

Agenda Item No 3

AYRSHIRE VALUATION JOINT BOARD

Minutes of meeting held on Tuesday, 10 November 2015 at 10.30 a.m. within
County Buildings, Wellington Square, Ayr

Item 1 - Sederunt.

Present:

East Ayrshire Councillors: George Mair, John McFadzean, William Menzies
Jim Roberts and Elena Whitham.

North Ayrshire Councillors: Matthew Brown (Chair) Catherine McMillan and Donald
Reid.

South Ayrshire Councillors: John Hampton, Rita Miller Robin Reid 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; Fiona Docherty, Finance North Ayrshire Council; and
Alison Nelson, Co-ordinator (Democratic Support), South Ayrshire
Council.

Apologies: Councillor John Easdale, North Ayrshire Council;
Councillor John Ferguson, North Ayrshire Council;
Councillor Andy Campbell, 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 1 September 2015 were submitted and approved
as a correct record.

Item 3 – Matters Arising.

With regard to Item 9 – Staffing (Modern Apprentices) the Assessor and ERO reported that she had been in dialogue with North and East Ayrshire Council and had been advised that the AVJB's employment of Modern Apprentices would depend on their employment contract with their respective Councils. The Assessor and ERO is still however pursuing this and will report back to a future meeting if there are any changes which allow the employment of Young Apprentices from North and East Ayrshire.

Item 4 A – Revenue Budget Monitoring Report 2015/16 – Position Statement at 30 September 2015

There was submitted (circulated) a report dated 30 October 2015 by the AVJB's Treasurer presenting the Board's income and expenditure for the period ended 30 September 2015 (monitoring period 6) as compared with the approved revenue budget.

Board Members raised issues in relation to employee costs, property costs and IER and Revaluation. Assurances were given that management were endeavouring to contain expenditure within existing budgets as far as possible, in order to minimise the impact on the Boards Reserves. Further updates would be provided to members as the year progresses.

Decided:

- (1) to approve the content of the report.

Item 5 – Valuation and Performance.

There was submitted (circulated) a report of 30 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 30th September 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 30th September 2015
 - Performance in Non-Domestic Valuation 1st April 2015 to 30th September 2015

The Head of Valuation Services and Assistant ERO intimated that the appeal for the Paper Mill had been concluded. Councillor Menzies enquired as to the budget implications regarding the funding of the appeal. Tom Simpson, Corporate Accountant advised that costs relating to this appeal were included in the budget statement discussed under Item 4A.

The Assessor and ERO advised that the settlement was 'fair and just' intimating that the Paper Mill was valued in a certain way with the agents intimating that it should have been valued another way.

After research it was determined that all other Paper Mills, within Scotland, had been valued as specified by the agents. The Assessor and ERO agreed to value it in that manner which has resulted in a major change of value from £5.8m to £4.4m.

Performance levels in both Council Tax for the period 1 April 2015 to 30th September 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 should be noted that within the Performance in Non-Domestic Valuation 1st April 2015 to 30th September 2015 % of total added – AVJB totals' should read 4%.

Staff had been split into teams which appeared to be working well and performance was currently being maintained and it is hoped 2014/15 targets will be met.

Decided: to note the contents of the report.

Item 6 – Electoral Registration

There was submitted (circulated) a report dated 10 November 2015 by the Principal Admin and IT Development Officer advising the Board of recent updates relating to the function of electoral registration in relation to the following areas:-

- (1) Individual Electoral Registration (IER)
- (2) Rolling Registration and Annual Canvass
- (3) By Elections
- (4) Scottish Parliament Election 2016
- (5) Publication of the Electoral Register
- (6) Electoral Management System

The Principal Admin and IT Development Officer intimated that the transitional period relating to IER under The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 (Transitional Provisions) Order 2015 comes to end. This will result in approximately 6,500 being removed from the register. Members acknowledged that they were aware that this may happen when IER was initially introduced. The ERO intimated that every effort had been made to contact non responders with approximately 6 letters being issued to each individual.

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. The ERO confirmed that she has received a list from Educational Services and will target those listed. She also advised that the Electoral Commission would be commencing a media campaign in February and that letters to 16/17 year olds would be issued to coincide with this. Discussions were also ongoing with the three Chief Executives with a view to promoting electoral registration through secondary schools.

The Principal Admin and IT Development Officer advised that approximately 3,000 letters

would be issued, in January, to postal voters, whose signature had been held for five years, in order for them to refresh their signature.

Board members intimated that they found the statistics contained within the Appendix interesting and valuable, particularly the variances between electoral wards. Councillor Menzies requested a breakdown per polling district of the non-IER registered electorate numbers to enable local councillors to use the information to target areas of low response and high expected drop off numbers. Board Members requested that the statistical information in the Appendix be reported to future meetings.

Board members discussed the publication of the electoral register and the advantages and disadvantages of publishing on the 1 December 2015 or 1 February 2016, after discussion the ERO intimated that she would publish on 1 December to maintain consistency with other EROs across the country.

Decided: to note the contents of the report and to note the publication of the electoral register on 1 December 2015.

Item 7 - Staffing

There was submitted (circulated) a report dated 10 November 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
- (5) Website
- (6) Policy and Procedures
- (7) Records Management

The Head of Valuation and Assistant ERO advised that two temporary property assistants would be starting early December which would alleviate some of the pressure on existing staff. The Board have also recruited up to 40 temporary canvassers. The Board were also taking part in South Ayrshire Council's 'Work Out Programme' and a fifth year pupil from Kyle Academy has joined the team each Wednesday from September 2015 until Easter 2016. The pupil had fitted in well and staff had taken on the challenge of supporting her in her duties.

The Board's website had been modernised and re-launched. The Assessor and ERO thanked South Ayrshire Council's IT for their assistance with this. Elected members were asked to look at the web-site and make any comments regarding further changes or content.

The Head of Valuation and Assistant ERO advised that as a result of updating the Code of Conduct the policies as listed in the Appendix 1 to the report required to be updated. Councillor Miller intimated that amendments were required to the contact details in the Media Relations

Protocol and reference to the Provost required to be removed in the Protocols for Relations between Councillors and Employees and Amongst Councillors in Multi-member Wards.

Councillor Menzies made reference to expenses and intimated that this required to be amended as each local authority reimburses expenses and not the Board.

Decided:

- (1) approve the contents of the Report and note the amendments required as detailed above.

Item 8 – Maximising Electoral Registration

There was submitted (circulated) a report dated 10 November 2015 by the Assessor and ERO to update the Board on the maximising registration/democratic engagement progress and to indicate the future of this element of service delivery. The report advised on;

- (1) Resources
- (2) Partnership Working
- (3) Electoral Commission and;
- (4) Current and Future Events/Projects

Decided:

- (1) note the content of the Report.

Item 9 – Schedule of Meetings for 2016/17

There was submitted (circulated) a report dated 1 October 2015 by the Democratic and Governance Manager to propose the dates for Board Meetings during 2016/17. A revised schedule was circulated which aided in the statutory requirement for accounting reporting.

Decided:

- (1) To agree the dates circulated on the Revised Schedule of Meetings for 2016/17.

Item 10 – Date of Next Meeting

The Board noted that the next meeting would be held on **Tuesday 12 January 2016** at 10.30 a.m. within the **Robert Burns Room, East Ayrshire Council Headquarters, London Road, Kilmarnock.**

The meeting ended at 12.10 p.m.