



Grampian Valuation Joint Board

Friday, 21 August 2020

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that at a Meeting of the **Grampian Valuation Joint Board** is to be held at **remote locations via video conference**, on **Friday, 21 August 2020** at **10:30**.

BUSINESS

1. **Sederunt**
2. **GVJB Declaration of Financial and Other Interests**
3. **Minute of Meeting of 19 June 2020** 5 - 8
4. **External Audit Report** 9 - 40
5. **Annual Accounts for Year Ending 31 March 2020 Report** 41 -
120
6. **Operations Update Report** 121 -
122

GUIDANCE NOTES

- * **Declaration of Group Decisions and Members Interests** - At the beginning of the meeting, immediately following the Sederunt, the Convener will, in terms of Standing Order 25, seek declarations from individuals on any financial or other interests.

- ** **Written Questions** - Any member can put one question to the Convener about relevant and competent business not already on the Agenda for a meeting of the Board. No member can put more than one question at any meeting. The member must give notice in writing of their question to the Clerk 4 working days prior to the meeting. A copy of any written answer provided by the Convener will be tabled at the start of the relevant meeting. The member who has put the question may, after the answer has been given, ask one supplementary question directly related to the subject matter but no discussion will be allowed.

- *** **Question Time** - At each ordinary meeting of the Board, 10 minutes will be allowed for question time when any member can put one question to the Convener regarding any matter within the remit of the Board. The Member who has put the question may, after the answer has been given, ask one supplementary question directly related to the subject matter, but no discussion will be allowed. In the event of further information/investigation being required in order to answer the question, the Clerk will arrange for a written answer to be provided within 7 working days.



Grampian Valuation Joint Board

SEDERUNT

Councillor Graham Leadbitter (Chair)
Councillor Bill Cormie (Depute Chair)
Councillor Charles Buchan (Member)
Councillor Marion Buchan (Member)
Councillor Neil Copland (Member)
Councillor Gordon Graham (Member)
Councillor Andy Kille (Member)
Councillor Neil MacGregor (Member)
Councillor Avril Mackenzie (Member)
Councillor Ron McKail (Member)
Councillor John Reynolds (Member)
Councillor Brian Topping (Member)
Councillor Judy Whyte (Member)
Councillor Frank Brown (Member)
Councillor Theresa Coull (Member)

Clerk Name: Tracey Sutherland
Clerk Telephone: 01343 563014
Clerk Email: tracey.sutherland@moray.gov.uk



Minute of Meeting of the Grampian Valuation Joint Board

Friday, 19 June 2020

To be held virtually,

PRESENT

Councillor Frank Brown, Councillor Charles Buchan, Councillor Marion Buchan, Councillor Neil Copland, Councillor Bill Cormie, Councillor Theresa Coull, Councillor Gordon Graham, Councillor Andy Kille, Councillor Graham Leadbitter, Councillor Avril Mackenzie, Councillor Ron McKail, Councillor Brian Topping, Councillor Judy Whyte
Councillor Ryan Houghton (for Councillor John Reynolds)

APOLOGIES

Councillor Neil MacGregor, Councillor John Reynolds

IN ATTENDANCE

Also in attendance at the above meeting were Ian Milton, Assessor and ERO, Lorraine Paisey, Treasurer to the Board and Tracey Sutherland, Committee Services Officer.

1. Chair

The meeting was chaired by Councillor Graham Leadbitter.

The Chair welcomed everyone to the first virtual meeting of the Grampian Valuation Joint Board.

2. GVJB Declaration of Financial and Other Interests

In terms of standing order 25 and the Councillor's Code of Conduct, there were no declarations from a member who was present at the meeting where any item of business in which he or she has any financial or other interest is to be dealt with.

3. Minute of the Meeting - 7 February 2020

The minute of the meeting of 7 February 2020 was submitted and approved by the Board.

4. Minute of Meeting - 20 March 2020

The minute of the meeting of the Board dated 20 March 2020 was submitted and approved by the Board, subject to a change to the wording of recommendation 3(i) to read - three year budget for 2020/21 while noting the further projections up to 2022/23.

5. Revenue Budget Monitoring Statement 1 April to 31 May 2020

A report by the Treasurer asked the Board to consider the Revenue Budget Monitoring Statement for the period 1 April to 31 May 2020.

Following consideration the Board agreed to note the Revenue Monitoring Statement to 31 May 2020.

6. GVJB Unaudited Accounts

A report by the Treasurer asked the Board to consider the Annual Accounts for the Grampian Valuation Joint Board for the year ended 31 March 2020.

Following consideration the Board agreed to note the unaudited Annual Accounts of the Grampian Valuation Joint Board for the year ending 31 March 2020.

7. Register of Electors

A report by the Assessor and ERO updated the Board on legislative developments and also reported on the arrangements for the 2020 canvass and issues arising from the Covid-19 pandemic.

Following consideration the Board agreed to note the content of the report.

8. Valuation Roll and Council Tax

A report by the Assessor and ERO updated the Board on progress in appeal resolution and advised the Board of performance levels achieved during 2019/20, reported progress on the reforms to non-domestic rates (NDR) and the related implications for Assessors and also issues arising from the Covid-19 pandemic.

Following consideration the Board noted the appeal progress and performance information.

9. Risk Management

A report by the Assessor and ERO updated the Board on risk management.

Following consideration the Board noted the risk register and the plans for future reviews.

10. Complaints Handling Process

A report by the Assessor and ERO updated the Board on the complaints handling performance.

Following consideration the Board agreed to note the complaints handling performance.

11. Question Time ***

No further questions were raised.

The Board joined the Chair in thanking the Clerk for setting up the virtual meeting and asked that the Clerk send an email of thanks to all staff in Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils who were involved in getting the ICT issues resolved to allow the meeting to take place remotely.

The Chair further thanked the Assessor and ERO and his team for their hard work in adapting to the current situation.

Grampian Valuation Joint Board
Woodhill House
Westburn Road
Aberdeen
AB15 6GE

21 August 2020

Grampian Valuation Joint Board

Audit of 2019/20 annual accounts

Independent auditor's report

1. Our audit work on the 2019/20 annual accounts is now substantially complete. Subject to receipt of a revised set of annual accounts for final review, we anticipate being able to issue unqualified audit opinions in the independent auditor's report on 21 August 2020.
2. We have included an 'Emphasis of Matter' paragraph in the audit report. This draws attention to the references in Note 4 (Assumptions made about the future and other major sources of estimation uncertainty) which describes the effects of uncertainty caused by Covid-19 on the valuation of the Joint Board's property assets. The audit opinion is not modified in respect of this matter.
3. The proposed report is attached at **Appendix A**.

