



Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board

Minute of Meeting Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board

Date	Time	Venue
Friday, 21 August 2015	14:00	Inverclyde Council, Municipal Buildings, Clyde Square, GREENOCK, PA15 1LZ

PRESENT

Provost Carmichael and Councillors O'Kane (East Renfrewshire Council); Brennan, Nelson, Loughran and Shepherd (Inverclyde Council); and M Sharkey, Hood, Bibby and Mullin (Renfrewshire Council).

CHAIR

Councillor Mullin, Convener, presided.

APOLOGIES

Councillors Green (East Renfrewshire Council), Loughran (for lateness) (Inverclyde Council) and Williams, Lawson and Audrey Doig (Renfrewshire Council).

IN ATTENDANCE

A MacTaggart, Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer, K Crawford, Depute Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer, L Hendry, Divisional Assessor and Assistant Electoral Registration Officer and J Gallacher, Senior Administrative Officer (all Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board); D Forbes, Finance Manager and E Currie, Senior Committee Services Officer (both Finance & Resources, 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 the Joint Board held on 5 June, 2015.

DECIDED: That the Minute be approved.

2 **REVENUE BUDGET**

There was submitted a report by the Treasurer in respect of the Joint Board for the period 1st April to 24 July, 2015.

DECIDED: That the report be noted.

3 **AUDITED ANNUAL ACCOUNTS 2014/15**

Under reference to item 2 of the Minute of the meeting of this Joint Board held on 5 June, 2015 there was submitted a report by the Treasurer relative to the annual accounts for the Joint Board for 2014/15. The report intimated that the Audit Certificate issued by Audit Scotland provided an unqualified opinion that the abstract of accounts presented a true and fair view of the financial position of the Joint Board as at 31 March, 2015, in accordance with the accounting policies detailed in the accounts. A report on the 2014/15 audit by Audit Scotland was also attached to the report and indicated that there were no matters arising from the audit which required specific reporting to members.

DECIDED: That the audited annual accounts 2014/15 be approved for signature and the report by Audit Scotland be noted.

4 **PERFORMANCE REPORT**

There was submitted a report by the Divisional Assessor and Assistant Electoral Registration Officer relative to the various key measures introduced to monitor and manage the performance of the Joint Board's services. The report detailed the performance in Council Tax and non-domestic valuation against set targets. In relation to Council Tax valuation, 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 meeting the target of 95% within three months and exceeding the target of 99.5% within six months. The report also detailed the average number of days taken to add a house in each constituent authority area between 1 April and 30 June, 2015 and also the number of deletions from the Valuation (Council Tax) List between 1 April and 30 June during 2014 and 2015 by constituent authority area.

The report detailed the number of statutory amendments to the Valuation Roll, excluding appeal settlements and amendments to the prescribed entries, between 1 April and 30 June, 2015 by constituent authority area, again ahead of the target of 80% to be actioned within three months and 95% within six months. These amendments were value changes only and did not reflect alterations where overall value was unchanged, changes to occupancy details or other administrative changes.

DECIDED: That the report be noted.

SEDERUNT

Councillor Loughran (Inverclyde Council) entered the meeting prior to consideration of the following item of business.

5 ELECTORAL REGISTRATION

There was submitted a report by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer providing an update on the electoral registration matters and advising of current activities and issues facing the Joint Board.

The report intimated that the transition phase of Individual Electoral Registrations (IER) would end on 1 December, 2015 and those unconfirmed electors retained during the transition phase would be removed. The report detailed the number of unconfirmed electors as at 1 August, 2015 by constituent authority area.

At present, unconfirmed electors remained on the Register and were able to vote. They were prevented from having any absent vote facility unless they registered under IER. These electors would be issued with a further invitation to register as part of the annual canvass.

Household enquiry forms had been issued during the week of 3 August, 2015. A short-term issue was discovered very early in the process resulting from the security code format being out of step with the agreed format printed on the forms and this matter had been rectified within two hours. The initial phase would run until 25 August, 2015 after which first reminder forms would be issued, thereafter, the door-to-door canvass would be conducted. The Register would be published on 1 December, 2015 and any elector carried forward through IER transition would be removed from the Registers.

