

Report To: Policy & Resources Committee **Date:** 7th February 2012
Report By: Chief Financial Officer **Report No:** FIN/03/12/AP/CM
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 held on 26th August and 18th November 2011.
- 2.2 The Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board next meets on 27th January 2012 and 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 attached in the Appendix.

Alan Puckrin
Chief Financial Officer

Minute Title Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board
Board Date 26/08/2011
Board Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board
Sub-Board Main

**MINUTE OF MEETING OF THE RENFREWSHIRE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
HELD ON 26TH AUGUST, 2011**

PRESENT

Councillors Gilbert (East Renfrewshire Council); Nelson, Loughran and Wilson (Inverclyde Council); and Perrie, Grady, Dillon, MacLaren, Sharkey, Doig, Noon and Langlands (Renfrewshire Council).

Councillor Doig, Convener, presided.

APOLOGIES

Councillors Carmichael, Fletcher and Green (East Renfrewshire Council); Blair, and White (substitute for Councillor Blair) (Inverclyde Council).

IN ATTENDANCE

A MacTaggart, Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer, K Crawford, Depute Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer, H McPhee, Divisional Assessor and Assistant Electoral Registration Officer, and R Nicol, Divisional Assessor and Assistant Electoral Registration Officer (all Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board); L Belshaw, Democratic Services Manager, A McMahon, Chief Auditor, A Fraser, Assistant Finance Manager, S McNab, HR Manager, and E Currie, Committee Services Officer (all Finance & Corporate Services, Renfrewshire Council).

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

ADDITIONAL ITEM

The Convener intimated that there was an additional item in relation to the Performance Report for the Joint Board which had not been included

in the notice calling the meeting. The Convener, being of the opinion that the item which was dealt with at item 13 below, was urgent in view of the need to advise members of the position, authorised its consideration.

1. MINUTE OF LAST MEETING

There was submitted the Minute of the meeting of the Joint Board held on 20th May, 2011.

DECIDED: That the Minute be approved.

2. AMENDMENT TO SCHEME OF DELEGATED FUNCTIONS – STRATHCLYDE PENSION FUND – EXERCISE OF DISCRETIONS

There was submitted a report by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer relative to a proposed revision to the Joint Board's Scheme of Delegated Functions. The report intimated that a revised Scheme of Delegated Functions had been approved at the meeting of the Joint Board held on 20th August, 2010. The Scheme operated on the principle that decisions should be made at the lowest level consistent with the nature of the issues involved.

There was a requirement in terms of (a) The Local Government Pension Scheme (Administration) (Scotland) Regulations 2008 (as amended); (b) The Local Government Pension Scheme (Benefits, Membership and Contributions) (Scotland) Regulations 2008 (as amended); (c) The Local Government Pension Scheme (Transitional Provisions) (Scotland) Regulations 2008 (as amended); and (d) The Local Government (Discretionary Payments and Injury Benefits) (Scotland) Regulations 1998 (as amended) that the Joint Board outlined the discretions which would be exercised in terms of these Regulations. It was proposed therefore that the Joint Board's Scheme of Delegated Functions be amended to include an additional delegation to the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer, in consultation with the Head of HR and Organisational Development, Renfrewshire Council, as outlined in paragraph 1.3 of the report.

DECIDED: That the Scheme of Delegated Functions be amended to include an additional delegation to the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer, in consultation with the Head of HR and Organisational Development, Renfrewshire Council, as outlined in paragraph 1.3 of the report.

3. INTERNAL AUDIT ANNUAL REPORT 2010/2011

There was submitted a report by the Chief Internal Auditor, Renfrewshire Council, relative to internal audit's annual report on the Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board. The report intimated that the Code of Practice for Internal Audit in Local Government in the UK recommended that the Chief Auditor prepare an annual report on the activities of internal audit to demonstrate performance. The report should contain a statement on the soundness of the internal control system of the audited body.

The annual report for the Joint Board was attached as appendix 1 to the report and outlined the role of internal audit, the performance of the

internal audit team, and the main findings from internal audit work undertaken in 2010/2011 and contained an audit assurance statement.

DECIDED: That the Internal Audit Annual Report for 2010/2011 be noted.

4. 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 22nd July, 2011.

An amended revenue budget monitoring statement for the Joint Board had been issued to members prior to the meeting.

DECIDED: That the report and the amended revenue budget monitoring statement be noted.

5. UNAUDITED ANNUAL ACCOUNTS 2010/2011

There was submitted a report by the Treasurer relative to the annual accounts for the Joint Board for 2010/2011 which were attached to the report. The report intimated that the Accounts for the year ended 31st March, 2011 had been completed and forwarded to Audit Scotland for audit. The accounts showed a surplus for the year of £103,343 as against a revised budgeted deficit of £77,400.

