamber of the First-tier Tribunal for Scotland.

5. Self-Catering Properties

The legislation relating to self-catering properties changed with effect from 1st April 2022. To be classed as a non-domestic property the owner of a self-catering property will now be required to provide evidence of 70 days actual letting as well as 140 days intention to let. The letting must be on a commercial basis with a view to making a profit. The Assessor wrote to the owners of all self-catering properties within the RVJB area earlier this year to inform them of the change and will be writing to request the required evidence towards the end of 2022.

6. Information Gathering powers

The new powers allow the Assessor to issue Assessor Information Notices (AINs), which if not responded to can lead to the Assessor issuing a Civil Penalty on the non-responder(s). The issuing of these AINs have begun, return of these will be closely monitored and where necessary Civil Penalties will be issued.

With assistance from Renfrewshire Council's Sundry Debt Team, processes are now agreed to assist in the collection of any Civil Penalties raised through these new powers for all three of the Board's councils.

When civil penalties are issued the revenue raised is due to be paid into the Scottish Governments Consolidated Fund (net of any costs). These processes will be kept under review and Scottish Government will be updated regularly on any monies raised which are due to them via the Consolidated Fund.

7. IT Valuation System

Development of this system continues and with the aim of going live at a suitable time during 22/23.

8. Recommendations

- i. The Board notes this report.

Robert Nicol
Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer
30th May 2022

For further information please contact Robert Nicol at [07483921232](tel:07483921232) or via e-mail at robert.nicol@renfrewshire-vjb.gov.uk



Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board

Report to: Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board

Meeting on: 10th June 2022

Subject: Non-Domestic Appeals

Author: Assistant Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to brief members on the appeal process and report progress not only on disposal of Revaluation appeals, but the disposal of Running Roll Appeals received since the 2017 Revaluation.

1. Background

A 5-yearly Revaluation process was introduced by the Valuation and Rating (Scotland) Act 1956. The previous revaluation was carried out as at 1st April 2010, the Revaluation due at 2015 was postponed by two years, therefore it has been seven years since the last revaluation. The 2017 Revaluation required the Assessor to value or revalue all of the lands and heritages in his valuation area. These valuations are totally fresh and need bear no relation to the value applied in the preceding 7 years.

The process involves the collection and analysis of rental, building cost and turnover data to establish the new levels of value to be applied to the various types of subjects. These valuations are then updated, the new valuation roll is published, and all interested parties notified. This process is founded on continuous processes but the bulk of the work in relation to the Revaluation is carried out in the 2 years preceding the date of the Revaluation.

2. Right of Appeal

The Revaluation brings with it a fresh right of appeal. This right of appeal has to be exercised within a six-month period starting on the 1st April in the year of the Revaluation or within six months of the date of issue of the Valuation Notice, whichever is later.

Any person to whom the Assessor has issued a Revaluation Notice is entitled to appeal. In practice this means the Proprietor, the Tenant or the Occupier of the property.

3. Negotiation of Appeals

Following citation of an appeal, it is normal practice for a member of the Assessor's staff to enter into negotiation with the appellant or the appellant's agent. In the majority of cases, these discussions will result in a settlement of the appeal without any need to present the appeal to the Valuation Appeal Committee; this settlement will be a withdrawal of the appeal by the appellant or an adjustment to the value by the Assessor.

If, however, the parties cannot reach agreement, the appeal will be presented to the Valuation Appeal Committee. In the normal course of events, a senior member of the Assessor's staff will lead the case, however depending on the complexity and legal arguments involved, it may require that Counsel is employed to lead the case for the Assessor. In all cases one or more members of the Assessor's staff will require to give evidence as an expert witness.

4. Local Valuation Appeal Committee

The Appeal Committee is drawn from the Renfrewshire Valuation Appeal Panel. The members of the Panel are appointed by the Sheriff Principal. They are all unpaid, are completely independent of the Assessor and the local councils and have no prior knowledge of any case listed for hearing.

In the case of highly complex appeals, either party has the right to request that the appeal is referred to the Lands Tribunal for Scotland. Referral is not undertaken lightly as it involves a considerable amount of preparatory work by several members of staff and may involve several days of examination, cross-examination and submissions in front of a suitably qualified legal representative and members who have experience in the valuation of land.

In all appeals, either party may appeal the decision of the Appeal Panel or Lands Tribunal. This appeal will be heard by the Lands Valuation Appeal Court (The Court of Session).

For information, the functions of the Valuation Appeals Committees will transfer to the new Local Taxation Chamber in the First-tier Tribunal for Scotland and the relevant functions of the Lands Tribunal for Scotland to the Upper Tribunal for Scotland with effect from 1st January 2023.

5. Revaluation Appeals

As members will be aware, the Revaluation brings with it a fresh right of appeal and traditionally results in a large influx of appeals. The 2017 Revaluation was no different having an increase of 6% on the number of 2010 Revaluation appeals. The total number of Revaluation Appeals received for 2017 is 3,832, which relates to 3,542 subjects with a cumulative value of £324,294,785.

A number of statistical extracts have been compiled to show the Revaluation Appeals received in 2017 and the subsequent running roll appeals. These have been shown by category type and map the categories used by the Scottish Executive; see Appendix 1. The 20 categories divide subjects into easily understood groupings such as Retail, Offices, Industrials, Health, Education and Hotels.

Category 11, titled "Public Service" includes subjects such as the Airport, Bus Station, Court House, Fire Station, Military Establishment, Police Station and Waste Water Treatment Works.

Category 17, titled "Others" includes subjects such as Car Parks, Car Spaces, Ground, Kennels, Livestock Auction Marts, Premises Under Reconstruction, Stables, Water Rights and Weighbridges.

Following a Revaluation, new values will generally remain unchanged until the next Revaluation; unless the property is altered, or other changes take place. New properties will be added to the Roll as they become capable of occupation and entries for demolished buildings will be deleted.

However, a Running Roll appeal can be lodged by a ratepayer or their agent on the grounds that there has been a Material Change of Circumstances which has affected the value of the property or on the basis of an error in the valuation at any time.

6. The disposal of 2017 Revaluation Appeals

A number of statistical extracts have been compiled to show the 2017 Revaluation Appeals. These have been shown by the same category type as stated above, see Appendix 1.

As the Board is aware, the Assessor for Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board is the “Designated Assessor” for fixed line Telecommunications subjects which are included at line 20 in the tables.

Normally, all Revaluation appeals must be cited for a local Valuation Appeal Committee hearing and disposed of by 31st December 2020. However, the Scottish Government extended the disposal date for 2017 Revaluation appeals to the 31st December 2021 and the Assessor discharged this statutory duty with only a small no of outstanding Revaluation appeals being referred to the Lands Tribunal prior to the disposal date.

The statistics provided within this report continue to be based on the quarterly progress made and relate to all revaluation appeals referred to the Lands Tribunal and processed over the last quarter up to the 31st March 2022. As at 31st March 2022 the numbers of appeals disposed of now sits at 3,440 which equates to 97.12% of the number of subjects under appeal. There are therefore only 102 subjects within the joint board area that have Revaluation appeals outstanding.

As outlined at the last meeting, those appeals that do remain outstanding relate primarily to Automated Teller Machines which account for 92 of the 102, and due to the issues involved have been referred to the Lands Tribunal. Staff are actively engaging with the relevant parties to progress these appeals.

