

LANARKSHIRE VALUATION JOINT BOARD

Minutes of meeting held via Microsoft Teams and in Committee Room 1, Council Offices, Almada Street, Hamilton on 7 September 2020

Convener:

Councillor Alex McVey, North Lanarkshire Council

Councillors Present:

North Lanarkshire Council

Councillor Bob Burgess, Councillor Tom Castles, Councillor William Shields, Councillor Annette Valentine

South Lanarkshire Council

Councillor Walter Brogan, Councillor Peter Craig, Councillor Isobel Dorman, Councillor Geri Gray, Councillor Ann Le Blond, Councillor Margaret B Walker, Councillor Jim Wardhaugh

Councillors' Apologies:

North Lanarkshire Council

Councillor Lynne Anderson, Councillor Jim Reddin, Councillor Caroline Stephen

South Lanarkshire Council

Councillor Poppy Corbett

Attending:

Assessor and Electoral Registration Service

G Bennett, Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer; R Pacitti, Assistant Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer

Clerk's Office

G McCann, Head of Administration and Legal Services; P MacRae, Administration Adviser, South Lanarkshire Council

Treasurer's Office

P Manning, Treasurer; L O'Hagan, Finance Manager (Strategy), South Lanarkshire Council

Also Attending:

Audit Scotland

D Richardson, Senior Audit Manager; B Gillespie, Lead Auditor

Convener's Opening Remarks – Change of Board Membership

The Convener advised that Councillor Margaret B Walker, South Lanarkshire Council, had replaced Councillor Lynsey Hamilton as an ordinary member of the Lanarkshire Valuation Joint Board for the duration of Councillor Hamilton's family leave. The Convener welcomed Councillor Walker to her first meeting of the Board.

1 Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared.

2 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 1 June 2020 were submitted for approval as a correct record.

The Board decided: that the minutes be approved as a correct record.

3 Revenue Budget Monitoring 2020/2021 - Lanarkshire Valuation Joint Board

A report dated 17 August 2020 by the Treasurer was submitted comparing the Board's actual expenditure at 17 July 2020 against the budgeted expenditure for 2020/2021 and providing a forecast for the year to 31 March 2021.

As at 17 July 2020, there was an underspend on the Board's revenue budget of £0.192 million. The financial forecast to 31 March 2021 would continue to be monitored and an update on the expected outturn position would be reported to the next meeting of the Board.

The Canvass Reform in 2020 had resulted in the number of households to be canvassed being reduced significantly. This would result in a reduction to costs incurred by the Board and a reduction in the funding received from the Cabinet Office. Budget virements which reflected those changes were detailed in Appendix A to the report.

An underspend was likely in respect of the Scottish Government funding totalling £0.594 million for 2020/2021 to address and identify costs to the Board arising from the Barclay Review. This was as a result of disruption to recruitment due to the pandemic and would be monitored as part of the ongoing revenue monitoring to the Board.

The Board decided:

- (1) that the underspend on the Board's revenue budget of £0.192 million at 17 July 2020, as detailed in Appendix A to the report, be noted; and
- (2) that it be noted that the forecast to 31 March 2020 would continue to be monitored and an update on the expected outturn position would be reported to the next meeting of the Board.

[Reference: Minutes of 1 June 2020 (Paragraph 3)]

4 External Auditor's Annual Audit Report to the Board

A letter dated 7 September 2020, together with the Annual Audit Report 2019/2020 to Members of the Lanarkshire Valuation Joint Board and the Controller of Audit, was submitted by Audit Scotland, the Board's External Auditor.

Details were given on the key messages contained in the External Auditor's report in relation to:-

- ◆ the audit of the Board's Annual Accounts for 2019/2020
- ◆ financial sustainability, governance and performance of the Board

The accounts had received an unqualified and unmodified independent auditor's report.

The Board decided: that the report be noted

5 Audited Accounts 2019/2020 and External Auditor's Report to the Board

A report dated 20 August 2020 by the Treasurer was submitted on the Board's audited annual accounts for 2019/2020. The accounts, which required to be approved for signature, had been audited by the External Auditor, Audit Scotland, and had received a clear audit certificate.

The accounts would be available for inspection:-

- ◆ on request from Finance Services, Council Offices, Almada Street, Hamilton
- ◆ from the office of the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer, North Stand, Cadzow Avenue, Hamilton
- ◆ on the Lanarkshire Valuation Joint Board's website

The Board decided:

- (1) that it be noted that the Statement of Accounts for 2019/2020 had received a clear audit certificate from the External Auditor; and
- (2) that the audited Statement of Accounts for 2019/2020 be approved for signature.