DECIDED: That the Annual Accounts for the year ended 31st March, 2011 be noted and that the accounts be further presented to the Joint Board on completion of the audit.

6. CAPITAL BUDGET UPDATE

There was submitted a report by the Depute Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer relative to the capital budget for 2011/2012. Attached as an appendix to the report was a list of projects being undertaken as part of the Capital Programme 2007/2010.

It was noted that the figure in relation to the 2010/2011 balance should read £130,000 and not £156,913.22 as stated in the report.

DECIDED: That, subject to the above amendment, the report be noted.

7. ELECTORAL REGISTRATION REPORT

There was submitted a report by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer relative to electoral registration matters. The report intimated that the publicity surrounding the election and referendum continued the heightened registration activity seen in 2010 and generated a significant increase in the number of applications to register and applications for postal votes with 7,411 changes being made in April and May, 2010 compared with 5,581 in the same period in 2011.

The postal canvass would begin on 24th August, 2011 and would involve

the posting of a canvass form and explanatory notes to all households in the Joint Board area. This would follow the same process as previous years, although minor changes had been made to the canvass form based on feedback received. The initial postal canvass would be followed in mid September with reminders being issued to any households where no return had been received. This year a preliminary door-to-door check had been carried out on a number of properties where no response had been received for several years and where it was clear that the existing processes were not working. The door-to-door canvass exercise would be carried out in October, 2011 and would target households where no return had been made and where electors were in danger of being removed under Regulation 34. Secondary checks would be carried out in an attempt to ascertain if registered electors were still resident in houses where no return had been made and this would involve making a comparison with the Council Tax billing records of the constituent authorities; checking information held by constituent authority Housing departments and Housing Associations; writing to private landlords; and using the information obtained during the Individual Electoral Registration Data Matching Pilot.

Appendix 1 to the report detailed the number of changes that had been made during the currency of the current Electoral Register. There had been no suspicious registration applications made in the Joint Board area.

Press releases had been issued to the local media; constituent authorities and the Joint Board had published details on websites and social media; and an advert had been shown on STV during peak evening viewing, the details of which formed Appendix 2 to the report.

DECIDED: That the report be noted.

SEDERUNT

Councillors Dillon and Sharkey entered the meeting during consideration of item 8.

8. PROPOSED INTRODUCTION OF INDIVIDUAL REGISTRATION

There was submitted a report by the Depute Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer relative to an update on individual registration. The report intimated that in the Coalition Agreement, greater priority had been given to the implementation of Individual Electoral Registration (IER) in Great Britain. Draft legislation for the introduction of IER and to make it compulsory by 2014 had been brought forward

The Joint Board was currently involved in a Data Matching Pilot as part of the Cabinet Office trials to identify individuals who were currently missing from the Electoral Register. Joint Board staff recently attended a briefing session by the Cabinet Office which gave the opportunity to explain the resourcing issues which would arise should this legislation be introduced and highlighted areas which would require funding to allow the new form of registration to be implemented. The report detailed the measures which it was understood would be contained in the draft legislation.

The introduction of IER would be a resourcing issue and would involve IT development both to allow interfaces with third parties and to allow

the ingathering and storage of the new data securely. Staffing numbers may require to be enhanced with the inherent on-costs of training and skill sets to be delivered and acquired. The number of forms to be processed in 2014, would be in the region of 260,000 compared to the current process where a minimum of 160,000 forms were issued. It may be that refreshed signatures might require to be collected for those absent voters whose signatures would be more than five years old by 2014.

DECIDED: That the report be noted.

9. JOB EVALUATION EXERCISE

Under reference to item 10 of the Minute of the meeting of the Joint Board held on 20th May, 2011, there was submitted a report by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer providing an update in relation to the job evaluation exercise. The report intimated that meetings had taken place with Unison and letters had been issued to staff informing them of their new pay and grading scale and salary point together with a copy of the proposed Terms and Conditions package. The Equality Impact Assessment had also been issued to Unison and their acceptance of this was awaited. It was anticipated that negotiations and balloting of all union members would take place in the near future, the outcome of which would be submitted to the next meeting of the Joint Board to be held on 18th November, 2011.

DECIDED:

- (a) That the report be noted; and
- (b) That a report on the outcome of the negotiations and ballot be submitted to the next meeting of the Board to be held on 18th November, 2011.

10. CONSULTATION ON FUTURE OF GREENOCK OFFICE

Under reference to item 9 of the Minute of the meeting of the Joint Board held on 14th January, 2011, there was submitted a report by the Depute Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer relative to proposed consultation on the future of the Greenock Office. The report intimated that the future of the office in Greenock had been the subject of debate for some time and its position within the structure of the Joint Board required to be considered in the present economic climate. Consultation would allow the Joint Board to look at the redeployment of resources in Greenock to better serve the Inverclyde population. Local elected members, local MSP's, the MP and the general public would be consulted to ascertain their views and a report would be submitted to the next meeting of the Joint Board to be held on 18th November, 2011.

