

AYRSHIRE VALUATION JOINT BOARD

Minutes of meeting held on Tuesday, 22nd September 2009 at 10.30 a.m. within Greenholm Street, Kilmarnock.

Item 1 - Sederunt.

Present:

East Ayrshire Councillors: Tom Cook and William Menzies.
North Ayrshire Councillors: Robert Barr, John Moffat and Ryan Oldfather.
South Ayrshire Councillors: Alec Oattes (Chair), Ian Douglas and Ian Fitzsimmons.

In Attendance: William Sommerville, Assessor; Alastair Kirkwood, Depute Assessor; William Brown, Principal Administrative Officer; Eileen Howat, Treasurer; Christine McCourt, North Ayrshire Council; Gail Couper, East Ayrshire Council; William Pollock, Corporate Administration Manager, South Ayrshire Council (for Clerk); and Andrew Gibson, Committee Administrative Officer, South Ayrshire Council.

Also in

Attendance: Asif A. Haseeb, Senior Audit Manager, Audit Scotland (External Auditor).

Apologies:

Councillor Alan Brown, East Ayrshire Council;
Councillor William Crawford, East Ayrshire Council;
Councillor Drew Filson, East Ayrshire Council;
Councillor Andrew Chamberlain, North Ayrshire Council;
Councillor Elisabeth Marshall North Ayrshire Council;
Councillor Alan Munro, North Ayrshire Council;
Councillor Andy Campbell, South Ayrshire Council; and
Councillor Mike Peddie, South Ayrshire Council.

Item 2 – Minutes of Meeting held on 9th June 2009.

The Minutes of the meeting of the Joint Board held on the 9th June 2009 (circulated) were submitted and approved as a correct record.

Item 3 – Matter Arising.

Item 13 – IRRV Conference on 2nd and 3rd September 2009.

The Assessor reported

- (1) that Councillor Cook, East Ayrshire Council had been due to attend the IRRV Conference on 2nd and 3rd September 2009, but that unforeseen urgent commitments had prevented him from attending and that Alistair Kirkwood, Depute Assessor had attended in his place; and
- (2) that elected member representation for next year's conference would be sought in due course.

Item 4 – Postal Voting – European Parliamentary Election 2009.

There was submitted (circulated) a report dated 11th September 2009 by the Clerk informing the Board of the postal voting statistics for Ayrshire in relation to the European Parliamentary Election 2009 as detailed in the Appendix of the report.

Decided: to note the contents of the report.

Item 5 – Revenue Monitoring Report 2009/10 – Period to 31st August 2009.

There was submitted (circulated) a report dated 10th September 2009 by the Treasurer

- (1) advising that the Revenue Estimates for 2009/10 had been approved by the Board on 13th January 2009; and
- (2) detailing the income and expenditure for the period to 31st August 2009 compared to the approved Revenue Estimates and outlining an underspend of £21,135.

Decided:

- (a) to approve the contents of the report; and
- (b) to instruct the Treasurer to provide updated figures to the next meeting.

Item 6 - Ayrshire Valuation Joint Board –Accounts for Financial Year to 31st March 2009.

There was submitted (circulated) a report dated 10th September 2009 by the Treasurer

- (1) advising
 - (a) that Audit Scotland had undertaken its audit of accounts of the Ayrshire Valuation Joint Board in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 and the Code of Audit Practice approved by Audit Scotland for the financial year to 31st March 2009; and
 - (b) that recognised best practice required the Board to consider the draft financial statements as outlined in Appendix 1 of the report and the proposed independent auditor's report and to approve a recommendation that the Treasurer signed the accounts;
- (2) outlining key issues as identified by the Auditors in the report as follows:-
 - (a) that there were no qualifications in the proposed independent auditor's report;
 - (b) that presentational adjustments had been agreed with Audit Scotland and these had been incorporated into the accounts; and
 - (c) that the accounts had shown an accumulated surplus of £56,799 for use by the constituent authorities and that the Board had already committed to using £18,317 to meet expenditure in 2009/10 and £30,000 to meet the costs of implementing single status and that proposals for the use of the remaining £8,482 would be presented to the Board when considering the 2010/11 Revenue Budget; and

- (3) reporting that the Annual Report to Members would be submitted to the next meeting of the Board on 10th November 2009.

Decided: to instruct the Treasurer to sign the accounts and submit copies to Audit Scotland by 30th September 2009.

Item 7 – Non-Domestic Rating.

