



Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board

Report to: Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board

Meeting on: 18th September 2020

Subject: Barclay Update / Service Review

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. Furthermore, at the February Board meeting, permission was sought from the Board for a Service Review to be undertaken to address issues such as non-filling of vacancies and the new legislative changes coming into effect beginning in April of this year.

The Non-Domestic Rates (Scotland) Bill is now law and has been partially implemented in April 2020, with full implementation to follow thereafter.

There are six main Barclay recommendations which are reflected in this bill, these are listed below:-

- i. The change of the revaluation cycle from 5 yearly to 3 yearly
- ii. New property markers to be shown against properties in the Valuation Roll
- iii. Changes to valuation of properties within a Park
- iv. From the 2022 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
- vi. Information Gathering powers to be strengthened with Assessors issuing Civil Penalties to those who do not respond.

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.

2. Recruitment/Restructure

Unfortunately, due to the impact of the Covid pandemic I have not been able to progress the recruitment/restructure as much as I would have wished to.

Matters relating to, the present Revaluation 2017, the recent significant number of Material Change of Circumstances Appeals lodged due to the pandemic and the Barclay Review recommendations have also moved on.

The Scottish Government has extended the timetable for the disposal of the remaining 2017 Revaluation appeals, by one year, to December 2021. The Government has also extended the timetable for disposal of the recently lodged 3,000 plus appeals due to the Covid pandemic. These would normally have had to have been disposed of by 31st March 2021. However, the Government also extended this deadline to December 2021.

Furthermore, the Government announced in its Programme for Government 2020/21 on 1st September their intention to delay the 2022 Revaluation by one year to 2023, in line with the Governments of both England & Wales. However, where this policy differs from these two countries is in the fact that the Tone Year (the year on which rental values will be based) for the 2023 Revaluation will be April 2022. This proposed one-year tone date is one of the Barclay recommendations, however, it was not expected to take effect until the 2025 Revaluation.

Whilst these changes are welcomed it does mean that recruiting new qualified surveyors is even more of a necessity. I intend therefore to begin a recruitment drive as soon as possible to ensure the Board is well resourced in terms of qualified staff to deliver the statutory duties.

3. IT Valuation System

As previously discussed, a new IT valuation system is in the process of being procured. I am pleased to report, that despite Covid and Lockdown, we have managed to progress with this project. We will shortly be commencing user testing of the new system. This is due in no small part to the extraordinary efforts of the staff involved, working remotely, and yet still managing to meet on a virtual platform and work through all the various requirements such a project demands. We are not quite at a finished product, but I can say we are in a much better place than could have been anticipated. I must thank all those involved, it has not been easy, but everyone has gone the extra mile to ensure we can eventually deliver a far better and efficient system for the whole of the Non-Domestic and Council Tax services.

We are also now meeting with our three constituent councils to ensure we are meeting their needs as far as information and finance updates etc are concerned.

4. Internal Barclay Project Group

Given the recent announcement by Scottish Government on the proposed changes to the Revaluation date, once we have certainty on these proposals this group can be tasked with overseeing the implementation of the Barclay review. Training and workshops, even if virtually, will be scheduled and delivered.

5. Recommendations

- i. The Board notes this report.

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8th September 2020

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