Annual audit report

4. Under International Standards on Auditing in the UK, we report specific matters arising from the audit of the financial statements to those charged with governance of a body in sufficient time to enable appropriate action. We present for the Grampian Valuation Joint Board's consideration our draft annual report on the 2019/20 audit. The section headed 'Significant findings from the audit of the financial statements' sets out the issues identified in respect of the annual accounts.
5. The report also sets out conclusions from our consideration of two (financial sustainability and the appropriateness of the disclosures in the governance statement) of the four audit dimensions that frame the wider scope of public audit as set out in the Code of Audit Practice. The reasons for this reduced scope are set out in our 2019/20 Annual Audit Plan.
6. This report will be issued in final form after the annual accounts have been certified.

Unadjusted misstatements

7. We also report to those charged with governance all unadjusted misstatements which we have identified during our audit, other than those of a trivial nature, and request that these misstatements be corrected.

8. We have no unadjusted misstatements to be corrected.

Fraud, subsequent events and compliance with laws and regulations

9. In presenting this report to the Grampian Valuation Joint Board we seek confirmation from those charged with governance of any instances of any actual, suspected or alleged fraud; any subsequent events that have occurred since the date of the financial statements; or material non-compliance with laws and regulations affecting the entity that should be brought to our attention.

Representations from the Treasurer

10. As part of the completion of our audit, we are seeking written representations from the Treasurer on aspects of the annual accounts, including the judgements and estimates made.
11. A draft letter of representation is attached at [Appendix B](#). This should be signed and returned to us by the Treasurer with the signed annual accounts prior to the independent auditor's report being certified.

APPENDIX A: Proposed Independent Auditor's Report

Independent auditor's report to the members of Grampian Valuation Joint Board and the Accounts Commission

Report on the audit of the financial statements

Opinion on financial statements

I certify that I have audited the financial statements in the annual accounts of Grampian Valuation Joint Board for the year ended 31 March 2020 under Part VII of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973. The financial statements comprise the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, Movement in Reserves Statement, Balance Sheet, Cash Flow Statement, and notes to the accounts, including a summary of significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRSs) as adopted by the European Union, and as interpreted and adapted by the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2019/20 (the 2019/20 Code).

In my opinion the accompanying financial statements:

- give a true and fair view in accordance with applicable law and the 2019/20 Code of the state of affairs of the Grampian Valuation Joint Board as at 31 March 2020 and of its income and expenditure for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with IFRSs as adopted by the European Union, as interpreted and adapted by the 2019/20 Code; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, The Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014, and the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003.

Basis for opinion

I conducted my audit in accordance with applicable law and International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)), as required by the [Code of Audit Practice](#) approved by the Accounts Commission for Scotland. My responsibilities under those standards are further described in the auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of my report. I was appointed under arrangements approved by the Accounts Commission on 10 April 2017. The period of total uninterrupted appointment is four years. I am independent of Grampian Valuation Joint Board in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to my audit of the financial statements in the UK including the Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standard, and I have fulfilled my other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. Non-audit services prohibited by the Ethical Standard were not provided to the Grampian Valuation Joint Board. I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion.

Emphasis of matter: property valuations

I draw attention to Note 4 'Assumptions made about the future and other major sources of estimation uncertainty' of the accounts, which describes the effects of a material uncertainty, caused by Covid-19, on the property valuations included in the annual accounts. My opinion is not modified in respect of this matter.

Conclusions relating to going concern basis of accounting

I have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the ISAs (UK) require me to report to you where:

- the use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is not appropriate; or
- the Treasurer has not disclosed in the financial statements any identified material uncertainties that may cast significant doubt about Grampian Valuation Joint Board's ability to continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting for a period of at least twelve months from the date when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Risks of material misstatement

I report in a separate Annual Audit Report, available from the [Audit Scotland website](#), the most significant assessed risks of material misstatement that I identified and my conclusions thereon.

Responsibilities of the Treasurer and Grampian Valuation Joint Board for the financial statements

As explained more fully in the Statement of Responsibilities for the Annual Accounts, the Treasurer is responsible for the preparation of financial statements that give a true and fair view in accordance with the financial reporting framework, and for such internal control as the Treasurer determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the Treasurer is responsible for assessing the Grampian Valuation Joint Board's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless deemed inappropriate.

The Grampian Valuation Joint Board is responsible for overseeing the financial reporting process.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

My objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes my opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control. The capability of the audit to detect fraud and other irregularities depends on factors such as the skilfulness of the perpetrator, the frequency and extent of manipulation, the degree of collusion involved, the relative size of individual amounts manipulated, and the seniority of those individuals involved. I therefore design and perform audit procedures which respond to the assessed risks of material misstatement due to fraud.

A further description of the auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of my auditor's report.

Other information in the annual accounts

The Treasurer is responsible for the other information in the annual accounts. The other information comprises the information other than the financial statements, the audited part of the Remuneration Report, and my auditor's report thereon. My opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and I do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon except on matters prescribed by the Accounts Commission to the extent explicitly stated later in this report.

In connection with my audit of the financial statements, my responsibility is to read all the other information in the annual accounts and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or my knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If I identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, I am required to determine whether there is a material misstatement in the financial statements or a material misstatement of the other information. If, based on the work I have performed, I conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, I am required to report that fact. I have nothing to report in this regard.

Report on other requirements

Opinions on matters prescribed by the Accounts Commission

In my opinion, the audited part of the Remuneration Report has been properly prepared in accordance with The Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014.

In my opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- the information given in the Management Commentary for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements and that report has been prepared in accordance with statutory guidance issued under the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003; and
- the information given in the Annual Governance Statement for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements and that report has been prepared in accordance with the Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework (2016).

Matters on which I am required to report by exception

I am required by the Accounts Commission to report to you if, in my opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept; or
- the financial statements and the audited part of the Remuneration Report are not in agreement with the accounting records; or
- I have not received all the information and explanations I require for my audit.

I have nothing to report in respect of these matters.

Conclusions on wider scope responsibilities

In addition to my responsibilities for the annual accounts, my conclusions on the wider scope responsibilities specified in the Code of Audit Practice are set out in my Annual Audit Report.

Use of my report

This report is made solely to the parties to whom it is addressed in accordance with Part VII of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 and for no other purpose. In accordance with paragraph 120 of the Code of Audit Practice, I do not undertake to have responsibilities to members or officers, in their individual capacities, or to third parties.