DECIDED:

- (a) That the report be noted; and
- (b) That a report on the outcome of the consultation exercise be submitted to the next meeting of the Joint Board to be held on 18th November, 2011.

11. NON DOMESTIC APPEALS

There was submitted a report by the Divisional Assessor and Assistant Electoral Registration Officer relative to non-domestic appeals. The report intimated that a 5-yearly revaluation process had been introduced by the Valuation and Rating (Scotland) Act 1956 which required the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer to value or revalue all of the lands and heritages in his valuation area. These valuations had to be 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 costs and turnover data to establish the new levels of value. These values were then updated, the new valuation roll published and all interested parties notified. The revaluation brought with it a fresh right of appeal and traditionally resulted in a large influx of appeals.

Appendix 1 to the report detailed the Revaluation Appeals received in 2010 and Appendix 2 to the report detailed the Running Roll Appeals received in 2010/2011.

A total of 6,493 Revaluation and Running Roll Appeals had been received and all had to be cited to attend a local Valuation Appeal Committee hearing by 31st December, 2013.

DECIDED: That the report be noted.

13 . 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 and also bettering 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 31st July, 2010 and the same period in 2011 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, 2011 and 31st July, 2011 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.

14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting of the Joint Board would be held at 2.00 pm on Friday, 18th November, 2011 within the offices of the Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board, Glasgow Road, Paisley.

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MINUTE OF MEETING OF THE RENFREWSHIRE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
HELD ON 18TH NOVEMBER, 2011

PRESENT

Councillors Carmichael and Green (East Renfrewshire Council); Blair (Inverclyde Council); and Grady, MacLaren, Sharkey, Doig and Noon (Renfrewshire Council).

Councillor Doig, Convener, presided.

APOLOGIES

Councillors Gilbert and Fletcher (East Renfrewshire Council); Nelson, Loughran, (McCabe, substitute for Councillor Loughran) and Wilson (Inverclyde Council); and Perrie and Langlands (Renfrewshire Council).

IN ATTENDANCE

A MacTaggart, Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer, K Crawford, Depute Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer, H McPhee, Divisional Assessor and Assistant Electoral Registration Officer, R Nicol, Divisional Assessor and Assistant Electoral Registration Officer, S Carlton, Principal Administrative Officer, and J Gallacher, Senior Administrative Officer (all Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board); A MacArthur, Senior Finance Manager, E Coventry, Democratic Services Officer, and E Currie, Committee Services Officer (all Finance & Corporate Services, Renfrewshire Council).

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

ADDITIONAL ITEM

The Convener intimated that there was an additional item in relation to the Audited Annual Accounts 2010/2011 which had not been included in the notice calling the meeting. The Convener, being of the opinion that the item which was dealt with at item 10 below, was urgent in view of the need to advise members of the position, authorised its consideration.

1. MINUTE OF LAST MEETING

There was submitted the Minute of the meeting of the Joint Board held on 26th August, 2011.

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 14th October, 2011.

It was noted that the request for virement would realign budgets to reflect projected spend and that there would be no impact on the approved budget.

DECIDED: That the report be noted and that the request for virement be approved.

3. CAPITAL BUDGET PROGRAMME

There was submitted a report by the Depute Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer relative to the capital budget programme for 2010/2013. Attached as an appendix to the report was a list of projects being undertaken as part of the Capital Programme. Information detailing the capital budget, contribution from members, total budget available, actual expenditure and the balance carried forward for 2009/2010, 2010/2011 and 2011/2012 was tabled at the meeting.

DECIDED:

- (a) That the report be noted; and
- (b) That the updated information tabled at the meeting in relation to the capital budget 2009/2010, 2010/2011 and 2011/2012 be noted.

4. ELECTORAL REGISTRATION REPORT

There was submitted a report by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer relative to electoral registration matters. The report intimated that in an attempt to obtain a response from the properties where a response had not been made for several years, 4,898 properties had been given more direct attention with a small door-to-door canvass of 242 of these households being carried out by Joint Board staff prior to the annual canvass. This had resulted 41 properties responding with a net increase of 51 electors. The annual canvass forms for the majority of the remaining 4,656 households had been issued by recorded delivery which resulted in a direct response from 953 properties and the addition of 800 electors.

The postal canvass of the remaining 154,409 residential properties began in August with forms being issued in three phases, the initial issue and two reminder issues. The report detailed the number of forms issued and returned and replies received by telephone, internet, and text by constituent authority area giving a 76.71% return on the Annual Canvass, which was on a par with the equivalent stage in earlier years.

The report provided information on secondary checks, the door-to-door canvass, and deletion from the register following failure to respond.

