

DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL AND BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD

At a Meeting of the Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute Valuation Joint Board held in Committee Room 2, Council Offices, Garshake Road, Dumbarton at 11.00 a.m. on Friday, 14 December 2001.

Present: Councillor Robin Currie, Argyll & Bute Council; Councillor Keith Moody, East Dunbartonshire Council; and Councillors Craig McLaughlin and Connie O'Sullivan, West Dunbartonshire Council.

Attending: David Rooney (for the Clerk to the Board); Duncan Wilson, Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer; William Mathieson, Depute Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer; Brian Byrne, Depute Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer; June Nelson, Principal Administrative Officer; Eric Walker, Treasurer; David Connell, Manager of Accounting; Dan Henderson, Director of Economic, Planning & Environmental Services; Allan Donaldson, Surveyor; Gerry McInerney, Head of Personnel; Peter Rudzinski, Section Head - Client, Information Services; and Don Findlay, Manager of Building Services.

Apologies: Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Councillors Alastair Blair and John Stirling, Argyll & Bute Council; Provost Robin McSkimming and Councillors Rhondda Geekie and Alan Brown, East Dunbartonshire Council; and Councillors Daniel McCafferty, Mary Campbell and Ian McDonald, West Dunbartonshire Council.

Councillor Keith Moody in the Chair

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of Meeting of the Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute Valuation Joint Board held on 30 March, 2001 were submitted and approved.

MEMBERSHIP OF VALUATION JOINT BOARD

A report was submitted by the Clerk to the Valuation Joint Board providing an update on the current position with respect to the membership of the Valuation Joint Board.

With regard to the list of Members on the Property Sub-Committee which was appended to the report, it was noted that Councillor John Stirling should have been listed rather than Councillor Ronnie Kinloch as the representative of Argyll & Bute Council. It was agreed that the position with respect to the amended membership of the Valuation Joint Board, the Appeals Sub-Committee and the Property Sub-Committee otherwise be noted.

In relation to a point which was raised by Mr. Wilson concerning problems which had been encountered prior to the meeting with respect to the circulation of a report which had not been available for issue with the agenda, it was agreed that steps would be taken to obtain fax numbers and e-mail addresses for all Members of the Valuation Joint Board with a view to alleviating such difficulties in the future.

FINANCE

(a) Annual Report and Final Accounts for Year Ending 31 March, 2001

A report was submitted by the Treasurer advising the Joint Board of the detailed Annual Report and Final Accounts for the year ending 31 March 2001 which had now been audited.

Following discussion it was agreed:-

- (i) to note that following the review of the accounts, the Auditors had issued a “clean” audit certificate and, arising therefrom, had prepared their “Final Report to Members 2000/2001”, a copy of which was appended to the report for information;
- (ii) to note the terms of the Assessor’s Report for the year ended 31 March, 2001; and
- (iii) to record the appreciation of the Members of the Joint Board in relation to the work which had been undertaken by the staff of the Assessor and the Treasurer.

(b) Revenue Estimates 2002/03

A report was submitted by the Treasurer regarding the draft Revenue Estimates for 2002/03.

After hearing the Treasurer, who apologised for the late circulation of the report, it was noted that copies had been faxed to the Heads of Finance of the constituent Authorities on Wednesday, 12 December and no comments had been received thereon.

It was agreed:-

- (i) that the draft Revenue Estimates for 2002/03 be approved; and
- (ii) that the requisition on the constituent Councils be based on each Council’s relevant GAE figures as before.

(c) Capital Estimates 2002/03

A report was submitted by the Treasurer concerning the draft Capital Estimates for 2002/03.

It was agreed:-

- (i) that the 2002/03 Capital Plan of £36,366 be approved;
- (ii) that the slippage identified within the Capital Programme be allocated to the 2002/03 Capital Plan; and
- (iii) that, as before, the requisition on the constituent Councils be based on each Council's relevant GAE figures.

(d) Appointment of External Auditor

A report was submitted by the Treasurer regarding the outcome of an audit tender exercise conducted by the Accounts Commission for Scotland in respect of the financial years 2001/02 to 2005/06.