Maggie Bruce
Senior Audit Manager
Audit Scotland
1st Floor, Room F03
The Green House
Beechwood Business Park North
Inverness
IV2 3BL

21 August 2020

APPENDIX B: Letter of Representation (ISA 580)

Maggie Bruce
Senior Audit Manager
Audit Scotland
1st Floor
Room F03
The Green House
Beechwood Business Park North
Inverness
IV2 3BL

Date

Dear Maggie

Grampian Valuation Joint Board Annual Accounts 2019/20

1. This representation letter is provided about your audit of the annual accounts of Grampian Valuation Joint Board for the year ended 31 March 2020 for the purpose of expressing an opinion as to whether the financial statements give a true and fair view in accordance with the financial reporting framework, and for expressing other opinions on the remuneration report, management commentary and annual governance statement.
2. I confirm to the best of my knowledge and belief and having made appropriate enquiries of the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer and the management team, the following representations given to you in connection with your audit of Grampian Valuation Joint Board annual accounts for the year ended 31 March 2020.

General

3. Grampian Valuation Joint Board and I have fulfilled our statutory responsibilities for the preparation of the 2019/20 annual accounts. All the accounting records, documentation and other matters which I am aware are relevant to the preparation of the annual accounts have been made available to you for the purposes of your audit. All transactions undertaken by Grampian Valuation Joint Board have been recorded in the accounting records and are properly reflected in the financial statements.
4. I confirm that the effects of uncorrected misstatements are immaterial, individually and in aggregate, to the financial statements as a whole. I am not aware of any uncorrected misstatements other than those reported by you.

Financial Reporting Framework

5. The annual accounts have been prepared in accordance with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2019/20 (2019/20 Code), and in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 and The Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014.
6. In accordance with the 2014 regulations, I have ensured that the financial statements give a true and fair view of the financial position of the Grampian Valuation Joint Board at 31 March 2020 and the transactions for 2019/20.

Accounting Policies & Estimates

7. All significant accounting policies applied are as shown in the notes to the accounts. The accounting policies are determined by the 2019/20 Code where applicable. Where the Code does not specifically apply, I have used judgement in developing and applying an accounting policy that results in information that is relevant and reliable. All accounting policies applied are appropriate to Grampian Valuation Joint Board circumstances and have been consistently applied.
8. The significant assumptions used in making accounting estimates are reasonable and properly reflected in the financial statements. Judgements used in making estimates have been based on the latest available, reliable information. Estimates have been revised where there are changes in the circumstances on which the original estimate was based or as a result of new information or experience.

Going Concern Basis of Accounting

9. I have assessed Grampian Valuation Joint Board ability to continue to use the going concern basis of accounting and have concluded that it is appropriate. I am not aware of any material uncertainties that may cast significant doubt on Grampian Valuation Joint Board's ability to continue as a going concern.

Assets

10. Where a rolling programme of asset valuations has been used, I have satisfied myself that the carrying amount of assets at 31 March 2020 does not differ materially from that which would be determined if a revaluation had been carried out at that date.
11. I carried out an assessment at 31 March 2020 as to whether there is any indication that an asset may be impaired and have recognised any impairment losses identified.
12. I have provided you with all information of which I am aware regarding any valuation exercises carried out after 31 March 2020.
13. There are no plans or intentions that are likely to affect the carrying value or classification of the assets recognised within the financial statements.
14. Owned assets are free from any lien, encumbrance or charge except as disclosed in the financial statements.

Liabilities

15. All liabilities at 31 March 2020 of which I am aware have been recognised in the annual accounts.
16. Provisions have been recognised in the financial statements for all liabilities of uncertain timing or amount at 31 March 2020 of which I am aware where the conditions specified in the 2019/20 Code have been met. The amount recognised as a provision is the best estimate of the expenditure likely to be required to settle the obligation at 31 March 2020. Where the effect of the time value of money is material, the amount of the provision has been discounted to the present value of the expected payments.

17. Provisions recognised in previous years have been reviewed and adjusted, where appropriate, to reflect the best estimate at 31 March 2020 or to reflect material changes in the assumptions underlying the calculations of the cash flows.
18. The accrual recognised in the financial statements for holiday untaken by 31 March 2020 has been estimated on a reasonable basis.
19. The pension assumptions made by the actuary in the IAS 19 report for Grampian Valuation Joint Board have been considered and I confirm that they are consistent with management's own view.
20. There are no plans or intentions that are likely to affect the carrying value or classification of the liabilities recognised in the financial statements.

Contingent liabilities

21. There are no significant contingent liabilities arising either under formal agreement or through formal undertakings requiring disclosure in the accounts. All known contingent liabilities have been fully and properly disclosed, including any outstanding legal claims which have not been provided under the 2019/20 Code and IAS 37.

Fraud

22. I have provided you with all information in relation to:
 - my assessment of the risk that the financial statements may be materially misstated because of fraud
 - any allegations of fraud or suspected fraud affecting the financial statements
 - fraud or suspected fraud that I am aware of involving management, employees who have a significant role in internal control, or others that could have a material effect on the financial statements.

Laws and Regulations

23. I have disclosed to you all known instances of non-compliance or suspected non-compliance with laws and regulations whose effects should be considered when preparing financial statements.

Related Party Transactions

24. All material transactions with related parties have been appropriately accounted for and disclosed in the financial statements in accordance with the 2019/20 Code. I have made available to you the identity of all Grampian Valuation Joint Board's related parties and all the related party relationships and transactions of which I am aware.

Remuneration Report

25. The Remuneration Report has been prepared in accordance with the Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2014, and all required information of which I am aware has been provided to you.

Management Commentary

26. I confirm that the Management Commentary has been prepared in accordance with the statutory guidance and the information is consistent with the financial statements.

Corporate Governance

27. I confirm that the Grampian Valuation Joint Board has undertaken a review of the system of internal control during 2019/20 to establish the extent to which it complies with proper practices set out in the Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework 2016. I have disclosed to you all deficiencies in internal control identified from this review or of which I am otherwise aware.
28. I confirm that the Annual Governance Statement has been prepared in accordance with the Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework 2016 and the information is consistent with the financial statements. There have been no changes in the corporate governance arrangements or issues identified, since 31 March 2020, which require to be reflected.

Events Subsequent to the Date of the Balance Sheet

29. All events subsequent to 31 March 2020 for which the 2019/20 Code requires adjustment or disclosure have been adjusted or disclosed.