The Register would be published on 1st December, 2011 and it was noted that anyone requesting a copy would be encouraged to take an electronic copy which was a more efficient and less expensive format. The Joint Board was in the process of developing a self-service secure website where elected representatives and others entitled to a copy of the Register could download the relevant files.

In relation to 2012, the report provided information in relation to the Local Government Elections and Individual Registration.

DECIDED: That the report be noted.

5. OUTREACH PROGRAMME - UPDATE

There was submitted a report by the Depute Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer relative to an update on the Outreach Programme. The report intimated that voters and elected representatives required to have confidence that the Registers were as complete and accurate as possible. Joint Board staff encouraged registration and participation in the democratic process and had participated in various voter awareness campaigns and had introduced a schools outreach programme. Visits had been scheduled to seven schools within the Joint Board area which would involve around 500 pupils. An "in-house" training event had been held for those Joint Board staff who had volunteered to deliver the outreach programme to school pupils.

These visits would be evaluated with the outcome being reported to a future meeting of the Joint Board.

DECIDED: That the report be noted.

6. JOB EVALUATION EXERCISE

Under reference to item 9 of the Minute of the meeting of the Joint Board held on 26th August, 2011, there was submitted a report by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer providing an update in relation to the job evaluation exercise. The report intimated that UNISON had approved both the new Pay and Grading Model and the Terms and Conditions and had advised that they were satisfied with the Equality Impact Assessment. The staff ballot had resulted in an overwhelming vote in favour of acceptance of the Job Evaluation Scheme and Terms and Conditions package. Staff would now be issued with their Job Overviews and Factor Level Scores together with details on their right to appeal.

A staff review would now be undertaken to reorganise or redeploy staff as appropriate. The results of the Job Evaluation exercise would be incorporated into the structure and any changes necessary as a result of the staff review would be addressed.

DECIDED: That the report be noted.

7. CONSULTATION ON FUTURE OF GREENOCK OFFICE

Under reference to item 10 of the Minute of the meeting of the Joint Board held on 26th August, 2011, there was submitted a report by the Depute Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer relative to consultation on the future of the Greenock Office. The report intimated that adverts had been placed in a local newspaper and on the web site of "Inverclyde Now" and letters had been issued to all Inverclyde elected members inviting comments on the future of the Greenock office. Two responses had been received and these were replied to with no further communication from either party.

Inverclyde Council had carried out some research locally regarding what services should be incorporated into their new service centre and the inclusion of Electoral/Valuation and Council Tax enquiries had been seen as a positive benefit allowing these services to be carried out in a "one stop shop" environment. Inverclyde Council had agreed that the current lease for the premises at Cathcart Street, Greenock could be surrendered and that Electoral/Valuation and Council Tax enquiries could be incorporated into their new service centre.

DECIDED: That the report be noted.

8. PERFORMANCE REPORT

There was submitted a report by the Divisional Assessor and 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 and also bettering 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 September, 2011 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 and 30th September, 2011 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.

9. NON DOMESTIC APPEALS

There was submitted a report by the Divisional Assessor and Assistant Electoral Registration Officer relative to non-domestic appeals. The report intimated that a 5-yearly revaluation process had been introduced by the Valuation and Rating (Scotland) Act 1956 which required the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer to value or revalue all of the lands and heritages in his valuation area. These valuations had to be 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 costs and turnover data to establish the new levels of value. These values were then updated, the new valuation roll published and all interested parties notified. The revaluation brought with it a fresh right of appeal and traditionally resulted in a large influx of appeals.

Appendix 1 to the report detailed the Revaluation Appeals received, disposed of and outstanding in 2010 by constituent authority area and Appendix 2 to the report detailed the Running Roll Appeals received, disposed of and outstanding in 2010/2011 by constituent authority area, all of which had to be disposed of by 31st December, 2013.

The report detailed the process in relation to the negotiation of appeals; the Local Valuation Appeal Committee; Revaluation Appeals; Running Roll Appeals; and a timetable for the disposal of appeals.

DECIDED: That the report be noted.

10. AUDITED ANNUAL ACCOUNTS 2010/2011

Under reference to item 5 of the Minute of the meeting of the Joint Board held on 26th August, 2011 there was submitted a report by the Treasurer relative to the audited annual accounts 2010/2011 for the Joint Board. The report intimated that the Audit Certificate issued by Audit Scotland submitted a clean opinion that the abstract of accounts presented a true and fair view of the financial position of the Joint Board as at 31st March, 2011, in accordance with the accounting policies detailed in the accounts. A report on the 2010/2011 audit by Audit Scotland was also attached to the report and indicated that there were no significant matters arising from the audit which required reporting to members.

DECIDED: That the audited accounts 2010/2011 be approved and the report by Audit Scotland be noted.

11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting of the Joint Board would be held at 2.00 pm on Friday, 27th January, 2012 within the offices of the Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board, Glasgow Road, Paisley