It was agreed to note that Audit Scotland had been appointed to carry out the audit of the Valuation Joint Board with effect from the financial year commencing 1 April, 2001.

PROPERTY

(a) Insurance Portfolio

A report was submitted by the Clerk to the Valuation Joint Board providing an update on the arrangements that are in place in respect of Group Life, Property, Combined Liability, Computer and Personal Accident insurances for the Joint Board.

It was agreed to note and approve the arrangements which had been made with regard to Property, Combined Liability, Computer and Personal Accident/Travel insurances and Death in Service cover.

(b) 235 Dumbarton Road, Clydebank - Occupation of part of premises by Greater Glasgow Primary Care NHS Trust

A report was submitted by the Director of Economic, Planning and Environmental Services, West Dunbartonshire Council, on the current position regarding the occupation of part of 235 Dumbarton Road, Clydebank by Greater Glasgow Primary Care NHS Trust.

It was agreed to note:-

- (i) that terms for the continued occupation of part of the premises at 235 Dumbarton Road, Clydebank by the Trust had been agreed, the principal terms being a ten year period with a rent review and break option at the fifth anniversary and an annual rental of £3000 excluding rates and a proportion of applicable service charges; and
- (ii) that it was now anticipated that the lease would be expeditiously concluded by the Legal Services Section of West Dunbartonshire Council on the above basis.

(c) 235 Dumbarton Road, Clydebank - Heating System

A report was submitted by the Director of Commercial and Technical Services, West Dunbartonshire Council, outlining the estimated costs for phase two of the heating system improvements at 235 Dumbarton Road, Clydebank and advising that a third phase may be necessary following evaluation of windows and wall insulation.

After discussion it was agreed:-

- (i) to approve the implementation of phase two of the heating improvements at an estimated cost of £21,350; and
- (ii) to note that a third phase may be necessary following evaluation of windows and wall insulation.

In relation to a general point which was raised by Councillor McLaughlin concerning various styles being used for reports to the Joint Board by different Departments/Sections, it was noted that Mr. Wilson would discuss the matter of standardising the format of reports with Councillor McLaughlin.

INFORMATION SERVICES

(a) Computer and other systems used by Valuation Joint Board staff

A report was submitted by the Head of Information Services, West Dunbartonshire Council providing an update on the computer and other systems currently used by the Valuation Joint Board.

After hearing Mr. Rudzinski it was agreed to note:-

- (i) that the target date for completion of the project to commission a new consolidated computer server had slipped by a further two weeks to January 2002; and
- (ii) that the amended Electoral Registration System had been successfully operating since February, 2001.

The Chairman clarified the Joint Board's expectation in relation to the services being provided by West Dunbartonshire Council, emphasising the need for an efficient service. Mr. Walker indicated that the Assessor's requirements resulted in competing

demands on the services provided to the Valuation Joint Board by Information Services within the funding resources made available by the Board. He advised that, if the Board was in a position to increase its resourcing, then additional services could be provided in consultation with the Assessor. Councillor McLaughlin asked to be kept apprised of developments to enable him to monitor the service provision on behalf of the Joint Board.

(b) Computer Systems

A report was submitted by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer advising on the current position with regard to various matters as undernoted:-

- (1) Policy regarding the purchase of replacement PCs
- (2) Local Area Network Infrastructure - Progress
- (3) Network Links - Progress
- (4) I. T. Security
- (5) I. S. Resources

With regard to (4) above, it was noted that arrangements were being made to adapt a recently introduced West Dunbartonshire Council Policy on ICT Access Security for application to Valuation Joint Board staff and equipment and it was agreed that a report on this matter would be submitted to a future meeting of the Property Sub-Committee for approval prior to implementation.

It was otherwise agreed to note the position concerning the various matters and that further progress would be notified to a future meeting.

PERSONNEL

(a) Single Status Update

A report was submitted by the Head of Personnel, West Dunbartonshire Council, informing of developments with regard to the Single Status Agreement.