Rolling registration had been in operation since March 2015 with updates published from April 2015, including supplementary updates associated with the General Election. A summary of the changes made formed the appendix to the report.

Following the European Election in 2014, individual electors whose Absent Vote had been rejected were advised of the reason for this and offered the opportunity to supply a fresh Postal Vote Application. The UK Government decided that this should be repeated following the General Election and the report detailed the total number of absent voters; the total number of rejection letters issued and the total number of absent vote deletions as at 31 July, 2015 by constituent authority area.

A comparison of the electoral canvass returns for 2012, 2013 and 2015 was tabled.

DECIDED: That the report be noted.

6 RECORDS MANAGEMENT POLICY

There was submitted a report by the Depute Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer relative to the Public Records (Scotland) Act 2011 which placed an obligation on named authorities in Scotland to produce a records management setting out arrangements for the effective management of all records.

The report intimated that Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board was a named authority as defined in the Act and the creation of a records management policy statement was a mandatory element of the plan and was necessary in order to identify the procedures to be followed in managing the organisation's public records.

The Records Management Policy, which formed the appendix to the report, was derived from a 'model' Records Management Plan for Assessors and Electoral Registration Officers devised by the Scottish Assessors Association in conjunction with the Keeper of the Records of Scotland.

DECIDED: That the Records Management Policy, which formed the appendix to the report, be approved.

7 2017 NON-DOMESTIC RATING REVALUATION PROGRESS REPORT

Under reference to item 6 of the Minute of the meeting of this Joint Board held on 16 January, 2015 there was submitted a report by the Divisional Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer relative to the 2017 Non-Domestic Rating Revaluation. The report intimated that the Valuation and Rating (Scotland) Act 1956 introduced a five yearly revaluation process which required the assessor to value or revalue all the lands and heritages in his valuation area. These valuations were totally fresh and need bear no relation to the value applied in the preceding five years. The process involved 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 were then updated, the new valuation roll published and all interested parties notified.

Appendix 1 to the report detailed the number of subjects for which information required to be ingathered, analysed and valued by constituent authority area. These 20 categories divided subjects into easily understood groupings such as retail, offices, industrials, health, education and hotels.

The report detailed the process in relation to the collection of rental evidence and the preparation and timeline for preparing and completing proposed valuations for the 2017 Revaluation. The Scottish Government had intimated that they were now seeking harmonisation with the English timetable and were looking for the bulk of subjects to be valued as early as January 2016. This would allow sufficient time for the Scottish Government to establish the net effect of the Revaluation as soon as possible and allow for the appropriate rate poundage, transition relief schemes and decapitalisation rates to be established.

DECIDED: That the report be noted.

8 UNACCEPTABLE ACTIONS POLICY

There was submitted a report by the Depute Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer relative to the adoption of an Unacceptable Actions Policy for the Joint Board. The report intimated that this Policy was supplementary to the existing Code of Conduct and Complaints Handling Policy for the Joint Board and was designed to offer advice to the public and Joint Board staff in terms of conduct that may be deemed unacceptable.

Service users had a right to be heard, understood and respected and occasionally the behaviour or actions of service users made it difficult for Joint Board staff to deal with other service priorities due to the time and effort required to deal with a few service users. In some cases this might extend to actions becoming unacceptable as they involve abuse of staff or processes. The Unacceptable Actions Policy, attached to the report as an appendix, detailed the approaches which would be taken to deal with these situations.

DECIDED: That the adoption of the Unacceptable Actions Policy be approved.

9 DISCLOSURE SCOTLAND POLICY

There was submitted a report by the Depute Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer relative to the adoption of a Disclosure Scotland Policy for the Joint Board.

The report intimated that the Joint Board was required to implement a vetting programme for all staff whose duties involved inspections of properties where children or vulnerable adults were likely to be present. The Joint Board's Disclosure Scotland Policy and Procedure, which formed the appendix to the report, was designed to promote good practice in the process of attracting and selecting employees and the creation of equal access to employment for all, including ex-offenders. It also allowed the Joint Board's services to be delivered to customers in their own home.

DECIDED: That the adoption of the Disclosure Scotland Policy be approved.

10 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 Friday, 20 November, 2015 within the offices of the Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board, Glasgow Road, Paisley.