

**MINUTE of MEETING of CENTRAL SCOTLAND VALUATION JOINT BOARD
held within HILLSIDE HOUSE, STIRLING on FRIDAY 21 NOVEMBER 2014 at
9.30 a.m.**

COUNCILLORS: Margaret Brisley
Gordon Hughes
Charles MacDonald (Convener)
Adrian Mahoney
Rosie Murray
Alan Nimmo
Christine Simpson (substituting for Cllr McChord)
Sandy Turner

OFFICERS: Ashleigh MacGregor, Treasurer
Brian Pirie, Assistant to Clerk
Jane Wanless, Assistant Assessor
Peter Wildman, Assessor and Electoral
Registration Officer

VJB25. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Depute Provost Hamilton; and Councillors Holden, Meiklejohn, McChord and Paterson.

VJB26. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations made.

VJB27. MINUTE

The minute of the meeting held on 26 September 2014 was approved.

VJB28. EQUALITIES OUTCOMES

The Board considered a report by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer presenting revised equality outcomes for approval.

The Board is required, in terms of the Equality Act 2010 to prepare and publish equality outcomes. Following review and consultation, the outcomes published in 2013 were revised and amended. The revised outcomes were set out in an appendix to the report.

Decision

The Board approved the revised equality outcomes set out in the appendix to the report.

VJB29. INTERIM VALUATION PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Board considered a report by the Assistant Assessor presenting service performance information for the period 1 April to 30 September 2014.

The service performances as measured by 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, 409 changes were made during the period - of these 82% were amended within 3 months, 93% within 6 months and 7% took longer – against targets of 90%:97.5% and 2.5% respectively.

Members questioned whether the target of 2.5% would be met by the year was achievable given the impact on resources in the lead up to the referendum.

In regard to the valuation list work, the time taken to add houses to the valuation list, 601 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.

Decision

The Board noted the report.

VJB30. REVENUE BUDGET 2014/15 – REVIEW AS AT 30 SEPTEMBER 2014

The Board considered a report by the Treasurer presenting the revenue budget outturn as at 30 September 2014 together with the year end forecast.

The revenue budget for 2014/15 is £2.539m. At 30 September 2014 the budget stood at £1,274,192 with a projected year-end under spend of £68,646. The main reasons for the projected under spend were reduced salary costs arising from the vacant Depute Assessor post.

Members sought clarification in regard to referendum related costs, in particular £27,000 in respect of overtime and whether these would be met by the Scottish Government.

Decision

The Board noted the report.

VJB31. DATES FOR FUTURE MEETINGS 2015

The Board considered a report by the Clerk presenting proposed meetings timetable for 2015.

Decision

The Board agreed:-

- (1) to meet on 23 January (budget); 20 March; 19 June; 17 September and 20 November for ordinary meetings;**
- (2) that meetings will normally be held in Hillside House, Stirling and will commence at 9.30am; and**
- (3) to note that special meetings may be convened as necessary.**

AGENDA ITEM 4

CENTRAL SCOTLAND VALUATION JOINT BOARD

Subject: Electoral Registration Update
Meeting: Central Scotland Valuation Joint Board
Date: 23rd January 2015
Author: Pete Wildman, Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The last 12 months have been a period of significant Electoral Registration activity for the organisation and it is appropriate to update the Board on the work that has been carried out in this period.
- 1.2 With the forthcoming UK Parliamentary General Election and the first full canvass under Individual Electoral Registration (IER) occurring in 2015 this report also highlights the likely impact of these events.

2.0 EUROPEAN PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION – MAY 2014

- 2.1 This election was held on the 22 May 2014, there were no significant problems arising with the registration of electors or with the issue of absent votes.
- 2.2 The publication of the Register of Electors was delayed by the UK Government in 2013 due to the forthcoming introduction of IER in the autumn of 2014. Instead of publishing the Register on the 1 December 2013 the publication date was delayed until 10 March 2014. This resulted in a very quick turnaround from completing all the “year end” processes associated with the production of the Register and the start of the processes associated with an Election e.g. Absent Vote and Poll Card data supplies. This had a noticeable impact on the workload of the team.
- 2.3 After the European Election I was required by law to write out to all permanent postal voters whose vote had been rejected due to the absence of a personal identifier or a mismatch between the personal identifier on the postal vote statement and the personal identifier on the postal vote record held by myself. This was the first time I had been formally required to do so and the response to it was positive.

