

## AYRSHIRE VALUATION JOINT BOARD

Minutes of meeting held on Tuesday, 1st September 2015 at 10.30 a.m. within  
Cunninghame House, Irvine.

### Item 1 - Sederunt.

#### **Present:**

East Ayrshire Councillors: George Mair and William Menzies.  
North Ayrshire Councillors: Matthew Brown (Chair), John Easdale, John Ferguson,  
Catherine McMillan and Donald Reid.  
South Ayrshire Councillors: John Hampton, Rita Miller and Alec Oattes.

In Attendance: Helen McPhee, Assessor and ERO; John McConville, Head of Valuation  
Services and Assistant ERO; Harry McCormick, Principal Administrative  
and IT Development Officer; Tom Simpson, Corporate Accounting  
Manager, South Ayrshire Council; Wynne Carlaw (for Clerk) South  
Ayrshire Council; Gwyneth McKinaly, Finance North Ayrshire Council; and  
Alison Nelson, Co-ordinator (Democratic Support), South Ayrshire  
Council; Alan McKenzie, Audit Scotland, David Richardson, Audit Scotland

**Apologies:** Councillor John McFadzean, East Ayrshire Council;  
Councillor Jim Roberts, East Ayrshire Council;  
Councillor Andy Campbell, South Ayrshire Council; and  
Councillor Robin Reid, South Ayrshire Council.

### Variation in Order of Business

The Board agreed to vary the order of business as hereinafter minuted.

### Declarations of Interest.

There were no declarations of interest by Members in terms of the Councillors' Code of  
Conduct.

### Item 2 - Minutes of Previous Meeting.

The Minutes of meeting of the AVJB held on 19th May 2015 were submitted and approved as a  
correct record.

### Item 3 – Matters Arising.

With regard to item 8 of the Minutes entitled "Electoral Registration", the Assessor advised that  
the telephone system had now been updated at no financial cost to the board and thoroughly  
tested following the election when Elected Members and Polling Station staff had been unable  
to contact Electoral Registration staff.

**Item 4 – Ayrshire Valuation Joint Board – Report to Those Charged with Governance on the 2014/15 Audit.**

There was submitted (circulated) a report dated 1 September 2015 by the Treasurer presenting the Annual Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2015, together with the proposed independent auditor's report and requesting that the Auditor communicate the matters raised during the audit to the Board.

**Decided:**

- (1) to approve the Annual Accounts;
- (2) to authorise the Chair, Assessor and Treasurer to sign and issue the Annual Accounts by 30th September 2015; and
- (3) to note that the accumulated General Fund surplus of £361,420 will be utilised to fund expenditure in future years, as previously approved by the Board.

**Item 4A – Audit Scotland Annual Report on 2014/15**

There was submitted (circulated) a report dated 1 September 2015 by the Treasurer on the Audit Scotland Annual Report on the 2014/15 audit for consideration by members of the Board.

**Decided:**

- (1) to accept the contents of Audit Scotland's Annual Report.

**Item 5 – Revenue Budget Monitoring Report 2015/16 – Position Statement at 31 July 2015.**

There was submitted (circulated) a report of 1 September 2015 by the Treasurer advising the Board of the income and expenditure for the period ended 31 July 2015 (monitoring period 4) as compared with the approved revenue budget.

**Decided:**

- (1) to approve the virement request at paragraph 4.3 and;
- (2) to otherwise approve the content of the report.

**Item 6 – Valuation and Performance.**

There was submitted (circulated) a report of 1 September 2015 by the Head of Valuation Services and Assistant ERO advising on progress achieved in Valuation and Council Tax issues and to provide an update to the ongoing reporting of performance up to 31 July 2015 in relation to the following:

- (1) Non-Domestic Subjects
  - Appeals Referred to the Lands Tribunal for Scotland
  - Outstanding Appeals Not Referred to the Lands Tribunal for Scotland
  - Revaluation 2017
- (2) Council Tax;
- (3) VAC Hearing Dates;
- (4) Performance
  - Performance in Council Tax from 1 April to 31 July 2015

The Head of Valuation Services and Assistant ERO expressed disappointment that the appeal on the Paper Mill, Irvine had failed to reach an amicable settlement with the case now destined to be heard by the Lands Tribunal for Scotland in late October.

That performance levels in both Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rating for the period 1 April 2015 to 31 July 2015 were well ahead of target. However, whilst every effort would be made to maintain these levels it is nevertheless very likely that some slippage will be experienced as more resources are diverted to allow progress to be made in delivering revaluation 2017.

It was noted that the appeals relating to Seamill and the Carrick Public Houses had been resolved.

**Decided:** to note the contents of the report.

### **Item 7 – Business Continuity**

There was submitted (circulated) a report dated 1 September 2015 by Head of Valuation Services and Assistant ERO advising the Board of recent updates to the Board's Business Continuity procedures.

It was acknowledged that the Business Continuity Plan would be continually reviewed and updated in order to identify the critical services within the Board and the procedures in place to ensure that these services can continue to operate in the event of disruption.

In terms of 3.4 of the Business Continuity Strategy, Councillor Reid intimated that disruption would be caused if the AVJB required to relocate.

