
Report To:	Policy & Resources Committee	Date:	15 November 2011
Report By:	Chief Financial Officer & Corporate Director Regeneration & Environment	Report No:	FIN/101/11/AP/CM
Contact Officer:	Alan Puckrin	Contact No:	01475 712223
Subject:	Consultation on the future of the Greenock Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board Office		

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise Committee of the ongoing consultation being undertaken by the Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board relating to the potential closure of the Cathcart Street Office and to advise Committee of a future option for the delivery of the Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board Services within Inverclyde.

2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board have indicated for the last year or so that the footfall within their Cathcart Street Office is reducing and in their view does not justify a presence within Greenock at the level currently provided.
- 2.2 The Corporate Director Regeneration and Environment and the Chief Financial Officer have had discussions with the Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board to examine whether there is an opportunity linked to the new Customer Service Centre whereby a service could still be provided within Inverclyde whilst also delivering the operational efficiencies which the Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board require to achieve.
- 2.3 The new Customer Service Centre in Clyde Square affords an ideal opportunity for the Council and some of it's partners to occupy the same buildings and provide a joined up service to the public. Initial discussions would indicate that there are opportunities whereby Council Customer Service Staff could deal with basic initial enquiries on some Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board matters such as notification of changes, handing out forms etc. In addition by sharing property it will provide more resilience within the service the Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board provide within Inverclyde.
- 2.4 Were the Committee to agree to this proposal then Officers would negotiate an appropriate rent with the Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board.
- 2.5 An added factor which the Committee need to bear in mind is that the Cathcart Street premises currently used by the Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board are owned by the Council and as such there will be a cost to the Council should the Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board be allowed to terminate their lease early.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Committee note the ongoing consultation being undertaken by the Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board.

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- 3.2 It is recommended that the Committee decide whether the proposal contained in this report to incorporate the Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board Service for Inverclyde within the new Customer Service Centre should continue to be pursued by Officers.
- 3.3 It is recommended that subject to approving 3.2 above, the Committee delegate to the Corporate Director Regeneration and Environment to negotiate with Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board the terms of any early termination of the Cathcart Street property lease and report thereon to the Regeneration Committee.

Alan Puckrin
Chief Financial Officer

Aubrey Fawcett
Corporate Director Regeneration &
Environment

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board (RVJB) have indicated over the last couple of years that footfall within the Greenock office has reduced considerably. This in tandem with the need for the Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board to deliver year on year savings has generated the proposal that the Cathcart Street offices of the Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board be closed.
- 4.2 Appendix 1 is a copy of the consultation letter which was issued to all Members and also includes a copy of the footfall information provided by the Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board. Whilst consultation closes at 31st October 2011 the Assessor has confirmed that the Committee decision taken today will be factored into the consultation responses.

5.0 ISSUES TO CONSIDER

- 5.1 The Assessor's professional opinion is that closing the Cathcart Street office will have limited impact upon the service provided to the residents of Inverclyde. He does however recognise that having a presence within Inverclyde is of use over and above the normal property visits which Officers will continue to carry out.
- 5.2 The Assessor has agreed in principle to have an appropriate presence within the new Customer Service Centre which could be varied in line with the demand for services. On this basis he would envisage that at times of greater demand of services such as approaching deadlines for registration for elections etc he could increase staffing whilst at other times the staffing would be kept at a minimal level.
- 5.3 One aim of the Council's approach to Customer Services is to provide joined up services to members of the public and having the Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board Service ensconced within the Customer Service Centre would be a positive move. In addition the Customer Service Centre Manager has had initial discussions with the Assessor and believes there are certain basic tasks carried out by the Assessor which could be carried out by her team.
- 5.4 The Committee needs to be aware that the property currently occupied by the Assessor is owned by the Council. The Head of Regeneration and Planning has indicated that the lease has over three years to run and whilst he believes he would be able to re-let the property in due course, the Assessor should make a one off payment to the Council to allow the lease to be terminated early.
- 5.5 The Council is a member of the Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board and as such has a responsibility to ensure that the Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board stays within its approved budget. The indicative budget for 2012/13 for the Assessor assumes a 1.7% (£40,000) cash reduction from 2011/12 budget. The closure of the Greenock office after the next Local Government Elections has been indicated by the Assessor as a key factor in his savings plans for 2012/13.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Recurring Costs