3.0 SCOTTISH INDEPENDENCE REFERENDUM – SEPTEMBER 2014

- 3.1 This proved to be the most significant electoral event that any member of the organisation has ever experienced. It was very good to see how the electorate engaged in such an important electoral event. However the level of engagement meant an unprecedented workload for the whole organisation. I am pleased to say that we delivered and my thanks go to all the staff here for their commitment and hard work to ensure that we were able to meet the needs of the electorate.
- 3.2 It was clear even before the European Elections that public interest in the referendum was going to be very high indeed. The workload was such that we had to start overtime working in July some two months ahead of the Referendum. This is unprecedented and the volume of work continued to climb. By the middle of August we had to draft in the help of the Valuation Team to assist in answering phone calls and issuing Registration and Absent Vote forms. By the last few weeks ahead of the Referendum the whole organisation was dealing with Electoral Registration work. It was necessary to work very long hours in the final weeks with many staff staying on until late in the night and working at weekends to ensure deadlines were met.
- 3.3 On the final day for registering we had 700 visitors to our office, with the last visitors appearing at 11:50 pm just prior to the midnight cut-off. There was also a huge volume of e-mails and calls to be dealt with and the staff had to move quickly to ensure all electors were added to the Register and Postal Votes were added in time for the files to be sent to the printers.
- 3.4 The volume of work normally diminishes slightly after the last date for Registration and Postal Votes with less interest in the appointment of proxies. This was not the case with the Referendum with a very high number of requests for proxy and emergency proxy appointments. This continued right up until 5.00pm on Referendum Day.
- 3.5 The Referendum also brought with it the Register of Young Voters. This process ran smoothly and the Depute ERO and I visited the local High Schools to promote awareness and we plan to do the same in future years.
- 3.6 The number of Postal Votes rose from just over 22000 when the Register was published to just over 33000 by the date of the Referendum.
- 3.7 The Board incurred exceptional overtime costs and an increase in postage costs. Along with the other EROs in Scotland I will be making a bid to the Scottish Government for the repayment of these unexpected costs.

4.0 INDIVIDUAL ELECTORAL REGISTRATION

- 4.1 The day after the Referendum saw the introduction of Individual Electoral Registration in Scotland. It had been introduced in England on 10 June 2014. Instead of one person in a household registering all electors in that household every elector must make an individual application. Every applicant must prove their identity by supplying their Date of Birth and National Insurance Number. These are checked against Government records and if they fail to match then the individual has to produce further proofs of identity such as passport, driving licence etc., if they cannot produce these documents then their application has to be attested.
- 4.2 To smooth the transition to the new system the whole Register was matched against government and local government records. Where electors successfully matched they were automatically transferred to the new system. For those who did not match they have been invited to register. If they fail to register they will remain on the Register until after the UK Parliamentary Election but will then be removed. Any one from now onwards who wishes to have an absent vote or act as a proxy must be registered under the new system.
- 4.3 In October we issued 196000 Confirmation letters to those electors who had matched. We achieved a high match rate of 93%, we have issued Invitation to Register to 21000 electors and also issued 18000 Household Enquiry Forms. Every form issued and not returned must be followed up with two reminders and a personal visit. If new names are added to a Household Enquiry Form they cannot be added to the Register. Instead we have to issue each new applicant with an Invitation to Register and follow up with reminders and a visit.
- 4.4 IER has seen the introduction of online registration at www.gov.uk/register-to-vote. This has proved popular. We have now issued reminders to all outstanding forms and are now in the process of carrying out personal visits with second reminders. The Electoral Commission has made it very clear that they expect every outstanding form to have been followed up with a personal visit. We have employed 19 temporary canvassers on a full time basis for two months and an additional 13 part time canvassers. The University has its own dedicated canvassers due to the need to follow up on some 3500 invitations.
- 4.5 The Confirmation letter raised the electorate's awareness of the difference between the Open and Full Registers and we have received 9000 requests to opt out of the Open Register.
- 4.6 It is looking likely that at the end of the canvass period we will issue a Household Notification Letter to all properties to advise who is registered. The new Register will be published on 27 February 2015.
- 4.7 Due to the number of forms that have to be issued under IER and that every non returned form has to be followed up with a visit has resulted in a significant increase in costs as detailed in the Budget report.