There was submitted (circulated) a report dated September 2009 by the Assessor outlining the current position with reference to Non-Domestic Rating.

Decided: to note the position.

Item 8 – Council Tax.

There was submitted (circulated) a report dated September 2009 by the Assessor

- (1) advising that the survey and banding of new houses for entry in the Council Tax List was continuing with a view to achieving or improving on the performance targets; and
- (2) outlining the current position on clearing appeals as detailed in the report.

Decided: to note the position.

Item 9 – Electoral Registration.

There was submitted (circulated) a report dated September 2009 by the Assessor

- (1) advising that the annual canvass had commenced on 2nd September 2009 and that details of returns were contained within the report;
- (2) reporting
 - (a) that adverts were in place to encourage electors to make their annual canvass form return;
 - (b) that pens emphasising the need not to lose your right to vote had been circulated to all libraries and the main Council offices throughout Ayrshire and that a further supply had been ordered with a view to distributing them to secondary schools in Ayrshire; and
 - (c) that to ensure more young people were registered to vote, he had requested lists from the Education Departments of the three Councils with names and addresses of all 16/17 year old pupils; and
- (3) intimating that Appendix 1 of the report detailed the number of monthly changes that had been actioned through the Rolling Registration process.

Decided: to note

- (i) the contents of the report; and
- (ii) an update of the annual canvas (tabled).

Item 10 – Staffing.

There was submitted (circulated) a report dated September 2009 by the Depute Assessor outlining the staffing position to date.

Decided: to note the contents of the report.

Item 11 – Capital Expenditure – Security Cameras.

There was submitted (circulated) a report dated September 2009 by the Depute Assessor

- (1) outlining the position concerning the installation of security cameras to the rear of 9 Wellington Square, Ayr; and
- (2) intimating that updated quotations had been received.

Decided:

- (a) to approve the purchase of CCTV system at a cost of £2,700; and
- (b) to note that it was presently felt that there was no need for a link to South Ayrshire Council's monitoring station.

Item 12 - Date of Next Meeting.

The Board noted that the next meeting would take place in County Buildings, Wellington Square, Ayr on 10th November 2009 at 10.30 a.m.

The meeting ended at 11.15 a.m.

REPORT BY ASSESSOR

SUBJECT: Non-Domestic Rating

1.0 Revaluation 2005 Appeals

Following each general revaluation the proprietor, tenant and occupier of a non-domestic property is entitled to appeal against the Rateable Value shown in the Valuation Roll (within the appropriate time limit set out in the relevant legislation).

The vast majority of revaluation appeals lodged subsequent to the 2005 revaluation have been cleared and the 13 that remain outstanding are awaiting the consideration of the Lands Tribunal for Scotland.

Revaluation 2005					
Unitary Authority	Total No. of Appeals Lodged	Disposed of	No. Outstanding	% Cleared	% Cleared at last meeting
East Ayrshire	1,079	1,073	6	99.44%	99.26%
North Ayrshire	812	808	4	99.51%	99.14%
South Ayrshire	978	975	3	99.69%	99.28%
TOTAL	2,869	2,856	13	99.55%	99.23%

2.0 Running Roll Appeals (2005 Revaluation Roll)

Running Roll appeals are lodged by proprietors, tenants and occupiers, normally as a result of changes of circumstances or changes of occupation, on an ongoing basis throughout the lifetime of the roll. The current position with Running Roll Appeals is as shown below:-

RUNNING ROLL 2005				
Unitary Authority	Total No. of Appeals Lodged	Disposed of	No. Outstanding	% Cleared
East Ayrshire	281	204	77	72.60%
North Ayrshire	409	272	137	66.50%
South Ayrshire	413	286	127	69.25%
TOTAL	1,103	762	341	69.08%

Similar to the position concerning revaluation appeals, provision exists for running roll appeals to be referred to the Lands Tribunal for Scotland. At the current time 27 of these running roll appeals are awaiting the Tribunal's consideration.

3.0 Non Domestic Valuation Appeal Committee Hearings

Arrangements have recently been made with the Secretary the Local Valuation Appeal Committee to schedule hearings for the consideration of outstanding non domestic appeals. These will take place on Thursday 5th November 2009 and Thursday 26th November 2009.

4.0 2010 Revaluation

Work in preparing valuations for the next general revaluation, which is due to come into force on 1 April 2010, has been progressing well. Provisional Rateable Values have been ascertained for all subjects and these were made available to the Scottish Government via the Assessor's portal over the summer 2009. We achieved our target of completing these valuations by 31 August 2009.