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	With Effect from	Annual Net Impact	Virement From (If Applicable)	Other Comments
Commercial & Industrial Rent	Rent Income	July 2012	£6,750	-	Loss of income due to Closure of Cathcart Street Office until it is re-let
Property Assets	Income	July 2012	(£tbc)	-	Rent for CSC to be negotiated with RVJB
Joint Boards	P to B	April 2012	(£2500)	-	Council's estimated share of net saving to RVJB

6.2 One off Costs

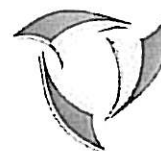
Cost Centre	Budget Heading	With Effect from	Annual Net Impact	Virement From (If Applicable)	Other Comments
Commercial & Industrial Rent	Rent Income	2012/13	£tbc	-	One off payment for early termination of lease

7.0 CONSULTATION

- 7.1 The Head of Regeneration and Planning advises that subject to the Committee decision he will negotiate a lease termination with the Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board and report thereon to the Regeneration Committee.
- 7.2 The Head of Organisational Development, Human Resources and Performance has been consulted and has no further comments.

Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board

Serving East Renfrewshire, Inverclyde and Renfrewshire



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

APPENDIX 1

Alasdair D MacTaggart, RD, BSc, FRICS, IRRV
Lands Valuation Assessor and
Electoral Registration Officer
Kate A Crawford, BSc, MRICS, IRRV
Depute

Tel No: 0141 842 5900
Fax No: 0141 842 5929
Our Ref: AMacT/JH
Your Ref:
Date: 4 October 2011

If phoning or calling please ask for Alasdair MacTaggart

TO ELECTED MEMBERS

Dear Elected Member,

CONSULTATION ON THE FUTURE OF THE GREENOCK OFFICE OF RVJB

I am writing to you to ask for your views and comments on the long term future of the satellite office that the Joint Board currently staffs in Greenock.

Historically, the offices in Inverclyde were much larger and housed both the technical and electoral services. However, changes over the last 10 years, which included the move to the present offices in Cathcart Street from the West Stewart Street offices, have resulted in there only being a small electoral/administrative capability offering a limited range of services to the general public. In part this came about from discussions with Inverclyde Council who were keen to take the West Stewart Street offices for their own use and in part to allow the then Assessor to move the technical staff to the offices in Paisley to assist in the business development of the Board's functions. This has resulted in a substantial fall in the use made of the office which can be seen in appendix 1; an analysis of visitor numbers calling in to the Greenock premises. Part of the drop in visitor numbers can be accounted for as a direct result of the various alternative options people now have to interact with this office e.g., by phone, text or internet.

Currently, the Board operates from the Robertson Centre in Paisley where we have a staff complement of 47 and from our offices in Cathcart St, Greenock where our complement of staff is 4.

Subject to the outcome of this consultation, it is proposed that the Joint Board's office in Cathcart Street in Greenock would be closed and the staff redeployed to Paisley. Thereafter, a presence would be maintained within the Inverclyde Council Customer Service Centre at a level appropriate to changes in demand throughout the year and business cycles associated with our functions. For example, in the weeks leading up to an election, staffing levels would be higher than at other times of the year.

The Customer Service Centre being constructed by Inverclyde Council offers the Joint Board the opportunity to provide a more efficient service to the people in Inverclyde if they wish to interact with the Joint Board in respect of Electoral Registration, Council Tax or Valuation Roll matters. Representation within the Customer Service Centre would allow the Joint Board to offer a more flexible service at a significantly reduced cost and would enable a more efficient deployment of staff within the organisation.

Notice of this consultation and proposal will be given to the local press and internet sites to allow the general public to be informed and make any comments to us. We will also seek to engage with local "focus" groups to collect their views on these proposals.

If/.....

If you would like to discuss this matter in more detail or have any questions please contact the Assessor & ERO at The Robertson Centre, 16 Glasgow Road, Paisley. I would appreciate any feedback be returned to me by 31st October 2011.