The disposal of the additional category of subjects that remain outstanding relate to subjects for which negotiations are being led by the relevant Practice Note authors within the SAA and comprise mainly of civic/public buildings and public undertakings. As a consequence, any future progress in resolving these appeals will, in the main, be dependent upon negotiations being carried out at a national level before progress can be made locally. Therefore, since last reporting, there has been minimal change to the number of revaluation appeals disposed of and that will remain the case until the national negotiations are concluded. Appendix 1 outlines where the remaining appeals lie for each of the three unitary authorities together with a total for the Joint Board area.

7. The disposal of Running Roll Appeals

In addition to the Revaluation appeals, Running Roll appeals require to be programmed into hearings and disposed of in line with the prescribed statutory timetable. Unlike the revaluation appeals which is a known quantity, running roll appeals are a moving target as ratepayers and their agents can lodge this type of appeal at least once in any one financial year. Therefore, whilst the revaluation appeals have steadily and progressively reduced throughout the quinquennium, the number of running roll appeals outstanding has fluctuated depending on numbers received and disposed of throughout this period.

As previously reported to the Board, the number of running roll appeals received since March 2020 has exponentially increased due to the Coronavirus pandemic and the situation facing many businesses. The position as of 31st March is that MCC appeals received since March 2020 total 6,067, the bulk of which, some 5585 relate to the Pandemic. We currently have a total of 5634 outstanding. At present we have continued to deal with non-Covid MCC appeals where possible and have to date disposed of 433 such appeals. I have provided additional tables similar to the Revaluation statistics in order to give the Board an indication as to the type of subjects for which appeals have been lodged and the numbers associated with each category.

Appendix 2 outlines the current number of R/R appeal within RVJB and each of the individual Council areas that now require to be dealt with.

I reported previously that the Scottish Government have intimated legislation would be enacted, similar to England, to prohibit Coronavirus being a material change of circumstance.

The Valuation and Rating (Coronavirus) (Scotland) Order 2021 came into force on 1st December 2021. The order seeks to remove the impact of Coronavirus from being a material change of circumstances from 1st April 2021.

The Non-Domestic Rates (Coronavirus)(Scotland) Bill was introduced to the Scottish Parliament in December 2021 and is currently being examined by the Local Government, Planning and Housing Committee. This Bill seeks to ensure that no account can be taken of any matter occurring on or after 2nd April 2020 whether directly or indirectly attributable to Coronavirus and has passed Stage 2 of the legislative process on the 24th May. The Bill will now move onto Stage 3 and the outcome of the legislative process will be reported to the Board when known in conjunction with the potential impact on the Board's resources as the disposal of appeals is a major component of the work undertaken by the Assessor's valuation staff. These appeals, potentially, could significantly impact on staff's workload and also may involve increased costs for citations and VAC hearings if they need to proceed.

This type of work can be stressful for staff due to the strict legislative timetables and the adversarial nature of the negotiations. The Management Team will ensure that staff will be provided with as much support as possible in order to minimise stress levels throughout this challenging time. I am confident the staff will continue to deal with these challenges with their usual commitment and professionalism.

8. Disposal of Other Outstanding Appeals

As outlined previously, if a case is considered highly complex it may be necessary for it to be referred to the Lands Tribunal for Scotland. At present there are a number of subjects that have cases from both the 2005 and 2010 Revaluations that have been referred to the Lands Tribunal, these relate to either mobile or complex fixed line telecommunication subjects. There are also a number of referrals that have been made with regard to the 2017 revaluation. Details of the numbers involved are outlined below. Negotiations continue with the relevant agents where possible and it is hoped that agreements will be reached without the need for any cases proceeding to formal hearings.

The number of appeals referred to the Lands Tribunal currently outstanding are as follows:

3 appeals remain outstanding from 2005 Revaluation in relation to 3 subjects.

16 appeals remain outstanding from 2010 Revaluation in relation to 8 subjects.

129 appeals have currently been referred in relation to the 2017 Revaluation and remain outstanding. Please note that 111 of these relate to ATM's.

Conclusion:

The disposal of appeals is a major component of the work undertaken by the Assessor's valuation staff. It is work that can be stressful due to the strict legislative timetables and the adversarial nature of the negotiations.

Staff are to be congratulated in disposing of the 2017 Revaluation appeals in line with the statutory disposal date of 31st December 2021 with the small number of outstanding appeals being referred to the Lands Tribunal. Despite the legislation being laid by the Scottish Government to ensure that no account can be taken of any matter occurring on or after 2nd April 2020 whether directly or indirectly attributable to Coronavirus, it will be a challenge to dispose of the outstanding COVID MCC appeals.

To put into context, the disposal timetable for the 3,542 revaluation appeals including the extension to the original disposal date has been four years, in comparison we have to the 31st December 2023 to dispose of just over 5,500 COVID MCC appeals. The management team will ensure all required support is available to staff to assist them in this highly unusual set of circumstances.

I would like to take this opportunity again to thank all members of the team for their commitment and professionalism in rising to the challenges faced particularly since March 2020 and successfully continuing to deliver the service.

It is hoped this gives an insight into the background of the appeal process and progress of revaluation and running roll appeals disposal to date.

Recommendations

- i. The Board notes the contents of this report.

Lindsey Hendry
Assistant Assessor and ERO
25th May 2022

For further information please contact Lindsey Hendry at 0141-618-5927 or via email at lindsey.hendry@renfrewshire-vjb.gov.uk

APPENDIX 1

RVJB Revaluation 2017 – Appeals (By number of subjects under appeal as at 31/03/2022 – **RENFREWSHIRE**)