Proposed Rateable Values will be made available to the general public via the internet during October or November 2009. It is anticipated that, in order to allow ratepayers to calculate their likely rating liability, this provision will be arranged to coincide with an announcement by Scottish Government of the 2010/11 rates poundage.

5.0 Valuation Roll Amendments/New Entries & KPI Performance

The update of the Valuation Roll to reflect new properties, deletions and amendments continues on an ongoing basis.

The increased incidence of Council Tax Proposals and the requirement to undertake the 5 yearly General Revaluation within a truncated timetable continues to have an impact upon this key performance area. However, at the current time, performance remains on target.

6.0 Recommendation

That the Board notes the content of the Report.

REPORT BY ASSESSOR

SUBJECT: Council Tax

1.0 New Houses

The survey and banding of new houses for entry in the Council Tax List continues with a view to achieving or improving on performance targets.

2.0 Proposals

Proposals (appeals) to alter the valuation band allocated to dwellings are normally received in small numbers each month. There has been an increase in the number of proposals lodged in recent months as a result of media attention. In many cases the proposals are invalid because they have not been lodged within the statutory timescale. Nevertheless, each proposal is being fully investigated and in the event that any errors are discovered these will be amended within the error procedures made available to the Assessor. Unresolved invalid proposals will be referred to the Local Valuation Appeal Committee.

The current position is as shown below:-

PROPOSALS LOGGED LESS THAN 3 MONTHS OLD					
Unitary Authority	Logged	Adjusted	Withdrawn	Outstanding	Outstanding at last Meeting
East Ayrshire	17	1	0	16	28
North Ayrshire	28	0	2	26	38
South Ayrshire	30	0	0	30	28
TOTAL	75	1	2	72	94

PROPOSALS LOGGED OVER 3 MONTHS OLD					
Unitary Authority	Logged	Adjusted	Withdrawn	Outstanding	Outstanding at last Meeting
East Ayrshire	1,367	472	803	92	72
North Ayrshire	1,885	687	1,084	114	107
South Ayrshire	2,063	861	1,124	78	70
Total	5,315	2,020	3,011	284	249

3.0 Council Tax Valuation Appeal Committee Hearings

Arrangements have recently been made with the Secretary the Local Valuation Appeal Committee to schedule hearings for the consideration of outstanding domestic appeals. These will take place on Thursday 10th September 2009 and Thursday 8th October 2009.

4.0 Recommendation

That the Board notes the content of the Report.

REPORT BY ASSESSOR

SUBJECT: Electoral Registration

1.0 Canvass Timetable

The annual canvass commenced on 2nd September, 2009 and listed below are early figures of returns received.

ELECTORAL CANVASS 2009 – Position as at 11th September, 2009							
Unitary Authority	Forms Issued	Forms Returned By Post	Telephone Returns	Internet Returns	Total Return	Non-Return	% Return
East Ayrshire	56,533	7,612	12,409	3,561	23,582	32,951	41.71%
North Ayrshire	66,727	9,330	14,320	4,435	28,085	38,642	42.09%
South Ayrshire	53,839	8,677	12,480	4,010	25,167	28,672	46.74%
Total	177,099	25,619	39,209	12,006	76,834	100,265	43.38%

2.0 Advertising Campaign

Adverts are in place to encourage electors to make their annual canvass form return. The railway station adverts at Ayr, Kilmarnock and Kilwinning will run for four weeks commencing 7th September, 2009. The adverts on buses for the same period of time will commence on 14th September, 2009.

Pens emphasising the need not to lose your right to vote have been circulated to all libraries and main council offices throughout Ayrshire. A further supply of pens have been ordered with a view to distributing them to secondary schools in Ayrshire.

A full page advert will be placed in Kilmarnock FC Football in the Community Brochure. The advert will target registration for the 16-25 year old age group and will run for a year commencing January 2010.

The Brochure is all about trying to keep young people fit, active and out of trouble and also trying to get them into further education and employment. The Brochure is full of community-minded messages regarding racial equality, anti-social behaviour, community cohesion and many more important issues.

Distribution is free of charge all across Ayrshire and surrounding areas via schools, colleges, council information points, libraries, one stop shops, businesses, youth networks and at the ground during match days, club shop and also the clubs main reception.

3.0 Young Voters

To try to ensure that more young people are registered, I have requested and received lists from the education departments of the three councils with names and addresses of all 16/17 year old pupils.