5.0 FUTURE WORK

- 5.1 We are already working closely with the Returning Officers to prepare for the UK Parliamentary General Election. This will be the first election under IER. Whilst the Register has a high number of electors on it due to the interest in the referendum there will still be a high number of new applications due to people moving home etc. All these new applicants will need to match against government records or produce further proof of identity. How this will operate in practice in the last few days before the registration cut off for the General Election remains to be seen.
- 5.2 We will have to write out after the Register has been published to all electors with an absent vote who have not successfully transitioned to advise them that they must register again and re-apply for their absent vote. Given the short time between Register publication on 27 February 2015 and the last date (20 April 2015) to apply for a postal vote in time for the General Election this will be a particular challenge. We will also have to handle the tight turnaround between Register publication and election preparations.
- 5.3 We will also have to write again to those absent voters whose signatures did not match at the European even though they may have matched at the Referendum.
- 5.4 We will commence the next annual canvass on 1 July 2015 with the new Register being published on 1 December 2015. The canvass will involve sending a Household Enquiry Form (HEF) to all 135000 residential properties with associated reminders and visits. Any new electors identified from returned HEFs will be issued with an Invitation to Register to be followed up by reminders and visits.

6.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 6.1 Members are invited to note and comment on this report

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Pete Wildman
Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer
Date: 13th January 2015



AGENDA ITEM 5

VALUATION JOINT BOARD FOR CENTRAL SCOTLAND

Subject: Draft Revenue Budget 2015/2016
Meeting: Central Scotland Valuation Joint Board
Date: 23th January, 2015
Author: Joint Report by Treasurer and Assessor

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report presents the Draft Revenue Budget for Central Scotland Valuation Joint Board for the financial year 2015/2016.
- 1.2 The report details the budget estimates for consideration and makes recommendations on the allocation of the net costs to Falkirk, Stirling and Clackmannanshire Councils.
- 1.3 The Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer is personally responsible for three statutory functions. These are the compilation and maintenance of the Electoral Register, the compilation and maintenance of the Council Tax Valuation List, and the compilation and maintenance of the Valuation Roll. These functions are important for local democracy and elections, and provide the basis for local domestic and non-domestic taxation.
- 1.4 The introduction of Individual Electoral Registration has resulted in a more prescriptive approach to Electoral Registration with requirements for new applicants to prove their identity and the compulsory issue of more forms and visits, the consequential implementation costs are significant. As the introduction of Individual Electoral registration (IER) is still in the early stages, 2015/16 budget estimates have been made on the information available to date and the professional assumptions of the Electoral Registration Officer. The Assessor and ERO will work with the Valuation Joint Board and the Constituent Authorities to confirm the IER budget requirement in future years, identifying clear efficiencies and savings proposals to ensure that planned expenditure is in line with funding and service delivery remains sustainable.

- 1.5 The report details the projected reserves to the 31st March and proposes a refund to the Constituent Authorities in recognition of the high level of general reserves, and the ongoing funding restrictions to Local Authorities.