| Category | Number Received | RV under Appeal | Disposed | Original RV | Adjusted RV | Number O/S | Appeal RV O/S | % O/S |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------|---------------|---------------|------------|---------------|--------|
| 1 Retail | 528 | £ 63,147,350 | 528 | £ 63,147,350 | £ 58,499,250 | 0 | £ - | 0.00% |
| 2 Public House | 67 | £ 2,482,000 | 67 | £ 2,482,000 | £ 2,198,900 | 0 | £ - | 0.00% |
| 3 Office including Banks | 526 | £ 13,448,400 | 476 | £ 12,903,675 | £ 12,160,725 | 50 | £ 544,725 | 9.51% |
| 4 Hotel Etc | 18 | £ 6,229,500 | 18 | £ 6,229,500 | £ 5,212,500 | 0 | £ - | 0.00% |
| 5 Industrial | 443 | £ 30,604,205 | 443 | £ 30,604,205 | £ 29,231,155 | 0 | £ - | 0.00% |
| 6 Leisure | 46 | £ 5,977,950 | 46 | £ 5,977,950 | £ 5,489,450 | 0 | £ - | 0.00% |
| 7 Garages and Petrol Stations | 19 | £ 1,003,500 | 19 | £ 1,003,500 | £ 912,000 | 0 | £ - | 0.00% |
| 8 Cultural | 3 | £ 136,200 | 3 | £ 136,200 | £ 136,200 | 0 | £ - | 0.00% |
| 9 Sporting Subjects | 3 | £ 136,000 | 2 | £ 74,000 | £ 66,500 | 1 | £ 62,000 | 33.33% |
| 10 Education and Training | 76 | £ 13,701,350 | 74 | £ 11,852,450 | £ 10,982,800 | 2 | £ 1,848,900 | 2.63% |
| 11 Public Service Subjects | 89 | £ 5,590,000 | 88 | £ 4,735,000 | £ 4,450,400 | 1 | £ 855,000 | 1.12% |
| 12 Communications (Non Formula) | 13 | £ 1,965,000 | 13 | £ 1,965,000 | £ 1,486,629 | 0 | £ - | 0.00% |
| 13 Quarries Mines etc | 1 | £ 21,500 | 1 | £ 21,500 | £ 21,500 | 0 | £ - | 0.00% |
| 14 Petrochemical | 2 | £ 239,000 | 2 | £ 239,000 | £ 229,000 | 0 | £ - | 0.00% |
| 15 Religious | 11 | £ 127,600 | 11 | £ 127,600 | £ 124,400 | 0 | £ - | 0.00% |
| 16 Health Medical | 22 | £ 4,890,200 | 22 | £ 4,890,200 | £ 4,447,350 | 0 | £ - | 0.00% |
| 17 Other | 185 | £ 3,020,970 | 185 | £ 3,020,970 | £ 1,551,930 | 0 | £ - | 0.00% |
| 18 Care Facilities | 52 | £ 2,498,800 | 52 | £ 2,498,800 | £ 2,304,200 | 0 | £ - | 0.00% |
| 19 Advertising | 38 | £ 121,140 | 38 | £ 121,140 | £ 102,340 | 0 | £ - | 0.00% |
| 20 Undertakings / Fixed Line | 8 | £ 98,306,000 | 4 | £ 91,888,000 | £ 67,483,000 | 4 | £ 6,418,000 | 50.00% |
| | 2,150 | £ 253,646,665 | 2,092 | £ 242,668,040 | £ 205,910,229 | 58 | £ 9,728,625 | 2.70% |

RVJB Revaluation 2017 – Appeals (By number of subjects under appeal as at 31/03/2022 – **EAST RENFREWSHIRE**

| Category | Number Received | RV under Appeal | Disposed | Original RV | Adjusted RV | Number O/S | Appeal RV O/S | % O/S |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------|--------------|--------------|------------|---------------|--------|
| 1 Retail | 180 | £ 11,304,000 | 180 | £ 11,304,000 | £ 10,256,550 | 0 | £ - | 0.00% |
| 2 Public House | 12 | £ 963,750 | 12 | £ 963,750 | £ 844,650 | 0 | £ - | 0.00% |
| 3 Office including Banks | 118 | £ 2,330,950 | 92 | £ 2,115,025 | £ 1,905,450 | 26 | £ 215,925 | 22.03% |
| 4 Hotel Etc | 5 | £ 635,000 | 5 | £ 635,000 | £ 554,000 | 0 | £ - | 0.00% |
| 5 Industrial | 85 | £ 1,175,105 | 85 | £ 1,175,105 | £ 1,154,855 | 0 | £ - | 0.00% |
| 6 Leisure | 13 | £ 2,248,000 | 13 | £ 2,248,000 | £ 2,196,000 | 0 | £ - | 0.00% |
| 7 Garages and Petrol Stations | 8 | £ 205,850 | 8 | £ 205,850 | £ 190,400 | 0 | £ - | 0.00% |
| 8 Cultural | 0 | £ - | 0 | £ - | £ - | 0 | £ - | 0.00% |
| 9 Sporting Subjects | 0 | £ - | 0 | £ - | £ - | 0 | £ - | 0.00% |
| 10 Education and Training | 31 | £ 6,885,000 | 31 | £ 6,885,000 | £ 6,553,500 | 0 | £ - | 0.00% |
| 11 Public Service Subjects | 36 | £ 1,319,940 | 36 | £ 1,319,940 | £ 1,225,440 | 0 | £ - | 0.00% |
| 12 Communications (Non Formula) | 7 | £ 861,500 | 7 | £ 861,500 | £ 563,278 | 0 | £ - | 0.00% |
| 13 Quarries Mines etc | 1 | £ 60,000 | 1 | £ 60,000 | £ 60,000 | 0 | £ - | 0.00% |
| 14 Petrochemical | 0 | £ - | 0 | £ - | £ - | 0 | £ - | 0.00% |
| 15 Religious | 4 | £ 11,700 | 4 | £ 11,700 | £ 11,700 | 0 | £ - | 0.00% |
| 16 Health Medical | 7 | £ 919,900 | 7 | £ 919,900 | £ 872,000 | 0 | £ - | 0.00% |
| 17 Other | 22 | £ 108,950 | 22 | £ 108,950 | £ 101,850 | 0 | £ - | 0.00% |
| 18 Care Facilities | 19 | £ 918,200 | 19 | £ 918,200 | £ 805,550 | 0 | £ - | 0.00% |
| 19 Advertising | 13 | £ 55,100 | 13 | £ 55,100 | £ 43,850 | 0 | £ - | 0.00% |
| 20 Undertakings / Fixed Line | 2 | £ 305,800 | 2 | £ 305,800 | £ 279,800 | 0 | £ - | 0.00% |
| | 563 | £ 30,308,745 | 537 | £ 30,092,820 | £ 27,618,873 | 26 | £ 215,925 | 4.62% |

RVJB Revaluation 2017 – Appeals (By number of subjects under appeal as at 31/03/2022 – **INVERCLYDE**

| Category | Number Received | RV under Appeal | Disposed | Original RV | Adjusted RV | Number O/S | Appeal RV O/S | % O/S |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------|--------------|--------------|------------|---------------|-------|
| 1 Retail | 245 | £ 12,093,100 | 245 | £ 12,093,100 | £ 11,131,250 | 0 | £ - | 0.00% |
| 2 Public House | 28 | £ 1,147,500 | 28 | £ 1,147,500 | £ 1,014,900 | 0 | £ - | 0.00% |
| 3 Office including Banks | 171 | £ 5,767,375 | 155 | £ 5,522,950 | £ 5,373,750 | 16 | £ 244,425 | 9.36% |
| 4 Hotel Etc | 2 | £ 171,500 | 2 | £ 171,500 | £ 170,000 | 0 | £ - | 0.00% |
| 5 Industrial | 153 | £ 3,917,550 | 153 | £ 3,917,550 | £ 3,801,150 | 0 | £ - | 0.00% |
| 6 Leisure | 25 | £ 1,812,500 | 25 | £ 1,812,500 | £ 1,613,000 | 0 | £ - | 0.00% |
| 7 Garages and Petrol Stations | 15 | £ 451,300 | 15 | £ 451,300 | £ 445,300 | 0 | £ - | 0.00% |
| 8 Cultural | 1 | £ 80,000 | 1 | £ 80,000 | £ 80,000 | 0 | £ - | 0.00% |
| 9 Sporting Subjects | 0 | £ - | 0 | £ - | £ - | 0 | £ - | 0.00% |
| 10 Education and Training | 34 | £ 7,564,550 | 34 | £ 7,564,550 | £ 7,221,050 | 0 | £ - | 0.00% |
| 11 Public Service Subjects | 61 | £ 2,763,800 | 59 | £ 1,901,800 | £ 1,760,300 | 2 | £ 862,000 | 3.28% |
| 12 Communications (Non Formula) | 9 | £ 637,200 | 9 | £ 637,200 | £ 536,682 | 0 | £ - | 0.00% |
| 13 Quarries Mines etc | 0 | £ - | 0 | £ - | £ - | 0 | £ - | 0.00% |
| 14 Petrochemical | 0 | £ - | 0 | £ - | £ - | 0 | £ - | 0.00% |
| 15 Religious | 2 | £ 57,400 | 2 | £ 57,400 | £ 57,400 | 0 | £ - | 0.00% |
| 16 Health Medical | 11 | £ 2,886,550 | 11 | £ 2,886,550 | £ 2,668,050 | 0 | £ - | 0.00% |
| 17 Other | 41 | £ 261,000 | 41 | £ 261,000 | £ 222,250 | 0 | £ - | 0.00% |
| 18 Care Facilities | 24 | £ 704,300 | 24 | £ 704,300 | £ 644,200 | 0 | £ - | 0.00% |
| 19 Advertising | 7 | £ 23,750 | 7 | £ 23,750 | £ 17,950 | 0 | £ - | 0.00% |
| 20 Undertakings / Fixed Line | 0 | £ - | 0 | £ - | £ - | 0 | £ - | 0.00% |
| | 829 | £ 40,339,375 | 811 | £ 38,549,950 | £ 36,122,232 | 20 | £ 1,106,425 | 2.17% |

