

Report To: Policy & Resources Committee **Date:** 24 May 2011
Report By: Chief Financial Officer **Report No:** FIN/60/11/AP/LM
Contact Officer: Alan Puckrin **Contact No:** 01475 712223
Subject: Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board - Update

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update to Committee in respect of the Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board.

2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 It has previously been agreed that Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board minutes should be presented to the Policy and Resources Committee when they become available. Appendix 1 contains the minutes of the meeting which took place on the 14th January 2011.
- 2.2 The Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board last met on 20th May 2011 and the next meeting will be held in Greenock on 26th August 2011.
- 2.3 Further updates will be provided to Committee when they become available.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Committee note the Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board minutes of the 14th January 2011.

Alan Puckrin
Chief Financial Officer

MINUTE OF MEETING OF THE RENFREWSHIRE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
HELD ON 14TH JANUARY, 2011

PRESENT

Councillors Carmichael, Fletcher and Gilbert (East Renfrewshire Council); Blair, Nelson, McCabe and Wilson (Inverclyde Council); and Perrie, Grady, Dillon, MacLaren, Doig, and Noon (Renfrewshire Council).

Councillor Doig, Convener, presided.

APOLOGIES

Councillor Green (East Renfrewshire Council); and Councillors Sharkey and Langlands (Renfrewshire Council).

IN ATTENDANCE

A MacTaggart, Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer, K Crawford, Depute Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer, R Nicol and H McPhee, Divisional Assessors and Assistant Electoral Registration Officers, and S Carlton, Principal Administrative Officer (all Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board); J Imlach, Senior Committee Services Officer, E Currie, Committee Services Officer, P Maguire, Finance Manager, and A McMahon, Chief Auditor (all Finance & Corporate Services, Renfrewshire Council).

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

1. MINUTE OF LAST MEETING

There was submitted the Minute of the meeting of the Joint Board held on 19th November, 2010.

DECIDED: That the Minute be approved.

2. REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING REPORT

There was submitted a joint revenue budget monitoring report by the Treasurer and the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer in respect of the Joint Board for the period 1st April to 10th December, 2010.

DECIDED: That the report be noted.

3. 2011/2012 REVENUE ESTIMATES

There was submitted a report by the Treasurer relative to the revenue estimates for the Joint Board for the financial year 2011/2012 and the establishment of the 2011/2012 requisition being built into the revenue estimates process of the constituent authorities. The report intimated that as a consequence of moving into the next spending review period covering 2011/2012 – 2013/2014 councils across Scotland were facing unprecedented financial challenges due to cuts in grant funding and continued cost pressures on expenditure. As a result it was recognised that member authorities were seeking to identify and implement savings on a scale which had not previously been experienced and were seeking appropriate reductions in requisition payments. For the purpose of preparing the revenue

estimates it had been proposed that a reduction in requisition levels of 4% be applied for 2011/2012 and that reductions of 1.7% per annum be used as indication planning assumptions for 2012/2013 and 2013/2014.

Due to the current financial climate it was not expected that any pay settlement would reach levels previously awarded and for the purposes of the preparation of the revenue estimates no increase had been assumed. Zero inflation had been assumed on all other expenditure lines.

The report intimated that the allocation of the requisition amongst the constituent authorities would be based on the percentage proportions of the Grant Aided Expenditure (GAE) as detailed in the report.

Appendix 1 to the report detailed the estimates of expenditure and income for the Joint Board for the year ending 31st March, 2012 and the requisitions for constituent authorities for 2011/2012. Appendix 2 to the report detailed the approved, recommended and indicative requisitions for 2020/2011 and 2013/2014.

DECIDED:

- (a) That the revenue estimates 2011/2012 and the requisitions for constituent authorities as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report be approved;
- (b) That it be agreed that any savings achieved on budgeted expenditure be used to fund the continued level of service delivery in future years;
- (c) That it be noted that the 2012/2013 and 2013/2014 revenue budget and associated requisition levels would be developed in future years once member council grant levels had been confirmed;
- (d) That the revenue budget planning assumptions for 2011/2014 and the indicative level of local authority requisitions for financial years 2012/2013 and 2013/2014 be noted;
- (e) That the Treasurer, in conjunction with the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer, present a report to a future meeting of the Joint Board should its remit and finances be materially affected by future events; and
- (f) That the constituent authorities be notified of the requisitions required for 2011/2012.