2. Draft Revenue Budget 2015/2016

- 2.1 The summary of the Draft Revenue Budget for the Valuation Joint Board is attached as Appendix A.
- 2.2 The Draft Budget has been prepared on the basis of a carry forward of the current year's budget with adjustments for known variations and the full year effect of Individual Electoral Registration. The proposed budget reflects an increase in expenditure of 8%.
- 2.3 Adjustments have been made to the base figures for 14/15 to produce the final estimates for 15/16. A summary of the major adjustments with brief explanation is included at Table 1.

Table 1:

2015/16 Budget Adjustments Summary			
Item		Adjustment Value £	Explanation
Salaries	↑	5,140	Incremental progression through payscales
Overtime	↓	-5,000	Reduction to overtime due there being only one election in 15/16
Management of Vacancies	↓	-23,150	1.50% of salary budget
Equipment Maintenance	↓	-4,000	New folding machine purchased with warranty included
Printing Outside Contractors	↓	-6,000	These printing costs are now reflected in the increased postage costs as part of a planned mail contract
Computer Software Purchase	↓	-11,500	Reduction in the amount of new software that is needed
Computer Software Maintenance	↓	-7,020	Based on current year spend
Other Local Authorities	↑	4,100	Increase to cover change in Councillor's salary costs.
Miscellaneous	↓	-4,960	Small adjustments across budget areas
TOTAL	↓	-52,390	

- 2.4 Inflation has been applied where there is deemed to be a specific requirement. A summary of the inflation applied is at Table 2 below.

Table 2:

2014/15 Budget Inflation Summary		
Item	%	Adjustment Value £
Pay Award	+1.5%	21,200
Superannuation	+2.44%	11,240
NIC	+1.50%	1,620
Gas	+1.25%	50
Electric	+1.25%	150
Cleaning	+2.50%	370
Service Charge	+2.50%	1,790
Water Charges	+2.50%	200
TOTAL		36,620

- 2.5 The Individual Electoral Registration costs incurred to date form the basis of the projected costs for 2015/16. The areas of budget growth are detailed in Table 3 below.

Table 3:

2015/16 IER Budget Requirement Summary			
Item		Adjustment Value £	Explanation
Canvassers	↑	127,000	Additional Canvassers are required to meet statutory obligations
Staff Travel Exps	↑	8,150	Increased in line with additional canvasser costs.
Stationery	↑	4,000	Required for increase in forms that must be issued under IER
Postage	↑	70,890	Increase for contract to provide printing and delivery of forms
Computer Services	↑	10,790	Additional costs due to new processes and systems
TOTAL	↑	220,830	

3. Indicative Funding to 2017/2018

- 3.1 There is anticipated to be a funding gap of over £387,000 by the year 2017/18. This assumes local authorities will look to mirror their own funding from Scottish Government to VJB funding. See Table 4 below for a summary of future year funding assumptions.

Table 4:

Central Valuation Joint Board - Funding Assumptions	2015/16 Draft £	2016/17 Indicative £	2017/18 Indicative £
Funding Assumption - per settlement	(2,547,940)	(2,514,817)	(2,469,550)
Funding From Reserves	(196,410)		
Funding Requirements - per known inflationary pressures	2,744,350	2,814,036	2,856,828
Annual Funding Shortfall / (Surplus)	0	299,219	88,059
Cumulative Shortfall / (Surplus)	0	299,219	387,278

It is proposed that the shortfall in 2015/16 is funded from reserves due to the uncertainty surrounding the funding of Individual Electoral Registration detailed below.

For future years the Valuation Joint board and the Constituent Authorities will work together to review how efficiencies can be achieved and how reserves can be used to fund any changes in working processes to balance the budget in future years.