Other Matters

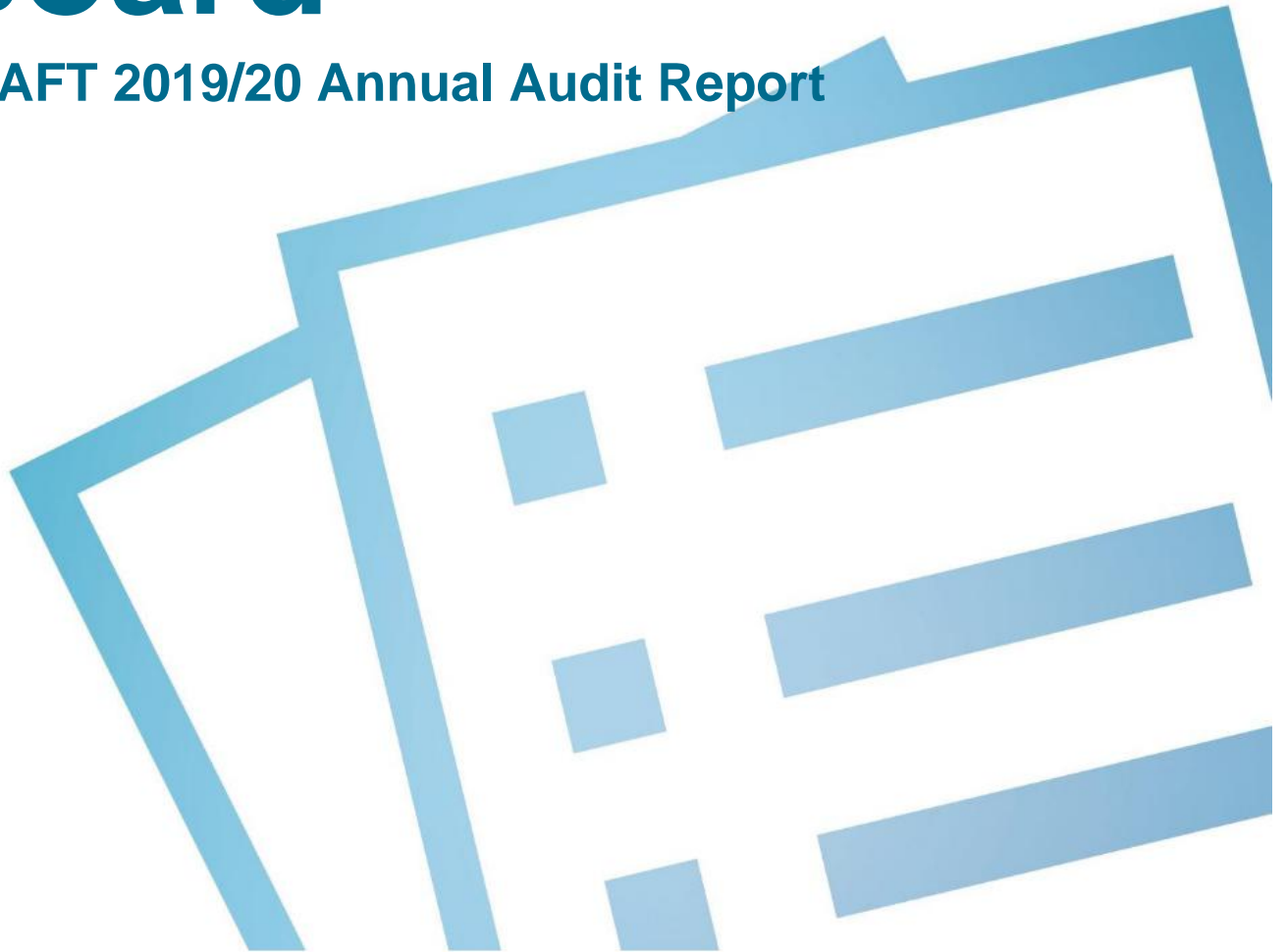
30. **Covid-19 impact.** I have reviewed the impact of Covid-19 on the financial statements and have reflected on the impact on property markets in Note 4 'Assumptions made about the future and other major sources of estimation uncertainty'. I am satisfied that all reasonable action has been taken to identify the impact of Covid-19 on the fair value of property (land and buildings) and that this has been disclosed appropriately in the financial statements.

Yours sincerely

Lorraine Paisey
Treasurer

Grampian Valuation Joint Board

DRAFT 2019/20 Annual Audit Report

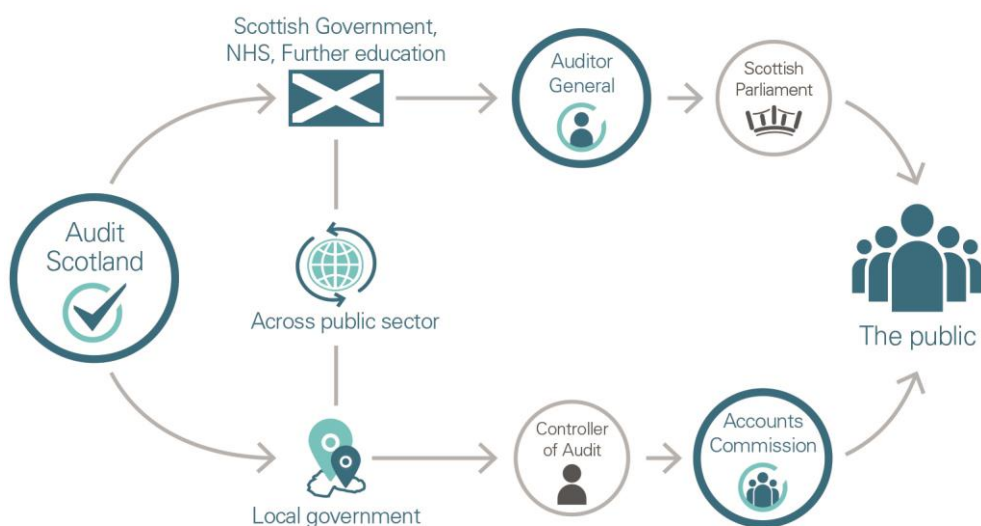


Prepared for Grampian Valuation Joint Board and the Controller of Audit
21 August 2020

Who we are

The Auditor General, the Accounts Commission and Audit Scotland work together to deliver public audit in Scotland:

- the Auditor General is an independent crown appointment, made on the recommendation of the Scottish Parliament, to audit the Scottish Government, NHS and other bodies and report to Parliament on their financial health and performance
- the Accounts Commission is an independent public body appointed by Scottish ministers to hold local government to account. The Controller of Audit is an independent post established by statute, with powers to report directly to the Commission on the audit of local government
- Audit Scotland is governed by a board, consisting of the Auditor General, the chair of the Accounts Commission, a non-executive board chair, and two non-executive members appointed by the Scottish Commission for Public Audit, a commission of the Scottish Parliament.



About us

Our vision is to be a world-class audit organisation that improves the use of public money.

Through our work for the Auditor General and the Accounts Commission, we provide independent assurance to the people of Scotland that public money is spent properly and provides value. We aim to achieve this by:

- carrying out relevant and timely audits of the way the public sector manages and spends money
- reporting our findings and conclusions in public
- identifying risks and making clear and relevant recommendations.