These lists will be checked to the canvass returns and should assist in having more young people registered and eligible to vote on their eighteenth birthday.

4.0 By-Election Ward 9 – East Ayrshire Council – 1st October, 2009

Unfortunately legislation has not been passed in time to allow names added to the annual canvass form being accepted and therefore eligible to vote at the above election. Each elector must complete a separate voter registration form and every attempt (including a possible personal visit to the property) will be made to have individual forms completed in time to allow the elector to be eligible to vote at the by-election.

5.0 Rolling Registration

Appendix 1 shows the number of monthly changes that have been actioned through the Rolling Registration process.

6.0 Recommendation

That the Board notes the content of the report.

Appendix 1

MONTHLY CHANGES TO REGISTER					
Month	Unitary Authority	Additions	Deletions	Amendments	Total Changes
January 2009	East Ayrshire	332	188	150	3,333
	North Ayrshire	938	285	170	
	South Ayrshire	769	337	164	
	Total	2,039	810	484	
February 2009	East Ayrshire	99	187	31	907
	North Ayrshire	111	201	43	
	South Ayrshire	56	139	40	
	Total	266	527	114	
March 2009	East Ayrshire	135	205	43	1,312
	North Ayrshire	215	313	53	
	South Ayrshire	106	211	31	
	Total	456	729	127	
April 2009	East Ayrshire	200	261	39	1,632
	North Ayrshire	240	386	74	
	South Ayrshire	133	228	71	
	Total	573	875	184	
1 May 2009	East Ayrshire	183	192	24	1,259
	North Ayrshire	165	262	35	
	South Ayrshire	158	223	17	
	Total	506	677	76	
28 May 2009	East Ayrshire	312	333	45	2,191
	North Ayrshire	331	371	42	
	South Ayrshire	317	388	52	
	Total	960	1092	139	
July 2009	East Ayrshire	139	177	15	1,091
	North Ayrshire	149	234	7	
	South Ayrshire	162	193	15	
	Total	450	604	37	

Appendix 1

August 2009	East Ayrshire	203	218	8	970
	North Ayrshire	124	183	2	
	South Ayrshire	85	137	10	
	Total	412	538	20	

September 2009	East Ayrshire	169	199	6	1,105
	North Ayrshire	190	195	8	
	South Ayrshire	148	171	19	
	Total	507	565	33	

REPORT BY DEPUTE ASSESSOR

SUBJECT: Staffing

1.0 Appointments

A temporary clerical assistant has been appointed to assist with Electoral registration duties during the canvass period.

Arrangements are being made to appoint members of the Board's constituent authority staff to undertake door to door canvass duties at weekends and during the evenings. Together with the Board's staff around 50 canvassers will be required for this task.

2.0 Training

Training in respect at work and equality issues, which was provided by South Ayrshire Council's Training and Development Group, has been delivered to all members of the Board's staff over the summer period. It is proposed that more detailed training in equality issues is provided to the Board's managers at a later stage.

Congratulations are extended to two members of the Board's technical staff, Christopher Carroll and Fay Jardine, who have each gained a BSc degree in Property Management and Valuation.

3.0 Recommendation

That the Board notes the content of the Report.

REPORT BY DEPUTE ASSESSOR

SUBJECT: Capital Expenditure - Security Cameras

1.0 Purpose of the report

To advise members on the position concerning the installation of security cameras to the rear of 9 Wellington Square.

2.0 Background

At the Board's meeting of 9th June a report was submitted outlining the current position concerning the replacement windows and seeking approval for the installation of security cameras. Approval in principal was given to purchase a CCTV system and the Assessor was requested to make enquiries with a view to providing a link to the monitoring station.

3.0 Security Cameras

Further advice has now been sought from South Ayrshire Council. It has been recommended that the security risk, although present, is not one which at this time would warrant providing a live link to the Council's monitoring station. However, it is suggested that the proposed system should incorporate the functionality that would allow such a connection to be provided at a later stage if required.

On this basis updated quotations have been received and the estimated cost for providing a system inclusive of this functionality is £2,700.

4.0 Financial Implications

The provision of CCTV security equipment will be funded from the under spend arising from the replacement windows. Therefore no further requisitions will be required from the constituent authorities.

A further report will be submitted to the Board detailing the final expenditure on the replacement windows and security cameras and making further proposals on any remaining balance at a future meeting.

5.0 Recommendation

That the Board note the position and approve the purchase of a CCTV system at a cost of £2,700.