[Reference: Minutes of 2 September 2019 (Paragraph 5)]

6 Lanarkshire Valuation Joint Board Office Relocation

A report dated 20 August 2020 by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer was submitted on a proposed relocation of Lanarkshire Valuation Joint Board (LVJB) staff from the North Stand, Cadzow Avenue, Hamilton to David Dale House, John Street, Blantyre.

South Lanarkshire Council had entered into a lease agreement with Hamilton Academicals Football Club Stadium Limited for offices at the North Stand, Cadzow Avenue, Hamilton in 2001. The period of the lease agreement would end on 26 May 2021 and South Lanarkshire Council was of the view that the lease would not be renewed as it had no operational requirement for the office space and could offer the current occupiers alternative accommodation. Accordingly, LVJB's Management Team, in conjunction with South Lanarkshire Council's Property Services, had explored the following options:-

- ◆ entering into a lease agreement with Hamilton Academicals Football Club Stadium Limited to remain in the North Stand
- ◆ relocating to private rented office space
- ◆ relocating to existing South Lanarkshire Council property stock

An options appraisal, details of which were provided in the report and in Appendix 2 to the report, had been carried out by the LVJB Management Team. This had identified David Dale House, John Street, Blantyre as the most suitable accommodation to meet the LVJB's current and future requirements. A comparison of the cost implications of remaining at the North Stand, based on renegotiated terms, and relocation to David Dale House was carried out, details of which were provided in Appendix 1 to the report.

South Lanarkshire Council had confirmed that it would address any dilapidations due in respect of LVJB's accommodation in the North Stand, estimated to be in the region of £100,000. The Council had also advised that, at the end of the term of the lease for David Dale House on 6 August 2030, it would accommodate any dilapidation works for the property.

Relocation to David Dale House would require the office space to be refitted to an acceptable specification and layout and LVJB would contribute £195,000 towards the cost, to be met from LVJB reserves.

Based on the options appraisal and cost comparisons, the LVJB Management Team proposed relocating to David Dale House, Blantyre, at a rent of £92,743 per annum until 6 August 2025 and, thereafter, £102,396 per annum, including associated costs illustrated at Appendix 1 to the report, until the end of the lease at 6 August 2030.

Based on the renegotiated terms offered for remaining at the North Stand, relocating to David Dale House would result in an estimated annual saving of £68,227 until 7 August 2025 and, thereafter, £58,574 per annum. Those estimates also did not take account of any future increase in service charges.

Following a full discussion and officers having responded to members' questions on various aspects of the report, Councillor McVey, seconded by Councillor Craig, moved that approval be granted to relocate LVJB staff from the North Stand, Cadzow Avenue, Hamilton to David Dale House, John Street, Blantyre. Councillor Brogan, seconded by Councillor Le Blond, moved as an amendment that consideration of the proposal be deferred to allow for further information on the matter to be obtained. On a vote being taken by roll call, members voted as follows:-

Motion

Tom Castles, Peter Craig, Isobel Dorman, Geri Gray, Alex McVey, William Shields, Annette Valentine

Amendment

Walter Brogan, Bob Burgess, Ann Le Blond, Margaret B Walker, Jim Wardhaugh

5 members voted for the amendment and 7 members voted for the motion. The motion was declared carried.

The Board decided: that the relocation of the Lanarkshire Valuation Joint Board staff from the North Stand, Cadzow Avenue, Hamilton to David Dale House, John Street, Blantyre be approved.

7 Timetable of Future Meetings – 2021 and to March 2022

A report dated 18 August 2020 by the Clerk was submitted on the proposed timetable of meetings for the Board for 2021 and to March 2022. It was proposed that the meetings be held at 2.00pm on the following dates:-

- ◆ Monday 1 March 2021
- ◆ Monday 7 June 2021
- ◆ Monday 6 September 2021
- ◆ Monday 6 December 2021
- ◆ Monday 7 March 2022

The Board decided: that the arrangements for future meetings of the Board for 2021 and to March 2022 be approved.

8 Progress Update

A report dated 31 August 2020 by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer was submitted on:-

- ◆ an overview of the Service
- ◆ current issues and Service priorities, including the response to the Coronavirus pandemic
- ◆ an update on performance
- ◆ issues affecting the future direction of the Joint Board
- ◆ complaints received and dealt with since the last quarterly report

Statistical information, illustrating progress made in terms of key areas of the work undertaken by Lanarkshire Valuation Joint Board, was provided in the appendices to the report.

The Board decided: that the report be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 1 June 2020 (Paragraph 13)]

9 Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.