Contents

Key messages	4
Introduction	5
Part 1 Audit of 2019/20 Annual Accounts	7
Part 2 Financial sustainability and annual governance statement disclosures	11
Appendix 1 Action plan 2019/20	15
Appendix 2 Significant audit risks identified during planning	18
Appendix 3 Summary of national performance reports 2019/20	20

Key messages

Audit of 2019/20 annual accounts

- 1 The Joint Board's financial statements give a true and fair view and were properly prepared in accordance with the Code of Practice on local authority accounting in the UK 2019/20.
- 2 The management commentary, annual governance statement and the audited part of the remuneration report were all consistent with the financial statements and were properly prepared in accordance with the applicable requirements.
- 3 An 'Emphasis of Matter' paragraph is included in the independent auditor's report to draw attention to the impact of Covid-19 on property valuations. The audit opinion is not modified in respect of this matter.

Financial sustainability and annual governance statement disclosures

- 4 The Joint Board underspent its 2019/20 budget by £0.215 million. The majority of this (£0.116 million) was returned to constituent authorities with £0.099 million added to reserves.
- 5 Reserves have been used to balance the 2020/21 budget in order to reduce constituent authorities' requisitions.
- 6 The Joint Board has made good progress in developing its approach to medium-term financial planning. We would encourage it to continue to work towards development of a long-term financial strategy.
- 7 Annual governance statement disclosures are appropriate.

Introduction

1. This report summarises the findings from our 2019/20 audit of Grampian Valuation Joint Board (the Joint Board).
2. The scope of our audit was set out in our Annual Audit Plan presented to the February 2020 meeting of the Joint Board. This report comprises the findings from:
 - our audit of the Joint Board's annual accounts
 - consideration of the Joint Board's financial sustainability and the appropriateness of the disclosures in the annual governance statement.
3. In common with all organisations, the Joint Board has had to respond to the global coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic. This affected the final month of the 2019/20 financial year and will continue to have a significant impact in 2020/21.
4. As we undertook our audit planning work prior to the pandemic, we reviewed our assessment of audit risks and the planned audit work in June 2020 and concluded that they remained relevant.

Adding value through the audit

5. We add value to the Joint Board through the audit by:
 - identifying and providing insight on significant risks, and making clear and relevant recommendations
 - sharing intelligence and good practice through our national reports ([Appendix 3](#)) and good practice guides
 - providing clear conclusions on the appropriateness of the disclosures in the annual governance statements and financial sustainability.
6. In so doing, we aim to help the Joint Board promote improved standards of governance, better management and decision-making and more effective use of resources.

Responsibilities and reporting

7. The Joint Board has primary responsibility for ensuring the proper financial stewardship of public funds. This includes preparing annual accounts that are in accordance with proper accounting practices. The Joint Board is also responsible for compliance with legislation, putting arrangements in place for governance, propriety and regularity that enable it to successfully deliver its objectives, and that demonstrate Best Value in how it conducts its activities.
8. Our responsibilities, as independent auditor appointed by the Accounts Commission, are established by the Local Government in Scotland Act 1973, the Code of Audit Practice (2016) and supplementary guidance and International Standards on Auditing in the UK.
9. Further details of the respective responsibilities of management and the auditor can be found in the [Code of Audit Practice 2016](#) and supplementary guidance.

10. The Code of Audit Practice 2016 (the Code) includes provisions relating to the audit of small bodies. Where the application of the full wider audit scope is judged by auditors not to be appropriate to an audited body then the annual audit work can focus on the appropriateness of the disclosures in the governance statement and the financial sustainability of the body and its services. As highlighted in our 2019/20 Annual Audit Plan, due to the volume and lack of complexity of the financial transactions, we applied the small body provisions of the Code of Audit Practice to the 2019/20 audit

11. This report raises matters from our audit. The weaknesses or risks identified are only those which have come to our attention during our normal audit work and may not be all that exist. Communicating these does not absolve management from its responsibility to address the issues we raise and to maintain adequate systems of control.

12. Our annual audit report contains an agreed action plan at [Appendix 1](#) setting out specific recommendations, responsible officers and dates for implementation. It also includes outstanding actions from last year and progress against these.

Auditor Independence

13. Auditors appointed by the Accounts Commission or Auditor general must comply with the Code of Audit Practice and relevant supporting guidance. When auditing the financial statements, auditors must comply with professional standards issued by the Financial Reporting Council and those of the professional accountancy bodies.

14. We can confirm that we comply with the Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standard. We can also confirm that we have not undertaken any non-audit related services. The 2019/20 audit fee of £7,450 set out in our Annual Audit Plan remains unchanged. We are not aware of any relationships that could compromise our objectivity and independence.

15. This report is addressed to both the Joint Board and the Controller of Audit and will be published on Audit Scotland's website www.audit-scotland.gov.uk in due course.

16. We would like to thank the management and staff for their cooperation and assistance during the audit, particularly given the current challenges presented by the impact of Covid-19.

Part 1

Audit of 2019/20 Annual Accounts



Main judgements

The Joint Board's financial statements give a true and fair view and were properly prepared in accordance with the Code of Practice on local authority accounting in the UK 2019/20.

The management commentary, annual governance statement and the audited part of the remuneration report, were all consistent with the financial statements and properly prepared in accordance with the applicable requirements.

An 'Emphasis of Matter' paragraph is included in the independent auditor's report to draw attention to the impact of Covid-19 on property valuations. The audit opinion is not modified in respect of this matter.

The annual accounts are the principal means of accounting for the stewardship of the Joint Board's resources and its performance in the use of those resources.

Our audit opinions on the annual accounts are unmodified

17. The annual accounts for the year ended 31 March 2020 were approved by the Joint Board on 21 August 2020 (TBC). We reported, within the independent auditor's report, that:

- the financial statements give a true and fair view and were properly prepared in accordance with the Code of Practice on local authority accounting in the UK 2019/20 (the Code)
- the management commentary, annual governance statement and the audited part of the remuneration report were all consistent with the financial statements and properly prepared in accordance with the applicable requirements
- we have nothing to report in respect of those matters which we are required by the Accounts Commission to report by exception.

18. We have included an 'Emphasis of Matter' paragraph in our independent auditor's report which refers to the impact of Covid-19 on property valuations. Emphasis of Matter paragraphs are added to auditors' reports where the auditor considers it necessary to draw users' attention to matters which are fundamental to the understanding of the accounts. Note 4 (Assumptions made about the future and other sources of estimation uncertainty) in the annual accounts describes the uncertainty caused. The opinion is not modified in respect of this matter. Further information is contained in [Exhibit 2](#) below.

The annual accounts were signed off within the original timescales

19. The unaudited annual accounts were received, on 29 May 2020, in line with our agreed audit timetable. Both Joint Board and Audit Scotland staff worked from home for the duration of the audit due to the Covid-19 pandemic and this presented challenges for both the finance and audit teams. As a result, the audit took longer than normal to complete.

