

**MINUTE of MEETING of CENTRAL SCOTLAND VALUATION JOINT BOARD
held within HILLSIDE HOUSE, STIRLING on FRIDAY 23 JANUARY 2015 at 9.30
a.m.**

COUNCILLORS:

Donald Balsillie
Irene Hamilton
Margaret Brisley
Gordon Hughes
Charles MacDonald (Convener)
Adrian Mahoney
Rosie Murray
Alan Nimmo

OFFICERS:

Ashley MacGregor, Assistant to the Treasurer
Brian Pirie, Assistant to the Clerk
Jane Wanless, Assistant Assessor
Peter Wildman, Assessor and Electoral Registration
Officer

VJB32. APOLOGIES

Apologies were intimated on behalf of Councillor McChord and Councillor Turner.

VJB33. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations were made.

VJB34. MINUTE

The minute of the meeting held on 21 November 2014 was approved.

VJB35. ELECTORAL REGISTRATION UPDATE

The Board considered a report by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer on electoral registration activity in 2014 together with challenges for 2015 and beyond.

The report set out the electoral registration activity in regard to the European Parliamentary election on 22 May 2014 and the Scottish Independence Referendum on 18 September 2014. Public interest in the referendum led to unprecedented levels of electoral registration activity and demand. This was immediately followed on 19 September 2014 with the introduction of Individual Electoral Registration (IER) in Scotland. This has resulted in significantly increased electoral registration activity and will impact on staff workload and budget. In addition, to comply with the requirements of IER preparations are underway for the UK Parliamentary election on 7 May 2015. In addition the annual canvass will commence on 15 July 2015 with a new electoral register to be published on 1 December 2015.

The Board sought clarification on the impact of the referendum on staff workload and on the service. The Assessor and ERO stated that the workload was unprecedented and that the commitment of all staff in working long hours had been to the service meeting huge public demand. At one point 1000 calls were received in a single day and 700 emails were regularly received daily. The Board asked that's it thanks and appreciation were expressed to all staff involved.

It was anticipated that postal budget for 2014/15 would be overspent as a direct consequence of IER. The Board sought confirmation that the budget would be balanced at year end. In response the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer indicated that overall the revenue budget would be underspent but within that the postal budget would be significantly overspent.

Decision

The Board noted the report.

VJB36. DRAFT REVENUE BUDGET 2015/16

The Board considered a report by the Treasurer and the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer presenting the draft revenue budget for 2015/16.

The Boards 2015/16 revenue budget was set out, together with the net requisitions for each of the constituent authorities. It was proposed that the gap between the proposed budget of £2,744,350 and the funding assumption of £2,547,940 is met from reserves. Additionally it was proposed that £277,000 was utilised from reserves to refund the constituent authorities. It was projected that reserves would be £359,000 at year end when the refund and earmarked funds are accounted for. The minimum level of reserves required is £82,330 (3% expenditure).

The report set out the drivers for the increased budget, in particular the introduction of Individual Electoral Registration; the reserves position and the requisition for each authority should the budget be approved.

The Board highlighted the budget pressures facing the constituent authorities and the actions being taken by each authority to reduce expenditure. Members questioned the proposed, increased, budget.

The assistant to the Treasurer confirmed that, while it was proposed that the gap is met from reserves in 2015/16, it was anticipated that funding would be received from the Cabinet Office to mitigate against the costs of IER. However the extent of the funding was not yet known.

Members questioned the level of reserves held by the Board and why it was necessary to hold such levels, which were in the order of 5 times the minimum level required. The Assessor set out the reasons for this and confirmed that, while it was prudent to carry a larger level of reserves than the minimum, particularly in light of the expected budget pressures in 2016/17 and 2017/18 he anticipated the level reducing. The position would be better known after the impact of IER.

Decision

The Board agreed:-

- (1) the Valuation Joint Board's Revenue Budget for 2015/2016 of £2,744,350, as detailed in appendix A of the report;**
- (2) the refund of 50% of general reserves in excess of the minimum level required, and**
- (3) to requisition the constituent authorities for their share of the net expenditure as outlined in table 5 of the report.**