

Minute of Meeting of the Central Scotland Valuation Joint Board held within Hillside House, Stirling on Friday 16 November 2018 at 9.30 a.m.

Councillors: David Alexander
David Balfour (Convener)
Lorna Binnie
Douglas Dodds
Kenneth Earle
David Grant
Bill Mason
Alan Nimmo
Jim Thomson

Officers: Elizabeth Hutcheon, Assistant to the Treasurer
Brian Pirie, Assistant to the Clerk
Peter Wildman, Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer

VJB25. Apologies

Apologies were intimated on behalf of Councillors Coombes, Gibson and Patrick.

VJB26. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations.

VJB27. Minute

The minute of the meeting held on 28 September 2018 was approved.

VJB28. Revenue Budget 2018/19 – Review as at 30 September 2018

The Board considered a report by the Treasurer presenting the Revenue Budget position as at 30 September 2018.

The projected outturn at 31 March 2019 was £71k below budget. The underspend was, in the main, due to a projected underspend of £81k in employee costs. An overspend of £10k in supplies and services was also projected.

Decision

The Board noted the report.

VJB29. Sharing of Software

The Board considered a report by the Assessor setting out a proposal to share in-house developed software with two other Valuation Boards. The arrangement would allow joint development in future and could result in a budget saving of £33-50k in staff costs. The Assessor had taken legal advice from the Board's external advisors and it had been confirmed that the Board could share costs but could not profit from any such arrangement. Mr Wildman set out the benefits to the Board in the proposal, together with potential risks. At this stage he sought authority to investigate further.

In response to a question the Assessor stated that if agreed it was likely that the number of programmers would increase from 2 to 3. However the costs would be shared between the 3 Boards. Mr Wildman confirmed that the intention was not to host data on behalf of the other, Boards. The arrangement would be restricted to sharing and developing software and the license for any software would be held by Central Scotland Valuation Joint Board. He confirmed that any deal would include governance protocols and as such could be bureaucratic but nonetheless worthwhile.

The Board discussed the proposal in detail and indicated agreement, in principle subject to further information on the outcome of discussion coming forward. Members suggested that similar arrangements should be encouraged to the Scottish government.

Decision

The Board agreed:-

- (1) in principal to the proposal and authorised the Assessor to investigate the feasibility of sharing software with other Joint Boards, and**
- (2) that a further report be submitted to the Board on this matter once investigations were completed.**

Councillor McDonald joined the meeting during consideration of the previous item.

VJB30. Information Technology Strategy

The Board considered a report by the Assessor presenting a revised Information Technology Strategy for approval.

The Boards current Information Technology Strategy had been approved in June 2013 (ref VJB17. A revised strategy which had been developed in consultation with the Management and Information Technology Teams, and would be in place, for four years, to 2022.

Decision

The Board approved the contents of the updated Information Technology Strategy.

VJB31. Update report on IT Audit

The Board considered an update report by the Assessor on progress made to implement recommendations arising from an internal audit of IT security measures.

The outturn of an internal audit review of IT security measures had been reported to the Board in June 2018 (ref VBJ15). An update showing the progress made in implementing the 11 recommendations which had been identified by the audit was presented. Of the 11, 4 had been completed with work underway on the remainder.

In regard to a recommendation that timescales for the review, testing and deployment of security 'patches' should be reduced, the Assessor confirmed that there had been no issues resulting from 'patches' and there was a roll back position should an issue arise.

The Assessor confirmed, following a question, that email data was outsourced. This allowed flexibility and mobility should there be an issue at Hillside House. The systems had been tested recently and had worked well. A 'live run' was also planned.

Decision

The Board noted the report.

VJB32. Acceptable Use Policy Report

The Board considered a report by the Assessor presenting a revised Acceptable Use Policy for approval.

The Board's current Acceptable Use Policy had been approved in June 2005 (VJB7 refers). It had been reviewed in 2014 and 2017 and updated again in 2018.

Following discussion the Board agreed that the policy should be reviewed annually and submitted to the Board for approval.

In response to questions the Assessor confirmed that the current IT system did not support homeworking for staff. Accessing of emails from unsecured devices was not permitted due to potential scrutiny risks. He confirmed that there had been no instances of the policy being transgressed.

Decision

The Board:-

- (1) approved the Acceptable Use Policy, and**
- (2) agreed that the policy be reviewed annually and submitted to the Board for approval.**

VJB33. Valuation Team Appeals Report

The Board considered a report by the Assistant Assessor presenting a Valuation Team Appeals update.

The report set out information on progress made in regard to:-

- 2017 Revaluation Appeal (to October 2018)
- 2019 Running Roll Appeals
- Appeals lodged against 2005 and 2010 valuation rolls
- Council Tax proposals and appeals

As at 26 October 2018, 36% (1649) of the 2017 Revaluation Appeals which had been received had been disposed of. The deadline for disposing of all appeals was 31 December 2020.

In regard to appeals outstanding against entries in 2005 and 2010 Valuation Rolls the Assessor explained that the majority of these were appeals that had been referred to the Lands Tribunal for Scotland. Any successful appeals could be backdated to 1 April 2005 or 2010 according to when the appeal had been lodged.

Decision

The Board:-

- (1) noted the significant appeal workload arising from the 2017 revaluation;**
- (2) noted the progress in disposal of appeals relating to the 2005 and 2010 revaluations, and**
- (3) noted progress in disposal of Council Tax Appeals.**

VJB34. Interim Valuation Performance Report

The Board considered a report by the Assistant Assessor presenting service performance information for the period 1 April 2018 to 30 September 2018.

The service performance indicators for Valuation Roll work and for Valuation List work were set out.

In regard to Valuation Roll work, which measures the period taken to change the Valuation Roll, 580 changes had been made during the period - of these 89% were amended within 3 months, 99% within 6 months and 1% took longer – against targets of 75%, 90% and 10% respectively.

In regard to the Valuation List work, the time taken to add houses to the Valuation List, 644 new entries were registered in the period, with 97% added within 3 months, 99% added within 6 months and 1% took longer – as against targets of 97%; 99% and 1% respectively.

It was noted that at this stage in the financial year all targets are being met or exceeded.

Decision

The Board noted the continuing commitment to Best Value.

VJB35. Equality Outcomes and Mainstreaming Report

The Board considered a report by the Assistant Assessor presenting the Board's Mainstreaming Report Together with its Equality Outcomes.

The Equality Act 2010 placed both general and specific duties on the Board. The general duties were to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010.
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The specific duties required the Board to prepare and publish a Mainstreaming Report by 30 April 2013 and every 2 years thereafter. The 2019 report was presented for approval and publication. The Board was also required to prepare and publish equality outcomes by 30 April 2013 and every 4 years thereafter. The 2019 outcomes were presented for approval and publication.

Decision

The Board approved the revised Equality Outcomes and Mainstreaming Report.