It was noted:-

- (i) that as a result of unforeseen problems in the development of the Scottish Councils' Job Evaluation Scheme, the whole Job Evaluation process had been significantly delayed;
- (ii) that it had been proposed that the date for completion of the Job Evaluation exercise may now be extended until April, 2004 for those Councils which would not be in a position to meet the previous target date of April, 2002; and

- (iii) that West Dunbartonshire Council would not complete the exercise for the staff of the Valuation Joint Board by April, 2002 and national guidance was awaited on the consequences for employees with outstanding grievances regarding their grades.

After hearing Mr. McInerney it was further noted that as many members of staff had long outstanding grievances regarding gradings, consideration was being given to the possible introduction of interim arrangements to deal with grading disputes at a local level pending completion of the Job Evaluation exercise.

Mr. Mathieson's involvement in ongoing developments on behalf of the Joint Board was noted.

It was agreed that the contents of the report otherwise be noted.

(b) Staffing Changes

A report was submitted by the Head of Personnel, West Dunbartonshire Council, on a proposed change to the existing staffing structure within the Assessor's Department.

It was agreed to approve the proposed change to the staffing structure as detailed in the report, it having been noted that the proposal was in line with West Dunbartonshire Council's principles on broad banding and that the associated financial implications would be contained within the approved revenue budget.

BEST VALUE

A report was submitted by the Depute Assessor providing an update on progress being made with the Best Value commitment contained in the Service Review Schedule and Implementation Plan of the Joint Board's submission of October, 1999 to the Scottish Executive in terms of SODD circular 11/1999.

In the course of consideration of the report, discussion focussed mainly on the matter of the Performance Report for 2000 - 2001 (incorporating Key Performance Indicators and detailing actual performance) which formed Appendix 1 to the report. Mr. Wilson referred to the Scottish Executive's approval of Assessors' co-operation and performance in relation to Key Performance Indicators and the general requirements of Best Value.

Whilst it was welcomed that the specified performance targets for the year had generally been met, concern was expressed regarding the number of cases where it had taken over 6 months from the date of occupation of a property before the relevant addition was made to the Council Tax List.

It was agreed:-

- (i) to note that the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer would endeavour to ensure that problems were resolved and notices were issued to occupiers of properties as expeditiously as possible;

- (ii) that the Chairman would be provided with details with respect to the 3% of properties where it had taken over 6 months for a banding to be issued in order that the length of time ultimately taken to issue bandings may be monitored;
- (iii) that in relation to a point which was raised by Councillor Currie concerning disparities between gradings of properties particularly where former local authority houses had been purchased, an explanatory report would be prepared for submission to the next meeting of the Joint Board; and
- (iv) to otherwise note the contents of the report and that further progress will be reported in due course.

ELECTORAL REGISTRATION

A report was submitted by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer concerning Electoral Registration matters, including the operation of the new system of rolling Electoral Registration and Return statistics in relation to the 2001 Electoral Canvass.

After hearing Mr. Wilson it was agreed to note:-

- (i) that Rolling Registration in accordance with present regulations was now in operation and the staff and computer systems were coping with the new procedures;
- (ii) that it was proposed that a random customer satisfaction survey would be carried out with regard to the design of the "A" form which is used for obtaining information on individuals who are eligible to be included in the electoral roll and efforts would be made to take account of any positive suggestions for improvements which may be received;
- (iii) that work was continuing to introduce changes to reflect further regulations in respect of the future register of electors and the impact on future electoral canvasses; and
- (iv) that the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer will report on the effect of new legislation on working procedures at future meetings of the Joint Board.

After hearing Councillor Moody it was also agreed to note that the Board Members wished to be associated with the comments made by Mr. Wilson in his report concerning the diligence and commitment of his staff, which had contributed to the achievement of a satisfactory level of return in respect of the 2001 Canvass, bearing in mind that it had been carried out using fully postal methods for the first time.

REVALUATION 2000 – PROGRESS

A report was submitted by the Depute Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer advising on ongoing progress with the disposal of appeals arising from the non-domestic Revaluation 2000.

It was agreed that the progress made to date be noted.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was agreed to defer fixing a date for the next meeting at the present time. It was noted, however, that the next meeting would potentially be held in June, 2002, and, if so, arrangements may be made to convene the meeting at a suitable venue within the Argyll and Bute Council area.