4. Individual Electoral Registration

- 4.1 Implementation of Individual Electoral Registration (IER) system began in September 2014 and is a significant change in the electoral registration process. There is now a statutory requirement to follow up every household form issued with two reminders and a personal visit. Electors can no longer be added to the register from the household form, where returned. The Electoral Registration Officer must issue an Invitation to Register to Vote to every new person identified as a potential eligible elector from returned forms, university lists and other council databases etc. Where no response is made to the initial invitations a reminder and personal visit is also a statutory requirement. These requirements have significant budgetary implications. As the system is so new it is only possible to estimate the likely number of forms and visits that will be necessary.
- 4.2 At the time of budget setting it is unknown how much funding will be provided by The Cabinet Office. In the current financial year The Cabinet Office provided funding of £238,000, which is expected to be fully utilised. In the 2014/15 budget £200,000 was earmarked as additional requirement for IER however due to The Cabinet Office funding this hasn't been required in the year. Based on the forecast budget increase for IER of £220,830, it is proposed to fund the budget shortfall in the year from earmarked reserves, if sufficient funding is provided by The Cabinet Office the amount will fall to general reserves.

Once the Electoral Registration Officer has been through a full cycle of IER, it is anticipated that the budget requirement will be reviewed, and a more accurate forecast of likely future expenditure can be determined.

5. Reserves

- 5.1 As at 31 March 2014 CSVJB had reserves of approximately £763,000, £225,000 of these reserves were earmarked, giving a usable reserve of £538,000. The usable reserve is expected to increase by £293,000 due to the anticipated 2014/2015 underspend (£68,000) and the release of earmarked reserves (£225,000) which wasn't required in the year. It is proposed to fund the budget shortfall of £196,000 (2015/16) from reserves due to the uncertainty surrounding the IER funding, and provide the constituent authorities a refund from reserves in the year of £277,000 due to the high level of reserves in excess of the minimum requirement. The balance of reserves at 31st March 2015 is expected to be around £832,000. This will reduce to £359,000 when the refund and earmarked reserves are reflected. The minimum level of reserves required is £82,330 which equates to 3% of expenditure.

6. Requisitions

- 6.1 The cost for financial year 2015/16 that requires to be allocated amongst the constituent authorities is £2,547,940.
- 6.2 On the basis of the draft budget less the refund of reserves the requisition is detailed in Table 5 below:-

Table 5:

	Requisition £	Reserves Refund £	Net Requisition £
Falkirk	1,255,624	(136,450)	1,119,174
Stirling	898,404	(97,630)	800,774
Clackmannanshire	393,912	(42,810)	351,102

7. Recommendations

The recommendations arising from this report are that the Valuation Joint Board:-

- (i) Formally approves the Valuation Joint Board's Revenue Budget for 2015/2016 of £2,744,350, as detailed in Appendix A.
- (ii) Agrees the refund of 50% of general reserves in excess of the minimum level required.

- (iii) Agrees to requisition the constituent authorities for their share of the net expenditure as outlined in Table 5. above.

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Assessor/Electoral Registration Officer

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Treasurer

Date: 23rd January, 2015

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Budget working papers (these are available from the Treasurer Tel 01259 452072)

