

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, 30 March, 2001.

Present: Councillor John Stirling, Argyll & Bute Council; Provost Robin McSkimming and Councillors Keith Moody, Anne Cameron and Alan Brown, East Dunbartonshire Council; and Councillor Craig McLaughlin, 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, Senior Administrative Officer; Eric Walker, Treasurer; David Connell, Manager of Accounting; Peter Rudzinski, Section Head - Client, Information Services; and Don Findlay, Manager of Building Services.

Apologies: Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Councillors Robin Currie, Alastair Blair, Paul Coleshill and Moyra Stewart, Argyll & Bute Council; Councillor Rhondda Geekie, East Dunbartonshire Council; and Councillors Andy White, Jim McCallum and Iain Robertson, West Dunbartonshire Council.

Councillor Keith Moody in the Chair

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

The Minutes of Meetings of the Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute Valuation Joint Board held on 15 September, 2000 and 15 December, 2000 were submitted and approved.

MEMBERSHIP OF VALUATION JOINT BOARD

A report was submitted by the Clerk to the Valuation Joint Board on the position with respect to the membership of the Board. A further report by the Clerk to the Valuation Joint Board was circulated at the meeting providing an update on the situation following the receipt of intimation of changes to representatives from Argyll & Bute Council.

Following discussion it was agreed:-

- (a) that the position with respect to the amended membership of the Valuation Joint Board be noted; and
- (b) to note that Councillor Stirling would discuss the nomination of representatives of Argyll & Bute Council to serve on the Appeals Sub-Committee and the Property Sub-Committee with the other representatives of that authority on the Board and intimate nominations to the Chairman, Councillor Moody, as soon as possible.

FINANCE

(a) Annual Report and Final Accounts for Year Ending 31 March, 2000

A report was submitted by the Treasurer regarding the Annual Report and Final Accounts for the Year Ending 31 March, 2000.

Following discussion it was agreed:-

- (i) to note that there had been no alterations to the unaudited accounts which had been submitted to the September meeting of the Joint Board for information and the Auditors had now issued a “clean” audit certificate in relation to the accounts;
- (ii) to note that following the review of the accounts, the Auditors had prepared their “Final Report to Members 1999/2000”, a copy of which was appended to the report for information;
- (iii) to note the terms of the Assessor’s Report for the year ended 31 March, 2000; and
- (iv) 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) 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, 2001.

It was agreed to approve the reimbursement of Assistant Secretaries’ Fees and Expenses in accordance with the rates detailed in the Appendix to the report.

PERSONNEL SERVICES

(a) Single Status - Job Evaluation

A report was submitted by the Head of Personnel, West Dunbartonshire Council providing information on the impending Job Evaluation exercise being undertaken by West Dunbartonshire Council in relation to the requirement to introduce single status conditions of employment for former Manual Worker and A.P.T.& C. Employees.

It was agreed to approve the lead Authority status of West Dunbartonshire Council in determining the grading arrangements.

With regard to a point which was raised by Provost McSkimming, concerning a delay of three months in the commencement of a pilot exercise as a result of technical problems with supporting software, it was noted that Mr. Rudzinski would check if the problems had now been resolved and confirm the position to the Chairman, Councillor Moody.

With respect to a question which was raised by Councillor McLaughlin, it was agreed that the Treasurer would arrange to provide Members with a breakdown of the costs associated with the various services to the Board which are provided by West Dunbartonshire Council.

(b) Staffing Changes

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

Following discussion it was agreed to approve the changes to the staffing structure as proposed in the report, which will bring the Joint Board into line with West Dunbartonshire Council's principles on broad banding, it having been noted that the financial implications associated with the proposed regrading of various posts would be contained within the approved revenue budget and that no members of staff would be placed in a redundancy situation.

PROPERTY MATTERS

(a) Premises at 235 Dumbarton Road, Clydebank - User Agreement with Health Board

A report was submitted by the Director of Economic, Planning and Environmental Services, West Dunbartonshire Council (copies of which were circulated at the meeting) providing information on the current position regarding the occupation of part of the premises at 235 Dumbarton Road, Clydebank by the Greater Glasgow Primary Care NHS Trust.

Following discussion it was agreed that the report be noted and that the Legal Services Section of West Dunbartonshire Council be instructed to conclude a month to month lease with the Greater Glasgow Primary Care NHS Trust on the terms and conditions detailed in the report.