RVJB Revaluation 2017 – Appeals (By number of subjects under appeal as at 31/03/2022 – **TOTALS IN JOINT BOARD AREA**)

| Category | Number Received | RV under Appeal | Disposed | Original RV | Adjusted RV | Number O/S | Appeal RV O/S | % O/S |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------|---------------|---------------|------------|---------------|--------|
| 1 Retail | 953 | £ 86,544,450 | 953 | £ 86,544,450 | £ 79,887,050 | 0 | £ - | 0.00% |
| 2 Public House | 107 | £ 4,593,250 | 107 | £ 4,593,250 | £ 4,058,450 | 0 | £ - | 0.00% |
| 3 Office including Banks | 815 | £ 21,546,725 | 723 | £ 20,541,650 | £ 19,439,925 | 92 | £ 1,005,075 | 11.29% |
| 4 Hotel Etc | 25 | £ 7,036,000 | 25 | £ 7,036,000 | £ 5,936,500 | 0 | £ - | 0.00% |
| 5 Industrial | 681 | £ 35,696,860 | 681 | £ 36,696,860 | £ 34,187,160 | 0 | £ - | 0.00% |
| 6 Leisure | 84 | £ 10,038,450 | 84 | £ 10,038,450 | £ 9,298,450 | 0 | £ - | 0.00% |
| 7 Garages and Petrol Stations | 42 | £ 1,660,650 | 42 | £ 1,660,650 | £ 1,547,700 | 0 | £ - | 0.00% |
| 8 Cultural | 4 | £ 216,200 | 4 | £ 216,200 | £ 216,200 | 0 | £ - | 0.00% |
| 9 Sporting Subjects | 3 | £ 136,000 | 2 | £ 74,000 | £ 66,500 | 1 | £ 62,000 | 33.33% |
| 10 Education and Training | 141 | £ 28,150,900 | 139 | £ 26,302,000 | £ 24,757,350 | 2 | £ 1,848,900 | 1.42% |
| 11 Public Service Subjects | 186 | £ 9,673,740 | 183 | £ 7,956,740 | £ 7,436,140 | 3 | £ 1,717,000 | 1.61% |
| 12 Communications (Non Formula) | 29 | £ 3,463,700 | 29 | £ 3,463,700 | £ 2,586,589 | 0 | £ - | 0.00% |
| 13 Quarries Mines etc | 2 | £ 81,500 | 2 | £ 81,500 | £ 81,500 | 0 | £ - | 0.00% |
| 14 Petrochemical | 2 | £ 239,000 | 2 | £ 239,000 | £ 229,000 | 0 | £ - | 0.00% |
| 15 Religious | 17 | £ 196,700 | 17 | £ 196,700 | £ 193,500 | 0 | £ - | 0.00% |
| 16 Health Medical | 40 | £ 8,696,650 | 40 | £ 8,696,650 | £ 7,987,400 | 0 | £ - | 0.00% |
| 17 Other | 248 | £ 3,390,920 | 248 | £ 3,390,920 | £ 1,876,030 | 0 | £ - | 0.00% |
| 18 Care Facilities | 95 | £ 4,121,300 | 95 | £ 4,121,300 | £ 3,753,950 | 0 | £ - | 0.00% |
| 19 Advertising | 58 | £ 199,990 | 58 | £ 199,990 | £ 164,140 | 0 | £ - | 0.00% |
| 20 Undertakings / Fixed Line | 10 | £ 98,611,800 | 6 | £ 92,193,800 | £ 67,762,800 | 4 | £ 6,418,000 | 40.00% |
| | 3,542 | £ 324,294,785 | 3,440 | £ 313,243,810 | £ 269,651,334 | 102 | £ 11,050,975 | 2.88% |

APPENDIX 2

RENFREWSHIRE - Running Roll Appeals (All) Received on/or after 01/03/20

As at 31st March

2022

| Category | Number Received | | Disposed | | Number O/S | % O/S |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|--|----------|--|------------|---------|
| 1 Retail | 1,088 | | 64 | | 1,024 | 94.12% |
| 2 Public House | 98 | | 3 | | 95 | 96.94% |
| 3 Office including Banks | 1,144 | | 42 | | 1,104 | 96.34% |
| 4 Hotel Etc | 28 | | 1 | | 27 | 96.43% |
| 5 Industrial | 1,021 | | 37 | | 992 | 96.40% |
| 6 Leisure | 77 | | 3 | | 74 | 96.10% |
| 7 Garages and Petrol Stations | 31 | | 4 | | 27 | 87.10% |
| 8 Cultural | 4 | | 1 | | 3 | 75.00% |
| 9 Sporting Subjects | 9 | | 0 | | 9 | 100.00% |
| 10 Education and Training | 80 | | 2 | | 78 | 97.50% |
| 11 Public Service Subjects | 91 | | 8 | | 83 | 91.21% |
| 12 Communications (Non Formula) | 16 | | 5 | | 11 | 68.75% |
| 13 Quarries Mines etc | 0 | | 0 | | 0 | 0.00% |
| 14 Petrochemical | 3 | | 0 | | 3 | 100.00% |
| 15 Religious | 0 | | 0 | | 0 | 0.00% |
| 16 Health Medical | 8 | | 0 | | 8 | 100.00% |
| 17 Other | 85 | | 22 | | 63 | 74.12% |
| 18 Care Facilities | 41 | | 1 | | 40 | 97.56% |
| 19 Advertising | 92 | | 2 | | 90 | 97.83% |
| 20 Undertakings | 10 | | 0 | | 10 | 100.00% |
| | 3,936 | | 195 | | 3,741 | 95.05% |