**Decided:**

- (1) Under 3.4 – Developing and Implementing BCM Plans 'loss of premises' amend the plan to read 'loss or relocation of premises' and;
- (2) otherwise note the contents of the report.

### **Item 8 – Electoral Registration**

There was submitted (circulated) a report dated 1 September 2015 by the Principal Administration and IT Development Officer entitled Electoral Registration updating the Board on the current position with regard to the Board's functions concerning electoral registration in

relation to the following areas:-

- (1) Individual Electoral Registration (IER)
- (2) Rolling Registration
- (3) Annual Canvass
- (4) By Elections
- (5) Voter Engagement and;
- (6) Electoral Management System

Questions were raised by Members of the Board in relation to the identification of 16/17 year olds who would be entitled to vote at the Scottish Parliamentary Elections taking place in May 2016 and the use of the Registration APP. The ERO confirmed that the process to identify 16/17 year old voters had commenced and advised that the Electoral Commission were issuing packs to all schools relating to registration. Due to the fact that the majority of youngsters were very skilled on the use of IT appliances, she advised that she would discuss promoting the APP in schools with the Chief Executives

**Decided:** to note the contents of the report.

### **Item 9 - Staffing**

There was submitted (circulated) a report dated 1 September 2015 by the Head of Valuation Services and Assistant ERO to advise members of current staffing issues. The report advised on;

- (1) Appointments
- (2) Staffing Structures
- (3) Staff Workloads
- (4) Absence and;
- (5) Christmas Office Closure

The ERO also advised that one Modern Apprentice would be starting in the office shortly. Members enquired as to why only one Modern Apprentice was being allocated when two were requested. The ERO advised that it was primarily due to the numbers actually applying for Modern Apprenticeship places within the South Ayrshire Council. She also intimated that she would be happy to consider employing Modern Apprentices from both North and East Ayrshire Councils, if feasible, and agreed to pursue this and report back to the next meeting.

The ERO advised that she had also been approached by South Ayrshire Council and agreed to facilitate a student on work placement from now until Easter.

Members expressed their appreciation at the improvement in absence figures.

**Decided:**

- (1) approve the closure of the office in the period between Christmas and New Year subject to staff using their annual leave and/or flexi and;
- (2) approve the contents of the Report.

**Item 10 – Risk Registers**

There was submitted (circulated) a report dated 1 September 2015 by the Head of Valuation Services and Assistant ERO and the Principal Administration and IT Development Officer to update members on the progress of the Board's existing Risk Registers, namely;

- (1) the AVJB Risk Register.
- (2) the IER Risk Register.

**Decided:**

- (1) approve the updated AVJB Risk Register and the IER Risk Register and;
- (2) note the content of the Report.

**Item 11 – Modernisation and Transformation Programme**

There was submitted (circulated) a report dated 1 September 2015 by the Assessor and the Electoral Registration Officer to update Members on the next phase of the re-structuring of the organisation.

The ERO intimated that the Report detailed Phase 2 of the modernisation and transformation of the organisation and that the recommendations were cost neutral to the Board. She commended the Report to the Members and intimated that employment would be created, promotional opportunities would be available for existing staff and that the recommendations, contained in the Report, would assist in enabling the AVJB to maintain or exceed the current performance standards in the future.

Members intimated that the improvements over the last few years have been impressive and that the Report detailed good succession planning.

**Decided:**

- (1) note that the AVJB is in a transitional period of modernisation and transformation.
- (2) note that as the landscape changes AVJB will change to meet the challenges this presents.
- (3) acknowledge that the financial outlook which the AVJB face requires new smarter ways of working

- (4) agree that the AVJB need to embark on the next stage – Phase 2 of the modernisation and transformation programme if the Board are to meet their statutory duties and show continuous improvement.
- (5) agree retention of all reserves until the modernisation and transformation programme of staff and assets is complete and;
- (6) request the Treasurer of the Board to examine and approve the cost estimates which are within budget.

## **Item 12 – Any Other Competent Business**

### **2015 HEF Canvass Report**

There was submitted (circulated) a report dated 1 September 2015 by the Assessor and the Electoral Registration Officer to update Members on the current position with regard to the printing error during the current Household Enquiry Form canvass.

Members acknowledged that the printing error was due to a technical fault with a contractor and commended the actions taken by the ERO to mitigate reputational damage to the Board.

The ERO wished to express her thanks for the support she had received from Members and the Chief Executive, South Ayrshire Council and the work that the Communications Team had undertaken.

Members acknowledged that they had been kept informed, of events, by email. However they felt it would have been better if they had been informed immediately when the problem was identified and regular updates given, which would have enabled them to answer questions within their respective organisations.

### **Decided:**

- (1) agreed that an appropriate press release would be issued, within the week, on the matter and that all elected members are written too summarising the contents of this report on conclusion of the Board meeting and;
- (2) that the 21 formal complainants will also be advised of the outcome of the investigation.

## **Item 13 – Date of Next Meeting**

The Board noted that the next meeting would be held on Tuesday, 10th November 2015 at 10.30 a.m. within the County Buildings, Ayr.

The meeting ended at 12.20 p.m.