

DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD

At a Meeting of the Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute Valuation Joint Board held in the Holyrood Suite, Queen's Hall, Argyll Street, Dunoon on Friday, 10 June 2005 at 11.30 a.m.

Present: Councillors Daniel Kelly, Sidney MacDougall, Donald MacMillan and Donald McIntosh, Argyll and Bute Council; Councillors Anne Jarvis, Margaret McNaughton and Vaughan Moody, East Dunbartonshire Council; and Councillors Geoff Calvert and Jackie Maceira, West Dunbartonshire Council.

Attending: David Thomson, Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer; William Mathieson, Depute Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer; June Nelson, Principal Administrative Officer; David Connell, Treasurer; and David Rooney, Senior Administrative Officer (for the Clerk to the Board).

Apologies: Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Councillor Robin Currie, Argyll and Bute Council; Provost Pat Steel and Councillors Rhondda Geekie and Alex Hannah, East Dunbartonshire Council; Councillors Gail Casey and Marie McNair, West Dunbartonshire Council; and Tricia O'Neill, Head of Personnel, West Dunbartonshire Council.

Councillor Donald MacMillan in the Chair

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of Meeting of the Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute Valuation Joint Board held on 10 December 2004 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

INSURANCE PORTFOLIO

A report was submitted by the Clerk to the Valuation Joint Board providing an update on the arrangements regarding the group life, property, combined liability, computer, personal accident and business travel insurances for the Valuation Joint Board.

Having heard the Senior Administrative Officer, the Joint Board agreed:-

- (1) to approve the arrangements which have been made with regard to the Death in Service Cover;

- (2) to delegate authority to the Clerk to the Valuation Joint Board to continue to negotiate renewal of the Insurance Contracts which are the subject of a Long Term Agreement and, if appropriate, agree an extension; and
- (3) to delegate authority to the Clerk to the Valuation Joint Board to re-tender particular Insurance Contracts where this is considered to be in the best interests of the Valuation Joint Board, thus securing cover which represents and maintains best value for the Board.

POST OF DEPUTE ASSESSOR & ELECTORAL REGISTRATION OFFICER – ADVERTISING AND RECRUITMENT ARRANGEMENTS

A report was submitted by the Head of Personnel asking the Joint Board to approve advertising and recruitment arrangements for the post of Depute Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer and to approve future recruitment arrangements for senior posts within the Valuation Joint Board.

The Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer advised that Mr. Brian Byrne, the Depute Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer based in the Board's Cambeltown office, had recently left to take up the position of Assessor and E.R.O. with the Central Scotland Valuation Joint Board.

Copies of a job description and the text for the proposed advert for the post were circulated at the meeting.

Following discussion it was agreed:-

- (1) to approve the proposed advertising and recruitment arrangements for the vacancy in respect of the post of Depute Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer;
- (2) that a Recruitment Panel of the Valuation Joint Board be established to consider applications and make appointments in relation to all vacancies for posts at Assessor and Depute Assessor level;
- (3) that the membership of the Recruitment Panel would comprise of 5 members (Convener, Depute Convener and 1 Member from each constituent authority); and
- (4) that the nominations of Panel members from the three constituent authorities would be intimated to the Clerk to the Valuation Joint Board prior to any future meeting of the Recruitment Panel and that substitutes would be permissible.

PROPERTY AT 235 DUMBARTON ROAD, CLYDEBANK – DEFECTIVE ROOF AREAS

A report was submitted by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer providing an update in relation to the roof renewal work included in the 2005/06 Capital Plan and advising of the interest of property developers in the site at 235 Dumbarton Road, Clydebank.

Having heard the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer and following discussion the Joint Board agreed:-

- (1) to note the interest of property developers in the site at 235 Dumbarton Road, Clydebank;
- (2) to authorise the Assessor and E.R.O. to continue his investigations into the viability of the developer's proposals;
- (3) to approve the 'hold' on Capital works pending the outcome of these investigations; and
- (4) that, if necessary, a special meeting of the Joint Board could be convened to consider any specific proposal which may arise from discussions with the developer.

PAYMENT OF VALUATION APPEALS PANEL SECRETARIES' EXPENSES

A report was submitted by the Treasurer concerning a proposed schedule of Fees and Allowances payable to the Secretaries of the Valuation Appeals Panel with effect from 1 July 2005.

After hearing the Treasurer, the Joint Board agreed to approve the reimbursement of Assistant Secretaries' Fees and Expenses in accordance with the notes detailed in the Appendix to the report.

2004/05 EXTERNAL AUDIT OF DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD AND PROPOSED SERVICE PLAN

A report was submitted by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer:-

- (a) providing an update in relation to the findings of Audit Scotland's 2004/05 Follow Up Audit of the Joint Board's Financial Systems and Overview of its Best Value arrangements;
- (b) advising of the findings of Audit Scotland in relation to the above and seeking approval of the agreed action plan; and
- (c) seeking approval of a proposed Service Plan and Risk Register.

The Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer made particular reference to the importance of the Scrutiny Role of the Elected Members in the context of the Overview of Best Value Arrangements, and provided an update on progress in relation to the matters listed in the “Issues for Further Action” Section of the report.

After discussion, the Joint Board agreed:-

- (1) to note the progress made in respect of implementing the further action identified in the Follow-up Audit of Financial Systems;
- (2) to approve the Action Plan agreed in respect of the 2004/2005 audit of transaction controls and corporate governance and contained in Section 3 of the report;
- (3) to approve the Service Plan and Service Calendar, subject to the reference in the Service Plan under Part One – Service Function, final paragraph of Section 1.1 - Valuation Roll, to “East Dunbartonshire” being amended to read “West Dunbartonshire”;
- (4) to approve the Risk Register and Priority Action Plan;
- (5) to note the Areas of Strength identified in the Overview of Best Value Arrangements report;
- (6) to note the Areas for Improvement in the Overview of Best Value Arrangements report; and
- (7) to note the scrutiny role of members under the Best Value regime as identified in paragraphs 13-15 of the Overview of Best Value Arrangements report.