EAST RENFREWSHIRE - Running Roll Appeals (All) Received
on/or after 01/03/20

As at 31st March 2022

| Category | Number Received | | Disposed | | Number O/S | % O/S |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|--|----------|--|------------|---------|
| 1 Retail | 212 | | 25 | | 187 | 88.21% |
| 2 Public House | 17 | | 0 | | 17 | 100.00% |
| 3 Office including Banks | 140 | | 15 | | 125 | 89.29% |
| 4 Hotel Etc | 7 | | 1 | | 6 | 85.71% |
| 5 Industrial | 37 | | 2 | | 35 | 94.59% |
| 6 Leisure | 18 | | 1 | | 17 | 94.44% |
| 7 Garages and Petrol Stations | 10 | | 0 | | 10 | 100.00% |
| 8 Cultural | 0 | | 0 | | 0 | 0.00% |
| 9 Sporting Subjects | 3 | | 1 | | 2 | 66.67% |
| 10 Education and Training | 37 | | 3 | | 34 | 91.89% |
| 11 Public Service Subjects | 26 | | 0 | | 26 | 100.00% |
| 12 Communications (Non Formula) | 12 | | 4 | | 8 | 66.67% |
| 13 Quarries Mines etc | 2 | | 0 | | 2 | 100.00% |
| 14 Petrochemical | 0 | | 0 | | 0 | 0.00% |
| 15 Religious | 0 | | 0 | | 0 | 0.00% |
| 16 Health Medical | 1 | | 1 | | 0 | 0.00% |
| 17 Other | 5 | | 2 | | 3 | 60.00% |
| 18 Care Facilities | 16 | | 2 | | 14 | 87.50% |
| 19 Advertising | 29 | | 0 | | 29 | 100.00% |
| 20 Undertakings | 0 | | 0 | | 0 | 0.00% |
| | 572 | | 57 | | 515 | 90.03% |

INVERCLYDE - Running Roll Appeals (All) Received on/or after 01/03/20

As at 31st March 2022

| Category | Number Received | Disposed | Number O/S | % O/S |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|----------|------------|---------|
| 1 Retail | 606 | 125 | 481 | 79.37% |
| 2 Public House | 39 | 1 | 38 | 97.44% |
| 3 Office including Banks | 392 | 27 | 365 | 93.11% |
| 4 Hotel Etc | 1 | 0 | 1 | 100.00% |
| 5 Industrial | 225 | 13 | 212 | 94.22% |
| 6 Leisure | 26 | 0 | 26 | 100.00% |
| 7 Garages and Petrol Stations | 11 | 0 | 11 | 100.00% |
| 8 Cultural | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0.00% |
| 9 Sporting Subjects | 1 | 0 | 1 | 100.00% |
| 10 Education and Training | 60 | 0 | 60 | 100.00% |
| 11 Public Service Subjects | 62 | 0 | 62 | 100.00% |
| 12 Communications (Non Formula) | 14 | 3 | 11 | 0.00% |
| 13 Quarries Mines etc | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.00% |
| 14 Petrochemical | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.00% |
| 15 Religious | 2 | 0 | 2 | 100.00% |
| 16 Health Medical | 14 | 2 | 12 | 85.71% |
| 17 Other | 57 | 8 | 49 | 85.96% |
| 18 Care Facilities | 36 | 1 | 35 | 97.22% |
| 19 Advertising | 12 | 0 | 12 | 100.00% |
| 20 Undertakings | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.00% |
| | 1,559 | 181 | 1,378 | 88.39% |

RVJB Running Roll Appeals (All) Received on/or after
01/03/20

As at 31st March 2022

| Category | Number Received | Disposed | Number O/S | % O/S |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|----------|------------|---------|
| 1 Retail | 1,906 | 214 | 1,692 | 88.77% |
| 2 Public House | 154 | 4 | 150 | 97.40% |
| 3 Office including Banks | 1,678 | 84 | 1,594 | 94.99% |
| 4 Hotel Etc | 36 | 2 | 34 | 94.44% |
| 5 Industrial | 1,291 | 52 | 1,239 | 95.97% |
| 6 Leisure | 121 | 4 | 117 | 96.69% |
| 7 Garages and Petrol Stations | 52 | 4 | 48 | 92.31% |
| 8 Cultural | 5 | 2 | 3 | 60.00% |
| 9 Sporting Subjects | 13 | 1 | 12 | 92.31% |
| 10 Education and Training | 177 | 5 | 172 | 97.18% |
| 11 Public Service Subjects | 179 | 8 | 171 | 95.53% |
| 12 Communications (Non Formula) | 42 | 12 | 30 | 71.43% |
| 13 Quarries Mines etc | 2 | 0 | 2 | 100.00% |
| 14 Petrochemical | 3 | 0 | 3 | 100.00% |
| 15 Religious | 2 | 0 | 2 | 100.00% |
| 16 Health Medical | 23 | 3 | 20 | 86.96% |
| 17 Other | 147 | 32 | 115 | 78.23% |
| 18 Care Facilities | 93 | 4 | 89 | 95.70% |
| 19 Advertising | 133 | 2 | 131 | 98.50% |
| 20 Undertakings | 10 | 0 | 10 | 100.00% |
| | 6,067 | 433 | 5,634 | 92.86% |



Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board

Report to: Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board

Meeting on: 10th June 2022

Subject: Accounts Commission Report on Orkney and Shetland Valuation Joint Board

Author: Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer

1. Background

The 2020/21 audit report and financial statements for Orkney and Shetland Valuation Joint Board (O&SVJB) highlighted significant issues in relation to governance and decision making within O&SVJB. This led to a report being submitted by the Controller of Audit under section 102(1) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 as a matter that the Controller of Audit considers should be brought to the attention of the Accounts Commissioner for Scotland. This report was published in March 2022 (see appendix 1).

2. Key Issues

The report contains a number of key issues regarding the Assessor for Orkney and Shetland's contract and changes to the Depute Assessor's contract which highlighted failures of governance and poor decision making by elected members and officers of O&SVJB. The report also mentions the importance of ensuring meetings are properly convened, the VJB developing and adopting processes and procedures of its own, the importance of long term planning and ensuring appropriate internal audit.

3. RVJB Position

The Assessor, Clerk and Treasurer have considered the report and there are no immediate actions arising, however the officers will continue to monitor the position and will bring new and revised policies and procedures for Board approval as appropriate.

4. Recommendations

- i. The Board notes the content of the report prepared by the Controller of Audit on the 2020/21 audit of Orkney and Shetland Valuation Joint Board.

Robert Nicol
Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer
30th May 2022

For further information please contact Robert Nicol at [07483921232](tel:07483921232)
or via e-mail at robert.nicol@renfrewshire-vjb.gov.uk

The 2020/21 audit of Orkney and Shetland Valuation Joint Board

Report on governance and decision-making



ACCOUNTS COMMISSION 

Prepared by the Controller of Audit
March 2022

Commission findings

- 1 The Commission accepts the Controller of Audit's report on matters from the 2020/21 audit of Orkney and Shetland Valuation Joint Board. It refers to concerns reported by the appointed auditor about how the Board managed contracts and pay awards for the Assessor and the Depute Assessor, and in related matters concerning financial sustainability, governance, leadership, procurement, and aspects of Best Value.
- 2 We note with serious concern the conclusion of the Controller that the Board took numerous decisions that were unlawful or not supported by appropriate procedures. We also share his significant concerns in relation to the Board's governance, transparency and planning.
- 3 We acknowledge the commitment made by the Board to rectify these matters and indeed the steps that it has already taken. As it does so, it is vital that Board members and officers fully understand their leadership responsibilities and statutory obligations, as well as having clarity on the support available from the contributing councils, namely Orkney Islands and Shetland Islands councils. We therefore expect the new Board in place following the forthcoming local government elections to draw upon effective training and development to allow them to fulfil such responsibilities.
- 4 As well as underlining the need for the Board to learn lessons from this matter, we would also, in line with our role of providing assurance about the use of public money, underline lessons to be learned by other bodies, particularly joint boards. Such lessons centre on the need for robust governance around decision-making. We also note in this case the need to manage risks around workforce planning for staff with specialised skills. Further, it is concerning that significant matters have been reported in successive external annual audits rather than through the Board's internal controls and reporting, including internal audit. We therefore underline the need for effective self-evaluation and governance and control frameworks to be in place to ensure that significant matters are identified and addressed as they arise.
- 5 The appointed auditor will report on progress made by the Board, and the Controller can report to the Commission as appropriate.