20. The unaudited annual accounts and supporting working papers were of a good standard and the audit team received good support from the finance team. Remote working meant that some elements of the accounts and some supporting working papers were not provided at the start of the audit.

21. Regular communication and good working relationships between the finance and audit teams helped ensure the audit ran relatively smoothly and, despite the challenges of lockdown, we were able to complete the audit on 21 August 2020 (TBC) as set out in our annual audit plan.

Overall materiality is £0.1 million

22. The assessment of what is material is a matter of professional judgement. It involves considering both the amount and nature of the misstatement.

23. On receipt of the unaudited annual accounts we reviewed our materiality calculations and updated them as set out in [Exhibit 1](#).

Exhibit 1 Materiality values

Materiality level	Amount
Overall materiality	£0.1 million
Performance materiality	£0.07 million
Reporting threshold	£0.005 million

Source: Audit Scotland

Our work to address the main risks of material misstatement is set out in Appendix 2 with key findings reported in Exhibit 2

24. [Appendix 2](#) provides our assessment of the risks of material misstatement in the annual accounts and any wider audit dimension risks. These risks influence our overall audit strategy, the allocation of staff resources to the audit and indicate how the audit team was directed. The Appendix summarises the work we have done to address these risks and our conclusions from this work.

25. We undertook our planning work and issued our 2019/20 annual audit plan prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. In line with auditing standards and professional advice, including the [Financial Reporting Council's Covid-19 bulletin](#) published in March 2020, we reviewed our assessment of audit risks and the planned audit work in June 2020 and concluded that they remained relevant. There have not been any changes to the audit risks, our audit approach or the timing of our audit.

26. Matters arising from our work on the risks of material misstatement include risks relating to management judgement and estimation and are discussed further in [Exhibit 2](#) below.

Significant findings from the audit of the financial statements

27. International Standard on Auditing (UK) 260 requires us to communicate significant findings from the audit to those charged with governance, including our view about the qualitative aspects of the Joint Board's accounting practices. The significant findings are summarised in [Exhibit 2](#).

Exhibit 2

Significant findings from the audit of the financial statements

Finding	Resolution
<p>1. Impact of Covid-19 on the valuation of property (land and buildings)</p> <p>The Joint Board's land and buildings portfolio (£0.668 million) is valued in full every five years with impairment reviews undertaken in each of the intervening years. The valuations are provided by Moray Council's in-house valuer.</p> <p>As part of his impairment review the valuer noted a 'material valuation uncertainty' clause regarding the impact of Covid-19 on the valuation of land and buildings, and pointed out that a higher degree of caution should be attached to the valuations contained in the annual accounts than would normally be the case.</p> <p>Note 4 (Assumptions made about the future and other sources of material uncertainty) to the accounts notes there is significant uncertainty in the property markets and that there is potential for the Joint Board's property asset values to change significantly.</p>	<p>We added an Emphasis of Matter paragraph to the independent auditor's report because we believe the disclosure is fundamental to users' understanding of the accounts.</p> <p>The audit opinion is not modified in respect of this matter.</p> <p>We have sought and received the Treasurer's assurances on management's assessment of the fair value of land and buildings in the ISA580 representation letter.</p>
<p>2. Revised IAS 19 disclosures</p> <p>Finance staff received a revised IAS 19 report from the pension scheme's actuary after the annual accounts were submitted for audit. The actuary revised the report to reflect changes to the expected costs resulting from the McCloud judgement and to update the valuation of investments. The impact of this late adjustment was to reduce pension liabilities and the pension reserve by £0.177 million in the audited accounts.</p>	<p>The audited accounts have been amended to reflect this late adjustment.</p>
<p>3. Holiday and flexi pay accrual</p> <p>The holiday and flexi pay accrual included in the unaudited accounts had not been calculated in line with the requirements of the Code. As a result, the net cost of services and short-term creditors were overstated by £0.022 million.</p>	<p>The audited accounts have been amended to correct this misstatement.</p>
<p>4. Remuneration Report disclosures</p> <p>Remuneration disclosures for two senior employees were overstated in the unaudited accounts due to an error in the working paper used to compile the disclosures.</p>	<p>The audited accounts have been amended to correct this misstatement.</p>

Source: Audit Scotland

The financial statements were amended to reflect all of our audit findings decreasing net liabilities by £0.199 million

28. Presentational and monetary adjustments to the accounts identified during the audit process were discussed with management who agreed to amend the financial statements. The net effect of the adjustments identified during the audit process was to decrease net liabilities by £0.199 million.

29. There was one material adjustment to the unaudited financial statements resulting from late receipt of a revised IAS 19 report from the actuary (see Exhibit 2, no. 2 above). We considered whether further audit procedures were necessary and concluded that additional procedures were not required.

30. It is our responsibility to request that all misstatements, other than those below the reporting threshold, are corrected. The final decision on this lies with those charged with governance considering advice from senior officers and materiality. There are no unadjusted misstatements in excess of our reporting thresholds to report to those charged with governance.

The management commentary could be further improved

31. In addition to the opinion on the management commentary noted at paragraph 17 above, we also consider the qualitative aspects of the management commentary. The purpose of a management commentary is to provide information on a body, its main objectives and the principal risks it faces. It should provide a fair, balanced and understandable analysis of a body's performance as well as helping stakeholders understand the financial statements.

32. Our review of the management commentary submitted for audit concluded that there was scope to provide a more balanced picture of performance in 2019/20. We discussed this with management who agreed to update the narrative. The revised narrative provides a more complete picture of the Joint Board's performance and we have concluded that the audited management commentary meets the requirements of the Code.

33. In our view, there is scope to further improve the management commentary and we would recommend that the Joint Board review its management commentary against Audit Scotland's '[Good Practice Note on Management Commentaries: Enhancing the quality of local government annual accounts](#)' as part of its preparation of the 2020/21 annual accounts.



Recommendation 1

The Joint Board should review the content and presentation of its management commentary against Audit Scotland's good practice guide.

Good progress was made on prior year recommendations

34. The Joint Board has made good progress in implementing our prior year audit recommendations. For actions not yet implemented, revised responses and timescales have been agreed with management, and are set out in [Appendix 1](#).

Part 2

Financial sustainability and annual governance statement disclosures



Main judgements

The Joint Board underspent its 2019/20 budget by £0.215 million. The majority of this (£0.116 million) will be returned to constituent authorities with £0.099 million added to reserves.

Reserves have been used to balance the 2020/21 budget in order to reduce constituent authorities' requisitions.

The Joint Board has made good progress in developing its approach to medium-term financial planning. We would encourage it to continue to work towards development of a long-term financial strategy.

Annual governance statement disclosures are appropriate.

