

LANARKSHIRE VALUATION JOINT BOARD

Minutes of meeting held via Microsoft Teams on 1 March 2021

Convenor:

Councillor Alex McVey, North Lanarkshire Council

Councillors Present:

North Lanarkshire Council

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

South Lanarkshire Council

Councillor Walter Brogan, Councillor Poppy Corbett, Councillor Peter Craig, Councillor Isobel Dorman, Councillor Geri Gray, Councillor Lynsey Hamilton (Vice Convener), Councillor Ann Le Blond, Councillor Jim Wardhaugh

Councillors' Apologies:

North Lanarkshire Council

Councillor Lynne Anderson, Councillor Caroline Stephen

Attending:

Assessor and Electoral Registration Service

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

Clerk's Office

C Sneddon, Clerk; S McLeod, Administration Officer; L Wyllie, Administration Assistant, South Lanarkshire Council

Treasurer's Office

P Manning, Treasurer, South Lanarkshire Council

Also Attending:

Audit Scotland

B Gillespie, Lead Auditor; P Lindsay, Senior Audit Manager

1 Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared.

2 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 7 December 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 and Probable Outturn Position 2020/2021 - Lanarkshire Valuation Joint Board

A report dated 1 February 2021 by the Treasurer was submitted comparing the Board's actual expenditure at 29 January 2021 against the budgeted expenditure for 2020/2021 and providing a forecast for the year to 31 March 2021.

As at 29 January 2021, there was an underspend of £0.547 million on the Board's revenue budget. Following the probable outturn exercise, the position was an anticipated transfer to Reserves of £0.140 million. This would leave a balance of £1.087 million to be carried into 2021/2022.

£0.362 million had been allocated by the Scottish Government to South Lanarkshire Council to be passed to the Board to support the Electoral Registration Officer's capacity to process the expected increase in postal vote applications in the run-up to the Scottish Parliamentary Elections on 6 May 2021. This additional budget would be monitored against the actual expenditure incurred. It was anticipated that all spend would be made in 2020/2021, however, any funds not spent by the end of the year would be carried forward into the next financial year.

The Treasurer responded to a question from the Convener on how risks were managed to reduce the likelihood of an overspend.

The Board decided:

- (1) that an underspend of £0.547 million for the revenue budget be noted;
- (2) that following the probable outturn exercise, the anticipated underspend of £0.510 million, resulting in a transfer to Reserves of £0.140 million, be noted; and
- (3) that it be noted that, following the transfer to Reserves of £0.140 million, £1.087 million would be carried forward to the Balance Sheet at 31 March 2021.

[Reference: Minutes of 7 December 2020 (Paragraph 3)]

Councillor Shields entered the meeting during this item of business

4 Lanarkshire Valuation Joint Board – Annual Audit Plan 2020/2021

The Board considered the Lanarkshire Valuation Joint Board Audit Plan for 2020/2021, dated February 2021, submitted by the Council's External Auditors, Audit Scotland. The Plan set out the audit work necessary to allow Audit Scotland to provide an independent auditor's report and meet the wider scope requirements of public sector audit.

The Plan was structured around the following areas:-

- ◆ risks and planned work
- ◆ audit scope and timing

Details were given on key aspects of those areas. The Annual Accounts timetable would be subject to change if further issues in terms of COVID-19 impacted on it.

The Board decided: that the report be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 1 June 2020 (Paragraph 7)]

5 Lanarkshire Valuation Joint Board - Service Plan 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2022 – Update

A report dated 11 February 2021 by the Assistant Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer was submitted providing an update on the Lanarkshire Valuation Joint Board Service Plan for the period 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2022.

The current Service Plan, approved by the Board on 4 March 2019, set out the Board's key business areas over the period 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2022. The Plan, which was attached as an appendix to the report, assisted in ensuring that services were delivered as effectively and efficiently as possible to service users.

Details of the Board's key challenges over the period of the Plan were outlined in the report.

Update reports on the progress of the Plan would be submitted to future meetings of the Board.

The Board decided: that the report be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 1 June 2020 (Paragraph 11)]

6 Risk Register Update 2021

A report dated 11 February 2021 by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer was submitted on the review and update of Lanarkshire Valuation Joint Board's Risk Register for 2021.

The Board's Organisational Risk Register had been fully reviewed by the management team and updated to reflect a reassessment of existing risks on the register and to document new risks which had emerged.

The review had identified 41 risks, which had been categorised as follows:-

- ◆ 3 as high risk
- ◆ 21 as medium risk
- ◆ 17 as low risk

The updated register was attached as Appendix 1 to the report. The Risk Scoring Matrix, which explained the allocation of inherent and residual risk, was attached as Appendix 2 to the report.

The Board decided: that the report be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 2 March 2020 (Paragraph 4)]

7 Lanarkshire Valuation Joint Board - Revised Complaints Handling Procedure

A report dated 11 February 2021 by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer was submitted on the introduction of a revised Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP) for Lanarkshire Valuation Joint Board.

Public authorities in Scotland were required to introduce a revised CHP, in line with the revised model CHP and associated guidance issued by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO), by 1 April 2021. The principal changes to the current CHP were:-

- ◆ core text had been standardised
- ◆ that it was now presented in 5 parts to make relevant information easier to find
- ◆ that it allowed for a complaint to be resolved, where possible, by agreeing on action to be taken with the customer, without making a decision on whether to uphold or not uphold the complaint
- ◆ that, where possible, the points of complaint must be agreed with the complainant at the start of stage 2 (investigation)
- ◆ that the relevant parts of the complaint and response must be shared with any employees who were subject of the complaint

- ♦ that it set out what kinds of actions employees could take to support equal access to the complaints process (including for vulnerable groups)

The Board's revised CHP, attached as Appendix 1 to the report, would take effect from 1 April 2021.

The Board decided: that the report be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 3 December 2012 (Paragraph 8)]

8 Progress Update

A report dated 11 February 2021 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 COVID-19 pandemic
- ♦ an update on performance
- ♦ issues affecting the future direction of the Joint Board
- ♦ a complaint 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.

In response to a member's question, the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer advised that there was a post box at David Dale House that members of the public could deliver postal vote applications to. He added that a dedicated email address had also been set-up for receiving applications.

In response to a question from the Convener, the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer provided further detail on the complaint referred to in the report.

The Board decided: that the report be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 7 December 2020 (Paragraph 5)]

9 Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.