Executive summary

Background

1. The Orkney and Shetland Valuation Joint Board ('the VJB') is an independent body, established by the Valuation Joint Boards (Scotland) Order 1995. Its primary purpose is to discharge all the functions of its two constituent councils, Orkney Islands Council and Shetland Islands Council, as required by legislation relating to the Valuation Roll and the Council Tax Valuation List.
2. The VJB is governed by a board, comprising up to ten councillors from each of the constituent councils (five from each). It has 15 full-time equivalent posts and, in 2020/21, a budget of £809,000. The VJB is funded by the two constituent councils.
3. I have received the annual audit report and financial statements for the VJB for 2020/21. The auditor has issued an unqualified opinion on the financial statements but has identified significant issues in relation to governance and decision-making at the VJB, some aspects of which have been reported in previous annual audit reports.
4. In his report, the appointed auditor highlights concerns about the way in which the VJB managed the contracts and pay awards for the Assessor – the most senior member of staff at the VJB – and the Depute Assessor, who was employed on a consultancy basis. While some of the issues described in the annual audit report took place after the end of the financial year, the nature of the issues brought them within the scope of the annual audit.
5. I submit this report under section 102(1) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 as a matter that the Controller of Audit considers should be brought to the attention of the Accounts Commission for Scotland.

Annual audit report 2020/21

6. The VJB has generally done well in delivering to budget and in meeting its performance targets. However, the appointed auditor's annual audit report highlighted concerns in relation to financial sustainability, governance, leadership, procurement, and aspects of Best Value.
7. Some of these concerns had been the subject of commentary in previous annual audit reports but there were two specific issues highlighted in the 2020/21 annual audit report that were of particular concern to the auditor.

Key issues

8. The first issue related to the Assessor's contract. Where VJB business is to be transacted – decisions taken and/or actions agreed – a meeting must be convened under sections 50A to 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973. A decision to extend the Assessor's contract was taken at a meeting of the Board of the VJB which had not been properly convened. This rendered the decision and meeting unlawful. While the decision was ratified at a subsequent, formal meeting of the Board, there was no reference to the unlawful meeting nor to the fact that the contract had already been extended by the time the decision was taken. There appears to have been a reasonable basis for holding the discussions on extending the Assessor's contract, but no clear justification for not holding a formal meeting of the Board to do so. As a consequence of the unlawful nature of the Board meeting at which the initial decision was taken, subsequent actions relating to the offer of a contract extension on improved terms to the Assessor and the processing of changes to his pay were themselves unlawful.

9. Secondly, the Depute Assessor's hourly pay rate was increased without being subject to appropriate scrutiny, including an assessment of value for money. The Depute Assessor was not a direct employee of the VJB. He was engaged as a consultant and paid an hourly rate. Between December 2015 and April 2021, the hourly rate paid to the consultant increased five times (January 2017; January 2019; November 2019; September 2020; April 2021), by 400 per cent in total.

10. These issues resulted from failures in governance and poor decision-making but can also be linked to weaknesses in medium-term financial and workforce planning. The remainder of this report provides further detail on these issues and on progress made by the VJB since the end of the financial year to address the issues identified by the appointed auditor in their 2020/21 annual audit report.

Key issues in 2020/21

The Assessor's contract arrangements

11. The VJB appointed the Assessor in 2015. In February 2020, the Assessor submitted his resignation to the Board, citing concerns regarding the ongoing Depute Assessor vacancy and the salary levels for both the Depute Assessor and Assessor roles. The Assessor offered to withdraw his resignation – with conditions – on 12 March 2020, subject to the Board approving an immediate increase to the Assessor and Depute Assessor salaries. On 29 April 2020, the Board rejected this but also decided not to begin a recruitment exercise or consider alternative options for the position. The Board requested that the Assessor 'extend' his notice period, "on a rolling monthly basis, until such time as the review of salary, terms and conditions has been completed and presented to the Board." This was accepted by the Assessor.

12. The Board commissioned an independent pay and grading review, applicable to the whole organisation, which was undertaken in 2020. The Board considered the results of the pay and grading review in May 2021, and subsequently implemented changes, which it determined should apply from April 2021. The changes resulted in an increase in the Assessor's salary, from £75,839 to £79,200. The pay and grading review also proposed a reduction in working hours for all staff of the VJB (from 37 hours per week to 35 hours per week), including the Assessor.

13. In April 2021, the Assessor notified the Board of his intention to retire in October 2021. The Board awaited the results from the pay and grading review to inform the recruitment process for the Assessor's position. In June 2021, the Board advertised the Assessor's post, on the new terms determined by the pay and grading review. One applicant proceeded to interview, but the Board determined that the applicant did not meet the necessary requirements for the role. The recruitment period ended on 6 August, with no successful appointment.

14. On 20 August 2021, the Clerk issued an invite to board members to attend a meeting on 6 September, to discuss recruitment options to replace the Assessor. This meeting was not publicly announced, and no agenda was published setting out the business to be considered or that the matters were exempt from being considered in public by virtue of their confidential nature, contrary to sections 50A to 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973. There were no minutes of the meeting, again contrary to those provisions, and so no formal record of attendance, though board members did attend. While there is no impediment to holding any meeting of the Board, a decision was taken by those present to offer the Assessor a new contract. The fact that the meeting was not properly convened rendered that decision unlawful.

15. Management was of the view that the 6 September meeting was necessary due to the urgency of the situation facing the Board. In May 2021, the Depute Assessor also intimated his intention to resign in October 2021¹. Therefore, the VJB faced having no Assessor and no Depute Assessor in place. But, even if the meeting was urgent, there does not appear to be any reason why a meeting could not have been properly convened.

16. Following the meeting, a verbal contract offer was extended to the Assessor, by the Clerk, on behalf of the VJB. The contract offer included a further increase in the Assessor's salary, to the top of the salary scale which, at £91,527, was significantly beyond the figure determined by the pay and grading review only three months' earlier². While an explanation was subsequently set out – see paragraphs 17 and 18, below - the justification for such an increase in value-for-money terms was unclear at this point. It is also unclear whether any consideration was given to the potential increase in pension costs arising from the salary increase. The Assessor accepted the offer on 9 September 2021 and changes to the Assessor's pay were processed on 21 September.

17. A meeting of the Board was subsequently convened, in accordance with the relevant statutory requirements, on 30 September 2021. A paper tabled at that meeting set out proposals for a further recruitment exercise. The paper acknowledged the previously unsuccessful recruitment exercise, noting that there had been an extremely limited response to the advert and that the calibre of applicant attracted did not meet the level of management and technical experience required. The paper also notes that informal discussions with members of the Scottish Assessors Association had not resulted in any offers of assistance, and that the competitive nature of the market would make it difficult to attract the required calibre of candidate with the salary previously offered.