4. CAPITAL BUDGET PROGRAMME

There was submitted a report by the Depute Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer relative to the Capital Budget 2007/2010. Attached as an appendix to the report was a list of projects being undertaken as part of the Capital Programme 2007/2010. The report intimated that the budget currently showed an underspend. Renfrewshire Council had advised that the new telephone system would not be implemented until the new financial year 2011/2012 and approval was sought to allow the underspend to remain in this part of the capital budget to allow the Joint Board to purchase the new telephone system in the forthcoming financial year.

DECIDED:

- (a) That the report be noted; and
- (b) That the underspend remain in this part of the capital budget to allow the Joint Board to purchase the new telephone system in the forthcoming financial year.

5. ACCOMMODATION UPDATE

There was submitted a report by the Depute Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer relative to the programme of work for 2009 to 2010. The report intimated that all refurbishment works had been completed and the total costs had come in under the expected budget.

DECIDED: That the report be noted.

6. 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 the targets set. 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) again bettering the target of 95% within three months but falling short of 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 and also the number of deletions from the Valuation (Council Tax) List between 1st April and 30th November, 2009 and the same period in 2010 by constituent authority area.

The report detailed the number of statutory amendments to the Valuation Roll, excluding appeal settlements and amendments to prescribed entries, between 1st April, 2010 and 30th November, 2010 by constituent authority area, again bettering the target of 80% 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.

7. ANNUAL CANVASS 2010 – PROGRESS REPORT

There was submitted a report by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer relative to an update on the outcome of the Annual Canvass completed in December, 2010. The report intimated that the 2010 canvass of 159,003 properties had been completed on time and that all targets had been achieved. Table 1 of the report detailed the changes in the electorate as at 1st December, 2009 and 1st December, 2010 and showed an increase in the number of registered electors of 3.23%. Table 2 of the report detailed the number of households that registered by telephone, text, and the internet.

The overall level of registration was around 96% and this was supported by analysis of the number of properties where there were no registered electors. In total, there were 5,574 properties, 3.5% of the housing stock in the Joint Board area, where there was no reason why the property should not have resident electors. The report provided information in relation to rolling registration; voter awareness; absent voters; and preparation for the Scottish Parliamentary Election and Referendum on Electoral Reform.

Appendix 1 to the report detailed the change in the Joint Board electorate since the last canvass shown by Westminster Parliamentary constituencies, and by Scottish Parliamentary constituencies; appendix 2 detailed the change in the Joint Board electorate since the last canvass by council area; and appendix 3 detailed the changes in the constituent local authority areas since the last canvass by ward.

DECIDED: That the report be noted.

8. REVISED FINANCIAL REGULATIONS AND CODES

There was submitted a report by the Treasurer relative to revised Financial Regulations and Codes for the Joint Board. The report intimated that a comprehensive and up to date set of Financial Regulations was a key element of corporate governance as they provided a framework for good financial management. The last revision of the Financial Regulations and Codes had been approved by the Joint Board on 23rd November, 2001 and this further revision took account of appropriate revisions made to Renfrewshire Council's Financial Regulations and Codes.

DECIDED: That the revised Financial Regulations and Codes be approved and adopted.

SEDERUNT

Councillor Blair (Inverclyde Council) entered the meeting during consideration of the following item of business.

9. GREENOCK OFFICE – REVISED OPENING HOURS

There was submitted a report by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer relative to revised opening hours for the Greenock office. The report intimated that overall Joint Board staffing levels had declined by around 10% as a result of the non filling of vacancies and in order to make best use of staff resources the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer had reduced the opening hours of the Greenock office as of 10th January, 2011, as a temporary measure until March, 2011, when the opening hours would return to the normal opening hours in anticipation of increased activity in the weeks prior to the Scottish Parliamentary Election and Referendum. This change would allow the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer to make use of the staff to carry out additional checks on properties where there were no registered electors and would also benefit the staff based in the Greenock office who currently had a more narrow focus than staff in the Paisley office who had greater involvement in other parts of the Joint Board's statutory functions.

The Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer would review this matter following the Scottish Parliamentary Election and Referendum and after the budget for 2011/2012 had been finalised. The change to the opening hours was a temporary measure and did not imply that there was any plan to permanently close the Greenock office. Permanent closure might have to be considered in the future but at this stage it was merely one of a range of options covering measures necessary to reduce the Joint Board's operating costs. This would be a matter for the Joint Board and a series of consultative measures would be taken to help inform any decision the Joint Board required to make.

DECIDED: That the report be noted.

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting of the Joint Board would be held within the offices of East Renfrewshire Council on Friday, 20th May, 2011 at 2.00pm.