						Appendix A
Budget for Central Scotland Valuation Joint Board 2015/16						
	GL Code	2014/15 Budget	Variation	Inflation	IER Increase	2015/16 Final Opening Budget
		£	£	£	£	£
Employee Related Expenditure						
APT & C General - Salaries	1060	1,419,020	(5,920)	21,200		1,434,300
APT & C General - Employers Supn	1061	266,980	15,660	11,240		293,880
APT & C General - Employers NIC	1062	112,320	(4,600)	1,620		109,340
APT & C General - Overtime	1063	10,000	(5,000)	0		5,000
Management of Vacancies	1064	(4,410)	(23,150)	0		(27,560)
Canvassers	1570	10,000	3,000	0	127,000	140,000
Long Service Award	1740	750	0	0		750
Superannuation Annual Charges	1830	26,200	(580)	0		25,620
Advertising Expenses - Recruitment	1870	500	0	0		500
Staff Training	1910	17,000	(2,000)	0		15,000
Conference Expenses - Officials	1950	2,000	0	0		2,000
Other Staff Costs	1980	2,000	(500)	0		1,500
Employee Related Expenditure		1,862,360	(23,090)	34,060	127,000	2,000,330
Premises Related						
Repairs and Maintenance	2105	13,640	0	0		13,640
Energy Costs- Gas	2210	4,160	0	50		4,210
Energy Costs - Electricity	2240	11,750	0	150		11,900
Rents	2310	85,000	0	0		85,000
Service Charge	2350	12,970	30	0		13,000
Rates	2400	68,350	0	0		68,350
Water Meter Charges	2530	7,860		200		8,060
Cleaning & Hygiene Materials	2710	1,500	0	0		1,500
Cleaning Services DSO	2720	14,890	0	370		15,260
Window Cleaning	2730	360	0	0		360
Property Insurance	2910	2,760	(200)	0		2,560
Premises Related		223,240	(170)	770	0	223,840
Transport Related Expenditure						
Staff Travelling Expenses	3310	23,850		0	8,150	32,000
Transport Related Expenditure		23,850	0	0	8,150	32,000
Supplies and Services						
Purchase of Equipment	4001	0	0	0		0
Furniture - Purchase	4002	500	0	0		500
Equipment Maintenance	4030	12,000	(4,000)	0		8,000
Equipment Insurance	4080	500	0	0		500
Bottled Water	4126	1,400	0	0		1,400
Hospitality	4190	1,500	(500)	0		1,000
Clothing and Uniforms	4210	300	0	0		300
Office Equipment - Rental	5020	2,000	0	0		2,000
Printing - Outside Contractors	5040	11,000	(6,000)	0		5,000
Photocopying	5042	3,500	0	0		3,500
Stationery	5043	11,000		0	4,000	15,000
Publications	5050	5,000	0	0		5,000
Advertising - Publicity	5070	5,000	0	0		5,000
Insurance	5080	13,600	0	0		13,600
Postages	5210	99,110		0	70,890	170,000
Legal Expenses	5730	12,000	5,000	0		17,000
Miscellaneous Expenses	5901	650	350	0		1,000
Supplies and Services Sub Total		179,060	(5,150)	0	74,890	248,800

	GL Code	2014/15 Budget	Variation	Inflation	IER Increase	2015/16 Final Opening Budget
Supplies & Services (Centralised IT)						
Telecommunications	5230	9,000	0	0		9,000
Computer Hardware Purchase	5511	22,000	(1,000)	0		21,000
Disaster Recovery	5520	23,140	(6,140)	0		17,000
Computer Hardware Maintenance & Support	5521	4,420	(2,420)	0		2,000
Computer Software Purchase	5531	21,500	(11,500)	0		10,000
Computer Software Maintenance & Support	5541	42,020	(7,020)	0		35,000
Computer Peripherals	5551	1,000	0	0		1,000
Computer Services	5571	49,210		0	10,790	60,000
Supplies & Services (Centralised IT)		172,290	(28,080)	0	10,790	155,000
Total Supplies & Services		351,350	(33,230)	0	85,680	403,800
Third Party Payments						
Payments to Other Local Authorities	6410	2,000	4,100	0		6,100
Payments to Contractors	6705	1,000	0	0		1,000
Audit Scotland	6840	8,250	0	0		8,250
Third Party Payments		11,250	4,100	0	0	15,350
Transfer Payments						
Transfer Payments		0	0	0	0	0
Support Services						
Legal Services	7030	14,340	0	360		14,700
Human Resources	7040	21,500	0	540		22,040
Finance Service	7050	29,480	0	740		30,220
Corporate and Democratic Core	7070	5,920	0	150		6,070
Support Services		71,240	0	1,790	0	73,030
Capital Financing Costs						
Capital Financing Costs		0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL GROSS EXPENDITURE		2,543,290	(52,390)	36,620	220,830	2,748,350
Income						
Sales	9402	(1,000)	0	0		(1,000)
Other Income	9445	(3,000)	0	0		(3,000)
Income		(4,000)	0	0	0	(4,000)
NET EXPENDITURE		2,539,290	(52,390)	36,620	220,830	2,744,350
					205,060	
					8.08 %	