Yours sincerely,

Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer

**Record of Visits made in 2010 to
Renfrewshire VJB Office, Cathcart Street, Greenock**

"PH" = Public Holiday, "NWD" = Non-Work Requirement Day

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Total
04/01/2010	PH	1	0	1	1	3
11/01/2010	1	0	0	1	0	2
18/01/2010	1	0	1	0	1	3
25/01/2010	0	1	0	1	2	4
01/02/2010	1	0	1	0	0	2
08/02/2010	0	1	1	0	1	3
15/02/2010	1	0	0	0	1	2
22/02/2010	0	0	1	1	1	3
01/03/2010	1	0	1	0	0	2
08/03/2010	0	1	0	0	2	3
15/03/2010	0	0	1	0	0	1
22/03/2010	1	0	0	0	0	1
29/03/2010	1	0	0	PH	2	3
05/04/2010	PH	0	1	1	0	2
12/04/2010	1	0	0	0	0	1
19/04/2010	0	1	0	2	0	3
26/04/2010	1	0	0	0	1	2
03/05/2010	PH	0	1	1	0	2
10/05/2010	0	1	1	1	0	3
17/05/2010	0	2	0	0	1	3
24/05/2010	1	0	0	1	1	3
31/05/2010	PH	0	1	1	0	2
07/06/2010	1	0	1	0	0	2
14/06/2010	1	1	0	0	1	3
21/06/2010	1	0	1	1	1	4
28/06/2010	1	0	0	1	2	4
05/07/2010	0	0	1	0	0	1
12/07/2010	0	1	0	1	0	2
19/07/2010	1	0	0	0	0	1
26/07/2010	1	0	0	1	0	2
02/08/2010	PH	1	0	0	0	1
09/08/2010	0	1	1	0	0	2
16/08/2010	1	1	1	0	1	4
23/08/2010	1	0	1	1	0	3
30/08/2010	1	0	1	0	0	2
06/09/2010	0	1	1	0	0	2
13/09/2010	1	1	1	0	0	3
20/09/2010	0	0	0	0	PH	0
27/09/2010	PH	1	0	0	0	1
04/10/2010	1	0	0	0	1	2
11/10/2010	1	1	0	0	0	2
18/10/2010	2	0	0	2	0	4
25/10/2010	1	1	0	0	0	2
01/11/2010	1	2	1	0	0	4
08/11/2010	0	1	0	1	1	3
15/11/2010	0	0	0	2	1	3
22/11/2010	1	1	1	0	1	4
29/11/2010	0	0	0	0	0	0
06/12/2010	1	1	1	0	0	3
13/12/2010	0	1	0	0	1	2
20/12/2010	2	1	1	0	0	4
27/12/2010	PH	PH	CLOSED		NWD	0
						123

**Record of Visits made in 2011 to
Renfrewshire VJB Office, Cathcart Street, Greenock**

"PH" = Public Holiday, "NWD" = Non-Work Requirement Day

"greyed out" days reflect restricted opening hours

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Total
03/01/2011	PH	PH	PH	1	1	2
10/01/2011	1				1	2
17/01/2011	1				1	2
24/01/2011	0				2	2
31/01/2011	1				0	1
07/02/2011	0				1	1
14/02/2011	1				1	2
21/02/2011	2				1	3
28/02/2011	0				0	0
07/03/2011	0				1	1
14/03/2011	1				0	1
21/03/2011	0				0	0
28/03/2011	1	0	0	0	2	3
04/04/2011	1	0	0	0	0	1
11/04/2011	0	0	1	0	0	1
18/04/2011	1	1	0	PH	0	2
25/04/2011	PH	0	0	NWD	1	1
02/05/2011	PH	1	0	0	0	1
09/05/2011	1				0	1
16/05/2011	1				1	2
23/05/2011	1				1	2
30/05/2011	PH				0	0
06/06/2011	1	0	1	0	0	2
13/06/2011	0	1	0	1	1	3
20/06/2011	0	0	0	1	1	2
27/06/2011	1	1	0	1	2	5
04/07/2011	1	1	1	0	0	3
11/07/2011	0				1	1
18/07/2011	1				0	1
25/07/2011	1				0	1
01/08/2011	PH				0	0
08/08/2011	1				0	1
15/08/2011	0				1	1
22/08/2011	1				0	1
29/08/2011	0				0	0
05/09/2011	1				0	1
12/09/2011	1				0	1
19/09/2011	2				PH	2
26/09/2011	PH				0	0
03/10/2011	0					0
10/10/2011						0
17/10/2011						0
24/10/2011						0
31/10/2011						0
07/11/2011						0
14/11/2011						0
21/11/2011						0
28/11/2011						0
05/12/2011						0
12/12/2011						0
19/12/2011						0
26/12/2011	PH				NWD	0
						56