

LANARKSHIRE VALUATION JOINT BOARD

Minutes of meeting held via Microsoft Teams on 7 December 2020

Convener:

Councillor Alex McVey, North Lanarkshire Council

Councillors Present:

North Lanarkshire Council

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

South Lanarkshire Council

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

Councillors' Apologies:

North Lanarkshire Council

Councillor Lynne Anderson, Councillor William Shields, Councillor Caroline Stephen

South Lanarkshire Council

Councillor Geri Gray

Attending:

Assessor and Electoral Registration Service

G Bennett, Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer; J Neason, 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

1 Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared.

2 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 7 September 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 9 November 2020 by the Treasurer was submitted comparing the Board's actual expenditure at 6 November 2020 against the budgeted expenditure for 2020/2021 and providing a forecast for the year to 31 March 2021.

As at 6 November 2020, there was an underspend of £0.357 million on the Board's revenue budget. Following the probable outturn exercise, the position was an anticipated transfer to Reserves of £0.140 million compared to a budgeted transfer from Reserves of £0.370 million. This would leave a balance of £1.087 million to be carried into 2021/2022.

The Board decided:

- (1) that it be noted that, following the probable outturn exercise, there would be a transfer to Reserves of £0.140 million for the current financial year;
- (2) that the underspend on the Board's revenue budget of £0.357 million at 6 November 2020, as detailed in Appendix A to the report, 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 September 2020 (Paragraph 3)]

4 Revenue Budget 2021/2022 – Lanarkshire Valuation Joint Board

A report dated 10 November 2020 by the Treasurer was submitted on the draft revenue budget for Lanarkshire Valuation Joint Board (LVJB) for 2021/2022.

A Financial Strategy for LVJB for 2019/2020 to 2021/2022 had been submitted to the meeting of the Board held on 5 March 2018. The Strategy had assumed an expenditure budget of £4.108 million for 2021/2022.

Details were given on:-

- ◆ the budget assumptions which had been used in the preparation of the financial strategy for 2021/2022, as at 31 March 2018, provided in Appendix 1 to the report
- ◆ the revised assumptions in proposing the budget for 2021/2022, which included:-
 - ◆ the anticipated cost of the pay award
 - ◆ anticipated savings in relation to the Canvass Reform which would be offset by reduced income
 - ◆ savings in relation to administration and operations costs which would be offset by a reduction in Requisitions
 - ◆ an assumption that no Barclay funding would be provided in 2021/2022 as the level of funding had not yet been confirmed. The budget would be reviewed in accordance with the confirmed funding
 - ◆ an assumption that there would be a 1% reduction in the grant funding provided to the constituent authorities via the Local Government Finance Settlement. If the Local Government Finance Settlement did not reflect the budgeted 1% reduction, the Treasurer would review the position and, if an adjustment to the Requisitions was required, it would be reported to the Board at its meeting on 1 March 2021
- ◆ an anticipated transfer to Reserves of £0.140 million following the 2020/2021 probable outturn exercise which, when added to the Reserves carried forward from the previous financial year, would result in a balance on Reserves of £1.087 million at 31 March 2021 for use in 2021/2022 and beyond

The Board's revised expenditure budget of £3.932 million for 2021/2022 would be funded as follows:-

- ◆ £3.470 million from Requisitions (apportioned to North and South Lanarkshire Councils at a level of 50% each)
- ◆ £0.020 million from the Cabinet Office for Individual Electoral Registration
- ◆ £0.345 million from Reserves

This would result in a budget shortfall of £0.097 million which would be managed by identifying efficiencies/savings across the budget totalling £0.097 million, resulting in a net expenditure budget of £3.835 million for 2021/2022.

The Treasurer responded to a question from the Convener regarding the Local Government Finance Settlement.

The Board decided:

- (1) that the budget strategy, resulting in a budget of £3.835 million for 2021/2022, as detailed in the report, be approved;
- (2) that the position on Barclay spend and funding, as detailed in the report, be noted;
- (3) that the Requisitions be reviewed following receipt of the Local Government Finance Settlement; and
- (4) that the Reserves position, as detailed in the report, be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 2 December 2019 (Paragraph 4)]

5 Progress Update

A report dated 19 November 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.

In response to a member's question, the Convener advised that progress on the response to the Coronavirus pandemic and the associated costs would be reported to future meetings of the Board.

In response to a further member's question, the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer advised that there would be no significant financial implications resulting from the postponement of the Local Government By-elections for Ward 13 Fortissat and Ward 14 Thorniewood in North Lanarkshire.

The Board decided: that the report be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 7 September 2020 (Paragraph 8)]

6 Non-Domestic Appeals Update

A report dated 19 November 2020 by the Assistant Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer was submitted on progress in relation to Non-Domestic appeals.

The Coronavirus pandemic had resulted in 4,234 new Running Roll appeals lodged on the grounds that the effects of the pandemic had affected the value of non-domestic properties and an analysis of those appeals was provided in Appendix 1 to the report.

Details of the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on Valuation Appeal Hearings and the disposal of appeals were provided in the report. In response to the impact of the pandemic, the Scottish Government had made The Valuation Timetable (Disposal of Appeals and Complaints) (Coronavirus) (Scotland) Amendment Order 2020 which extended the last date of disposal of 2017 Revaluation appeals from 31 December 2020 and Running Roll appeals from before 1 April 2021 respectively to 31 December 2021.

To mitigate against the risk of not meeting the statutory appeal disposal dates, in addition to the 4 remaining Non-Domestic Appeal Hearings scheduled for 2020, it had been agreed with the Secretary to the Appeal Panel that there would be 18 Hearings held in 2021, an increase of 4 compared to the number of scheduled Hearings in 2020.

Details of the outstanding Valuation Appeals and Running Roll appeals in terms of the 2005, 2010 and 2017 Revaluations were provided in the report and Appendices 2 and 3 to the report.

The Assistant Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer responded to a member's question on the likely impact of shop closures on Non-Domestic Appeals.

The Board decided: that the report be noted.

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

7 Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

Convener's Closing Remarks

The Convener extended the compliments of the season to all members and officials present.