BEST VALUE AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND PLANNING – UPDATE

A report was submitted by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer providing an update on progress in relation to Best Value; reporting on Key Performance Indicators for the year 2004/05; and advising of the current position with Performance Management and Planning (PMP).

After hearing the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer, the Joint Board agreed:-

- (1) to note the improvement in performance in relation to the KPIs for 2004/05 and to commend the officers and staff for the improvements achieved;
- (2) to note the actions taken in relation to the PMP self-assessment and the areas of strength reported in the Audit Scotland Review of Best Value Arrangements; and
- (3) to approve the proposals for further action including those in compliance with the Review of Best Value Arrangements.

In relation to a point which was raised by Councillor Calvert, concerning possible assistance which could be provided by the constituent authorities, it was noted that the Planning and Building Control Section of West Dunbartonshire Council could possibly assist with the provision of relevant information. It was further noted that whilst Mr. Mathieson would contact the relevant Council officers in order to make progress, Councillor Calvert would also pursue the matter with the appropriate officials.

RISK MANAGEMENT

A report was submitted by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer providing an update in relation to the requirement to introduce a risk management strategy and procedures.

After hearing the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer and following discussion the Joint Board agreed:-

- (1) to note that a strategy and procedures had now been implemented in compliance with the audit requirement;
- (2) to approve the Risk Register and Priority Action Plan; and
- (3) to note that a Disaster Recovery Plan would be submitted to the next meeting of the Joint Board.

ELECTORAL REGISTRATION

A report was submitted by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer providing an update on the current position in relation to Electoral Registration.

After hearing the Principal Administrative Officer in answer to Members' questions, and the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer, the Joint Board agreed:-

- (1) to note the content of the report;
- (2) to note that a copy of the joint response from the Electoral Registration Committee of the Scottish Assessors' Association and the Scottish Branch of the Association of Electoral Administrators to a consultation from the Arbutnott Commission on Boundary Differences and Voting Systems, referred to in Section 7 of the report, would be made available to all Members;
- (3) to note that the possibility of joint working with other Boards would be kept under review by officers and utilised where appropriate; and
- (4) to note that discussions had taken place with officers of the Lanarkshire Valuation Joint Board regarding the intended purchase of electoral registration software, as referred to in Section 6 of the report, and that the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer may request that a special meeting of the Board be convened, or otherwise seek the views of Members prior to the next meeting, in order to progress this matter.

MODERNISING GOVERNMENT FUND (MGF)

A report was submitted by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer providing an update on progress in relation to the Scottish Assessors' Association MGF(2) and MGF(3) Assessors' Portal Projects.

After hearing the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer, who advised that the Scottish Executive had absorbed the MGF programme into its "Customer First" initiative, the Joint Board agreed to note the content of the report.

In response to a request for an explanation of the term 'CAG', Mr. Thomson provided a brief outline of the 'Corporate Address Gazetteer', and it was noted that this is a project aimed at allocating a unique property reference number which will be used by all local authority bodies.

REVALUATION 2005 – PROGRESS

A report was submitted by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer providing an update on the successful completion of the 2005 Non-Domestic Rating Revaluation.

After hearing the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer, the Joint Board agreed:-

- (1) to note the progress in relation to the 2005 Revaluation;
- (2) to note that a small number of appeals had been received to date but interested parties had until 30 September 2005 to submit appeals against proposed values;
- (3) to note that the Non-Domestic Rating (Valuation of Utilities) (Scotland) Order 2005 had been passed, formally designating the Assessor for Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute as the Assessor responsible for the valuation of Transco Plc's Scotland-wide gas utility networks; and
- (4) to record the appreciation of the Assessor and E.R.O., the Senior Managers and the Members of the Board for the efforts of all members of staff in the successful completion of the Revaluation

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

A report was submitted by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer providing an update of the current position on the implementation of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002.

After hearing the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer, the Joint Board agreed:-

- (1) to note that appropriate training of staff had been carried out;

- (2) to note the volume of Freedom of Information requests that had been received and the effect on resources; and
- (3) to approve revised Publication Schemes, incorporating minor amendments, for both the Valuation Joint Board and the Assessor, copies of which were appended to the report.

RACE EQUALITY SCHEME

A report was submitted by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer seeking approval for a revised Valuation Joint Board Race Equality Scheme.

After hearing the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer, the Joint Board agreed to approve the revised Race Equality Scheme, appended to the report, which had been amended to provide a policy which:-

- recognises that the Valuation Joint Board is a separate entity
- extends its obligations to the whole geographical area covered by the Board
- refers more specifically to the mission and vision of the Board and the functions and services carried out on its behalf
- provides an Action Plan more tailored to the Board's duties and obligations.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING AND PROPOSED DATES FOR MEETING OF RECRUITMENT PANEL

It was agreed that the next meeting of the Valuation Joint Board would be held on Friday, 9 December 2005 in Dumbarton.

After hearing the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer it was noted that proposed dates for meetings of the Recruitment Panel to consider applications for the post of Depute Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer had been identified as follows:-

Friday 15 July 2005 – Meeting to shortleat applications – Clydebank Offices

Friday 22 July 2005 – Interviews - Lochgilphead

The meeting closed at 12.38 p.m.