It was also noted that should the Trust vacate the premises at some time in the future, the premises will be marketed for let.

At this point in the meeting the Convener emphasised the requirement for attendance at Joint Board meetings of officers who have the appropriate knowledge or expertise to speak to reports which have been submitted and to answer relevant questions from Members of the Board.

(b) Premises at 235 Dumbarton Road, Clydebank - Space and Water Heating System

A report was submitted by the Director of Commercial and Technical Services, West Dunbartonshire Council providing information on a revised scheme of improvements and proposed programme of work to the heating system at the premises at 235 Dumbarton Road, Clydebank.

It was agreed that the content of the report be noted and that the actions taken to progress the revised improvements be homologated.

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.

In relation to a question which was raised by Councillor McLaughlin concerning the delay in the project to replace two existing UNIX servers, due to industrial action by staff within the Information Services Section of West Dunbartonshire Council, it was noted that there had been no legal implications or impact on the Board's ability to fulfil its obligations in respect of the provision of services to the public as a consequence of the industrial action.

Following discussion it was agreed:-

- (i) to note that the project to commission a new consolidated computer server had commenced on 15th March, 2001 and should be completed in approximately three months;

- (ii) to note that required changes will be made to the Assessor's computer systems to ensure compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998; and
- (iii) that the recommended procedures for the disposal of redundant computer equipment detailed in the report be approved.

(b) Disposal of Surplus Computer Equipment.

A report was submitted by the Depute Assessor on proposals to dispose of redundant computer equipment.

Following discussion it was agreed:-

- (i) that approval be given for current surplus computer equipment to be made available to local voluntary groups, on the basis outlined in the report by the Head of Information Services referred to in the previous item of business;
- (ii) that two of the current surplus computers identified in the report be allocated to Garelochhead Community Council and Garelochhead & Rosneath Peninsula Tourism Forum in response to the requests which had been intimated via Councillor Freeman of Argyll & Bute Council in this regard;
- (iii) that future surpluses should be disposed of in a similar fashion at the Assessor's discretion; and
- (iv) that unwanted redundant equipment can be disposed of as scrap.

ELECTORAL REGISTRATION

A report was submitted by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer providing information on new electoral legislation which was introduced with effect from 16 February, 2001 to create a system of rolling electoral registration.

In the course of discussion concern was expressed by Councillor McLaughlin relative to the fall in the overall response rate to the annual canvass between 1998 and 2000, which, in the view of Mr. Wilson, was attributable to the increased use of a postal canvass.

It was agreed to note:-

- (a) that rolling registration in accordance with the new regulations is now in place;
- (b) that work is continuing to introduce changes to reflect further regulations due for the annual canvass; and

- (c) that the Assessor & E.R.O. will monitor rates of return and attempt to tackle problem areas as they arise and will report to the Board on any effect on response rates or resources resulting from the new legislation.

In relation to a point which was raised by Mr. Wilson, it was noted that in the past he had been afforded a degree of flexibility with respect to the recruitment of temporary staff to deal with situations which required additional resources, and he would wish to retain such an arrangement to enable immediate action to be taken to respond to an anticipated substantial increase in demand for postal votes prior to the expected forthcoming General Election, which was likely to arise having regard to provisions contained in the new legislation. It was agreed that the Assessor & E.R.O. be authorised to take any appropriate action which may be required to deal with such a situation.

BEST VALUE

A report was submitted by the Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer providing a review of the 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.

It was agreed to note the position as outlined in the report and that further progress will be notified in due course.

REVALUATION 2000 - PROGRESS

A report was submitted by the Depute Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer updating the Board on progress made with the disposal of appeals arising from the non-domestic Revaluation 2000.

After hearing Mr. Mathieson it was noted that whilst the figures contained in the report indicated that nearly 74% of disposals of appeals had been due to withdrawals, a substantial amount of work required to be undertaken by staff in negotiations with appellants which resulted in the withdrawal of appeals.

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

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It having been noted that there may be no need to hold another meeting of the Joint Board prior to December, when the revenue budget for the 2002/03 financial year will require to be considered, it was agreed to defer fixing a date for the next meeting at present.

It was also noted that the Treasurer will arrange for copies of the Board's draft accounts for 2000/01 to be circulated to Members, for information, in June, 2001 when public notice is given of the availability of the draft accounts.