18. The paper proposed an increase in working hours (back to 37 hours per week) and for the salary to be offered at the top of the scale, along with the offer of a 'golden hello' payment of £5,000³. Except for the 'golden hello' payment, these terms were the same as those offered to the Assessor in September 2021. The paper also notes that, because the VJB was now facing a significant problem – if no Assessor was in post, the VJB would be unable to fulfil its functions – it proposed offering the same terms to the current Assessor, to have him stay until the end of March 2022.

19. So, while the 30 September meeting attempted to ratify the actions taken following the 6 September meeting, it made no reference to the earlier meeting or the fact that the recommendations had already been implemented. The meeting therefore did not properly ratify the actions that the Clerk had already taken on the basis of the earlier meeting.

¹ The Depute Assessor post was subsequently advertised and a successful candidate took up post in November 2021.

² All staff of the VJB receive an annual allowance - the Distant Islands Allowance - worth £2,265. The allowance has been in place since before the pay and grading review.

³ The 'golden hello' payment would require a commitment to remain in post for three years.

20. A revised contract, confirming the verbal offer described at paragraph 15, and dated 5 October, was issued to the Assessor on 1 November. The contract was issued by the Clerk, under the names of the Chief Executives of the two councils. The Board did not delegate authority to the Chief Executives to perform this function and, in any event, did not have in place any scheme of delegation that would allow it to do so. Further, while the Chief Executive of Orkney Islands Council has confirmed he authorised the use of his name on the contract, the Clerk issued the contract without obtaining approval from the Chief Executive of Shetland Islands Council. The Chief Executive of Shetland Islands Council did not attend the meeting on 30 September. The contract issued by the Clerk was also a permanent contract, rather than a fixed-term contract to 31 March 2022, which is what the Board agreed on 30 September.

21. It is worth noting that, while elected members of both councils serve as members of the Board, the Board is a separately constituted body and neither council has any direct role in the management of, or decision-making at, the VJB. Neither Chief Executive has any direct role in managing the VJB's activities. Regardless of whether the Chief Executives had provided approval for the contract to be issued on behalf of the VJB, they had no authority to do so. This meant that the revised contract had no legal authority. However, notwithstanding the lack of legal authority of the contract, under employment law the Assessor could reasonably have expected to rely on it.

22. A timeline of the events described above is set out in [Exhibit 1 \(page 7\)](#).

23. The processes followed, and decisions taken, by the VJB in relation to the Assessor's contract were seriously flawed. The decision taken at a meeting of the Board that was not properly convened limited the transparency of decision-making on a matter of public spending. The subsequent errors in relation to the contract offered and issued to the Assessor were ultra-vires and unlawful, as were the additional salary payments made following the payroll changes made on 21 September 2021. In addition, the lack of information on how the Board had determined the extent of the increase in salary at the point that the verbal contract offer was made to the Assessor makes it unclear whether the Board considered, or the contract offered, value for money.

Exhibit 1**Assessor's contract – timeline of events, April 2021 – November 2021**

| April | May | May | June | July |
|---|---|--|--|---|
| Assessor notifies the Board of his intention to retire in October 2021. | Clerk to the Board notifies the Board of Depute Assessor's intention to resign in October 2021. | Results of pay and grading review considered by the Board. | Assessor's post advertised. | Terms and conditions of all staff, including Assessor, updated (applicable from April 2021) following pay and grading review. |
| 6 August | 20 August | 3 September | 6 September | 6 September |
| Recruitment period ends, with no successful appointment. | Clerk makes arrangement for a meeting of the Board. | Depute Assessor submits formal notice (one month notice period). | Board meeting – not properly convened – at which decision taken to offer the Assessor a contract extension, on improved terms. | Clerk issues verbal offer of contract extension to the Assessor. |
| 9 September | 21 September | 30 September | 6 October | 1 November |
| Assessor informs Clerk that he accepts the offer. | Changes to Assessor's pay processed. | Properly convened meeting, at which the Board approves the making of an offer to the Assessor. | Date that the Assessor's previous contract was due to expire. | Formal contract letter issued to the Assessor (dated 5 October). |

Source: Annual Audit Report

Depute Assessor – increases in hourly rate

24. The VJB found it difficult to fill the Depute Assessor position following the appointment of the previous Depute Assessor into the Assessor role in 2015. This led to the service being provided by an external consultant who was appointed by the Assessor in December 2015. This appointment was made by agreement between the Assessor and the consultant, with a written contract in place. The contract was due to expire in September 2016 but was repeatedly

extended – verbally, in contravention of the requirements of the contract and good practice – to now expire in March 2022.

25. Between December 2015 and 2020/21, the VJB had attempted to fill the post on a permanent basis. For example, the VJB applied a permanent uplift to the previously advertised salary and the position was advertised in 2019/20, with a candidate applying and receiving an offer. This offer was subsequently rejected by the candidate and services continued to be provided on a consultancy basis. The 2019/20 annual audit report noted that the consultant position costs equated to 80 per cent of the equivalent full-time Depute Assessor position, but also noted the extent of services provided were not directly comparable.

26. The consultant was paid an hourly rate and increases made to his hourly rate were not subject to appropriate scrutiny, including an assessment of value for money. The hourly rate rose by 400 per cent over a period of five years and four months. The total amount paid to the consultant Depute Assessor also increased significantly, though not by 400 per cent. The amount of time spent by the consultant providing services to the VJB decreased over the length of the contract. However, the increase in the hourly rate still led to the annual cost increasing from £32,727 in 2016/17 to £49,956 in 2020/21.

27. The VJB did not have its own contract standing orders. In practice, it sought to follow those of Shetland Islands Council, though they had not formally been adopted by the VJB. The auditor concluded that, in making changes to the hourly rate paid to the consultant Depute Assessor, the VJB repeatedly breached the requirements of the Council's Contract Standing Orders and the Procurement (Scotland) Regulations 2016. Despite the hourly rate being increased on five separate occasions, at no point was a tender issued, no quotations were received, no competition was assessed, and no benchmarking was performed.

28. The only written record of any request or approval to increase the hourly rate paid to the consultant Depute Assessor was the change made in April 2021. That increase (a 100 per cent increase on the then-hourly rate) was initially suggested by the Assessor to the Board in March 2020. The Assessor notified the Treasurer and the Clerk of the increase to the consultant Depute Assessor's hourly rate in April 2021. Neither the Treasurer nor the Clerk challenged whether it complied with regulations or demonstrated value for money, and these decisions were not subject to any scrutiny by the Board.

29. The VJB's attempts, over the period from 2015 to 2021, to recruit a Depute Assessor on a permanent basis were unsuccessful. This led to the regular extension of the consultant's contract. While there were obviously challenges in recruiting to the permanent post, the regular – and ultimately significant – increases in the hourly rate paid to the consultant were in contravention of applicable regulations. It is difficult to determine whether the increases represented value for money. In addition, these decisions about important staffing matters within the VJB were not subject to any oversight and scrutiny by the Board, raising concerns about openness and transparency.