Financial sustainability looks forward to the medium and longer-term to consider whether the body is planning effectively to continue to deliver its services or the way in which they should be delivered.

The 2019/20 budget was underspent by £0.215 million

35. The Joint Board's net operating expenditure in 2019/20 was £4.248 million compared to budgeted net expenditure of £4.463 million, an underspend of £0.215 million. The majority of this underspend relates to vacant posts (£0.166 million). [Exhibit 3](#) summarises performance against budget in 2019/20.

Exhibit 3 Performance against budget 2019/20

	Budget £'000	Actual £'000	Variance £'000
Employee benefit expenses	3,461	3,292	(169)
Other service expenses	1,090	1,070	(20)
Support service recharges	57	57	-
Requisitions	(4,463)	(4,463)	-
Government grants and other service income	(143)	(166)	(23)
Interest and investment income	(2)	(5)	(3)
Net (Under)/overspend against budget	-	(215)	(215)

Source: GVJB Annual Accounts 2019/20

36. The net operating expenditure (£4.248 million) differs from the net cost of services disclosed in the comprehensive income and expenditure statement of £4.786 million by £0.538 million. This is because reports prepared for the Joint Board's monitoring purposes are prepared on a different basis from the accounting policies used to prepare the financial statements.

37. Note 7 to the accounts reconciles the figures in the budget outturn report to the figures in the comprehensive income and expenditure statement (note: £5,000 of interest income is included in the Other Income and Expenditure line in Note 7 but offset against net expenditure in the budget monitoring reports). Note 7 shows that the majority of the difference is due to the cost of retirement benefits which are based on cash flows in the budget monitoring reports, but on the current service costs of benefits accrued in the year within the accounts.

38. The Joint Board's balance sheet as at 31 March 2020 was in a net liability position due to the requirements of IAS19 (Retirement Benefits). This liability will be made good by increased contributions over the remaining working lives of the employees, as assessed by the scheme's actuary.

Reserves increased by £0.099 million with £0.116 million to be returned to constituent authorities

39. The Joint Board maintains a General Fund balance to support medium-term financial planning and to address any unforeseen costs. In the absence of a more specific regulation for Valuation Joint Boards in respect of the carry forward limits on the General Fund, members agreed that a maximum of 3% of the total budget should be added to the general fund in any one year as long as the cumulative balance does not exceed 5% of the total budget in that year.

40. In February 2020, the Joint Board agreed to earmark the underspend (£0.091 million) on the budget for Non-Domestic Rates reform as an additional part of the General Fund. This underspend resulted from difficulties in recruiting additional staff and slippage on IT projects due to existing staff focusing on the unscheduled elections in May and December 2019. After transferring the maximum permitted (£0.008 million) to its uncommitted General Fund balance, the remainder of the underspend (£0.116 million) will be returned to constituent authorities.

Reserves have been used to balance the 2020/21 budget in order to reduce constituent authorities' requisitions

41. The 2020/21 budget paper, presented to the Joint Board at its February 2020 meeting, proposed an increase of £0.370 million (8.3%) compared to the 2019/20 budget. The majority (£0.265 million) of this increase related to additional costs associated with NDR reform which are funded by the Scottish Government through the local government settlement to constituent authorities. 2020/21 is also the first year that the Joint Board will have to fund the full costs of Individual Electoral Registration which have previously been funded through a separate government grant (£0.152 million received in 2019/20).

42. A number of members raised concerns about the level of increase in requisitions and, following lengthy discussion, the Joint Board agreed to defer the decision on the budget to allow discussions to take place with the Assessor and Treasurer; and to hold a special meeting before 31 March 2020 to agree a budget for 2020/21.

43. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, Standing Orders were suspended to allow the special meeting to be held via email on 20 March 2020. At this meeting, the 2020/21 budget was agreed at the previously proposed level (£4.833 million) with £0.130 million being funded by reserves and the remainder (£4.703 million) by constituent authorities.

44. This is the first year that the General Fund balance has been used to balance the Joint Board's budget and as a result, the uncommitted General Fund balance is expected to reduce to £0.093 million (1.9% of 2020/21 net budget) at 31 March 2021 (£0.223 million as at 31 March 2020).

45. The latest budget monitoring report, as at 31 May 2020, shows an underspend against the budget to date of £0.144 million. A detailed estimated outturn statement will be reported to the Joint Board meeting in November 2020.

A three-year financial plan has been developed and approved by the Joint Board

46. In previous years we have highlighted the importance of medium to longer-term financial planning and recommended that the Joint Board develops a medium to long-term financial strategy supported by clear and detailed financial plans.

47. In November 2019, the Treasurer presented a three-year financial plan to the Joint Board which set out three scenarios (optimistic, worst case and mid-point) for budget areas (salaries and recruitment, income and the impact of an unplanned election or referendum) where the financial implication is not certain.

48. The recommended scenarios were built into an indicative budget for the three years to 31 March 2023 which was included in an Appendix to the November report. This formed the basis of the three-year budget considered by the Joint Board in February 2020 and approved in March 2020.

49. The approved budget sets out the financial challenges facing the Joint Board: no provision has been made for the costs of repairs and maintenance required to the Joint Board's premises, and employee costs are projected to rise to £4.1 million in 2022/23 by which time they will account for 79% of the Joint Board's net expenditure. These challenges are likely to put pressure on the General Fund balance which has already been reduced to balance the 2020/21 budget.

50. There are currently no plans to develop a longer-term financial strategy. Work has begun to update the three-year financial plan to reflect the changes and uncertainties caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. An updated three-year financial plan will be submitted to the November 2020 meeting and this will form the basis of the budget paper presented to the Joint Board in February 2021. The Assessor has committed to continue to identify additional efficiencies and savings as part of this process.

51. We have concluded that the Joint Board has made good progress in developing its approach to medium-term financial planning and recognise the need to focus on the immediate and medium-term impact of the current pandemic. We would, however, stress the importance of longer-term financial planning to the achievement of financial sustainability and encourage the Joint Board to continue to work towards development of a long-term financial strategy.

Annual governance statement disclosures are appropriate

52. Our review of the Annual Governance Statement within the annual accounts assessed the assurances which are provided to the Treasurer regarding the adequacy and effectiveness of the Joint Board's system of internal control which operated in the financial year. As in previous years, the Treasurer has placed reliance on the Internal Audit Manager's opinion that 'reasonable assurance can be placed on the adequacy and effectiveness of the system of internal financial control established within the Assessor's Service.'

53. The Annual Governance Statement sets out the key challenges facing the Joint Board in 2020/21. These include upgrading operational capacity in terms of workforce, processes and IT systems, improving and streamlining governance arrangements, and making optimal use of the new electoral registration system.

54. We concluded that the information in the Annual Governance Statement is consistent with the financial statements and complies with the guidance issued by Scottish Ministers.