Lack of medium-term plans

30. The VJB has not undertaken effective medium-term planning. The VJB achieved financial balance in 2020/21 and is projecting financial balance in 2021/22. This balance will be achieved through contributions from the two councils. However, the appointed auditor has highlighted the lack of a medium-term financial plan in the 2020/21 annual audit report and has flagged this issue consistently in previous annual audit reports.

31. The appointed auditor has also highlighted the lack of a workforce plan in the 2020/21 report, and in previous reports. In 2019/20, the auditor noted that resignations and difficulties in recruitment meant the VJB was faced with vacancies in three of its four most senior positions (Depute Assessor, Clerk and Treasurer) with the fourth position (Assessor) continuing on a rolling, monthly basis. The Clerk and the Treasurer subsequently resigned in April 2020. These positions remained vacant for half of 2020/21, although the Board did appoint officers from Orkney Islands Council to fill these vacancies in November 2020.

Systems and services

32. The VJB has relied on – and continues to rely on – the two constituent councils for both staff and systems, including financial, human resources and IT systems. Both staff and systems have been provided on an alternating basis by the two councils. Until 2019/20, the services were provided exclusively by Shetland Islands Council. Services began to move over to Orkney Islands Council from 2020/21.

33. While not a contributory factor to the issues described above, the appointed auditor also identified a lack of understanding, on the part of the VJB, about services provided by Orkney Islands Council. Although the VJB believed that Orkney Islands Council was responsible for providing legal advice to it, this was not the case in practice. Moving forward, it will be important that the VJB clarifies what support it can expect to receive from the two constituent councils in supporting it to exercise its statutory functions.

Staffing

34. When council staff work at the VJB, their work as employees of the VJB lies outside the direct management responsibilities of their employing council. I am aware that the scope for support to members of staff from their 'home' council was constrained during the audit, due to limitations on what information could be shared with the constituent authorities. This created challenges for the staff involved.

35. It would be helpful for the VJB and the constituent councils to consider how best to provide appropriate advice and support to individual members of staff during their period of employment away from their 'home' council.

Internal audit

36. The VJB relied on the work carried out by Shetland Island Council's internal audit function, as the VJB continued to use the council's systems throughout

2020/21. In the annual audit report, the auditor notes that there have been no VJB-specific internal audits carried out in over a decade. Given the issues identified during the annual audits, and the changes in service provision from Shetland Islands Council to Orkney Islands Council, the auditor has stated that it is no longer appropriate for the VJB to rely solely on the Shetland Islands Council's internal audit programme to provide assurance to the VJB. I agree with the auditor on this point.

Progress since the financial year end

37. The VJB accepted the findings and recommendations in the annual audit report in full and has shown a commitment to addressing the gaps in decision-making relating to both the Assessor and Depute Assessor positions. There have also been several other recent developments, in response to the auditor's findings and recommendations in this and previous years.

38. The VJB has developed a workforce plan, the first draft of which was submitted to the Board on 30 September 2021. The plan and progress with implementation will be reviewed by the appointed auditor as part of the 2021/22 audit. A high-level review of the plan presented on 30 September indicates that the VJB would consider both immediate needs and future needs. The plan also recognises the challenges in recruitment to technical posts, including senior posts. It recognises the need to consider alternative measures to attract the right staff, as well as a need to develop the existing workforce.

39. The VJB intends to develop a medium-term financial plan later in 2021/22, following the completion of a review of the new pay and grading model.

40. A formal offer of appointment was made in October 2021 and a new, permanent Depute Assessor took up post in November 2021.

41. The issue of there being no access to legal advice was rectified at the Board's meeting on 18 November 2021, when the Board authorised the Clerk to obtain legal advice when required.

42. The Assessor is due to retire at the end of March 2022. A new Assessor has been appointed and will take up post on 16 May 2022. At the time of writing this report, the VJB was considering options to cover the period between these two events.

Conclusion

Conclusion

43. The VJB faced challenges in terms of recruitment for both the Assessor and the Depute Assessor positions. While the basis for some of the decisions it took may have been justified, there were serious flaws in both the processes followed and the actions taken. The VJB took numerous decisions that were unlawful or were not supported by appropriate or specified procedures, and which did not accord with good practice.

44. The issues in this report highlight significant concerns in relation to governance and transparency. The report also highlights weaknesses in the VJB's approach to planning.

45. While the VJB has since taken steps to address the gaps in decisions made in relation to the Assessor's contract, and has appointed a permanent Depute Assessor, the VJB's actions have led to increased costs, additional work for staff and board members, risks in relation to value for money and potential reputational damage to the Board.

46. It is critical that the Board learns the lessons from this experience and promotes strong governance around decision-making, as well as exercising care when considering what business it considers at anything other than a properly convened meeting. The VJB sought to follow the procedures of the two councils, but it did not formally develop or adopt processes and procedures of its own, including a scheme of delegation and contract standing orders. While I am of the view that this was not a significant factor in the matters covered by this report, the VJB should draw on the lessons from these events to put in place, or strengthen, its own procedures.

47. It is encouraging that the VJB has now prepared a workforce plan and has been working on a medium-term financial plan. It now needs to finalise and implement these plans, and it will be important that they are subject to regular review.

48. The appointed auditor will continue to monitor developments and will report on progress in the 2021/22 annual audit report.

The 2020/21 audit of Orkney and Shetland Valuation Joint Board

Report on governance and decision-making

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Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board

To: Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board

On: 10 June 2022

Report
by
Clerk

TIMETABLE OF MEETINGS 2022 TO 2027

1. Summary

1.1 Meetings of the Joint Board are convened on a quarterly basis with meetings being held at 2.00 pm on Fridays in February, May/June, September and November each year.

1.2 Arrangements for ordinary meetings of the Joint Board are governed by the provisions of Standing Order 5 of the Joint Board's Procedural Standing Orders which state that:-

"The Joint Board will agree the dates, times and places for its ordinary meetings. The Joint Board will meet from time to time in each constituent authority and will normally hold at least four meetings a year."

1.3 At the meeting of the Joint Board held on 19 November 2021, it was decided that future meetings of the Joint Board be hybrid meetings and that arrangements be made to hold these meetings in the Council Chamber in Renfrewshire House, allowing members to either attend meetings 'in person' or join remotely using Microsoft Teams, and that the Clerk, in consultation with the Convener and Depute Convener, be requested to develop a protocol for the conduct of hybrid meetings.

1.4 The protocol for the conduct of hybrid meetings was approved at the meeting of the Joint Board held on 25 February 2022 and has been issued to members with the agenda for this meeting.

1.5 The suggested dates for meetings of the Joint Board for the current five-year term from 2022 to 2027 are:

16 September and 18 November 2022

24 February, 26 May, 15 September and 17 November 2023

23 February, 24 May, 13 September and 15 November 2024

21 February, 23 May, 12 September and 14 November 2025

20 February, 22 May, 18 September and 13 November 2026
19 February 2027

- 1.6 The next local government election is scheduled to be held in May 2027 and in order to give constituent authorities suitable time to advise the Joint Board of their members and substitutes it is proposed that the first meeting of the Joint Board after the local government elections in 2027 be held on 18 June 2027.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That meetings of the Joint Board be held at 2.00 pm on the dates detailed in sections 1.5 and 1.6 of the report; and
- 2.2 That these meetings be hybrid meetings held in the Council Chamber in Renfrewshire House, allowing members to either attend meetings 'in person' or join remotely using Microsoft Teams.

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