Covid-19 has affected the Joint Board's governance arrangements

55. The Joint Board has amended its governance arrangements as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. A crisis management team has been established which meets daily and, at the start of the lockdown, employees were provided with equipment from the offices to allow them to work from home. As lockdown continued staff were permitted to purchase additional equipment, such as full-size monitors, to improve their home working environment. Other changes made in response to the pandemic include:

- Joint Board meetings have been held virtually with no changes to the original dates
- site inspections and visits to households for registration and canvass purposes have been suspended in line with Scottish Government guidance
- Valuation Appeals Committees were suspended with appeal hearings due to resume in Autumn 2020.

56. We have concluded that the Joint Board has been proactive in dealing with the changed operating environment and, as a result, the Joint Board has continued to operate during the lockdown period. Management are currently working with a consultant to develop a longer-term approach to remote working. We will assess the new arrangements as part of our 2020/21 audit. The scale and pace of change as a result of Covid-19 poses a risk that key financial controls will not operate as intended. Arrangements need to be put in place to ensure that these remain effective.



Recommendation 2

The Joint Board should ensure that controls remain effective during this period of uncertainty and as new ways of working are developed and adopted.

National performance audit reports

57. Audit Scotland carries out a national performance audit programme on behalf of the Accounts Commission and the Auditor General for Scotland. Although there were no reports published in 2019/20 which were of direct interest to the Joint Board, there were others with some wider relevance. These are included in [Appendix 3](#).

Appendix 1

Action plan 2019/20



No.	Issue/risk	Recommendation	Agreed management action/timing
1	<p>Management commentary</p> <p>The management commentary included in the unaudited annual accounts required amendment before we could conclude that it met the requirements of the Code.</p> <p>Risk: there is a risk that the Joint Board fails to communicate effectively with its stakeholders.</p>	<p>The Joint Board should review the content and presentation of its 2020/21 management commentary against Audit Scotland's good practice guide.</p> <p>Recommendation 1, paragraphs 31 to 33</p>	<p>The management commentary for 2020/21 will reflect the latest good practice guidance.</p> <p>Responsible officer: Assessor & ERO</p> <p>Agreed date: 30 June 2020</p>
2	<p>Internal control arrangements</p> <p>The scale and pace of change as a result of Covid-19 poses a risk to the Joint Board's governance arrangements.</p> <p>Risk: there is a risk that key financial controls do not operate as intended due to new ways of working.</p>	<p>The Joint Board should ensure that internal controls remain effective during this period of uncertainty and as new ways of working are developed and adopted.</p> <p>Recommendation 2, paragraph 56.</p>	<p>The organisation will review business processes to ensure that appropriate adjustments are made to reflect the new working environment.</p> <p>Responsible officers: Treasurer and Assessor & ERO</p> <p>Agreed date: 1 January 2021</p>
Follow up of prior year recommendations			
3	<p>Medium to long term financial planning</p> <p>The Joint Board's budgets are prepared and approved on an annual basis and include an indicative budget for the following year. Since 2016/17 we have recommended that the Joint Board prepare a long-term financial strategy supported by clear and detailed financial plans. Limited progress has been made with this to date.</p> <p>Risk: the Joint Board is unable to deliver all of its commitments or meet performance targets within its existing resources.</p>	<p>The Joint board should continue to develop its long-term financial strategy supported by clear and detailed financial plans (3 years +). Plans should set out scenario plans (best, worst, most likely) with a clear assessment of the impact of the budget assumptions on activity and any residual risks.</p>	<p>This action was delayed while we awaited information on the impact of the Barclay review and the associated funding.</p> <p>A more achievable three-year financial strategy will be compiled. The first stage of this will be reported to the Board in the autumn.</p> <p>Responsible officer: Assessor & ERO and Treasurer</p> <p>Agreed date: To commence September 2019</p>



No. Issue/risk

Recommendation

Agreed management action/timing

		2019/20 Update The Joint Board has made good progress in developing its approach to medium-term financial planning and we recognise the need to focus on the immediate and medium-term impact of the current pandemic (paragraphs 46 to 51). Completed
4	Related party returns and registers of interest Of the 15 related party returns issued to members, only 8 responses (53%) were received. Senior officers are not asked to complete a related party return. Review of Joint Board member's registers of interest noted that only 3 showed evidence of update within the previous 6 months. The Joint Board's senior officers have not completed a register of interests' disclosure. Risk Related party transactions are not all detected and disclosed within the annual account	<p>The Joint Board should review its procedures for identifying related parties within the annual accounts. These should cover both members and senior officers. In addition, members should be reminded of the importance of keeping their registers of interest up to date and senior officers should be asked to complete a register of interests return.</p> <p>2018/19 Update In June 2019, the Joint Board agreed that all staff should complete registers of interest. Members have been reminded of the importance of completing related party returns. Return rates from members improved to 73% in 2018/19.</p> <p>Revised action All staff will be asked to complete registers of interest by 31 August 2019. Members will again be reminded of their responsibilities regarding related party returns as part of a training session to be given by the Treasurer in August 2019.</p> <p>Responsible officer: Assessor & ERO and Treasurer</p> <p>Revised date: August 2019</p> <p>2019/20 Update Return rates from members improved to 87% in 2019/20. The Assessor and Deputies completed the register of interest in June 2020. The register of interests has not yet been rolled out to remaining staff.</p> <p>Revised action/date Roll out to all staff by 1 November 2020</p>



No.	Issue/risk	Recommendation	Agreed management action/timing
5	<p>Governance documents</p> <p>The following policies require to be reviewed to ensure that they are up to date and reflect the latest guidance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Code of Corporate Governance (last reviewed 2006)• Code of Conduct (last reviewed 2008)• Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy (last reviewed 2009)• Confidential Reporting (Whistleblowing) Policy (last reviewed 2008)• Contingencies Plan (last reviewed 2010). <p>In addition, a scheme of delegation has not been prepared for the Joint Board</p>	<p>Governance documents should be reviewed regularly to ensure that they are up to date and reflect best practice</p>	<p>This recommendation was first made in our 2016/17 Annual audit report. The 2017/18 update has been omitted due to space constraints.</p> <p>2018/19 update:</p> <p>Contingencies Plan was reviewed in November 2018</p> <p>Code of Conduct was approved by the Board in February 2019</p> <p>Anti-fraud and corruption policy was reviewed during 2018 and will be considered by the Board at the August 2019 meeting.</p> <p>Confidential Reporting Policy is scheduled for review in November 2019.</p> <p>IT policies are scheduled for review in 2020.</p> <p>2019/20 Update:</p> <p>A revised timetable for review of key governance documents was presented to the Joint Board meeting in February 2020.</p> <p>All reviews scheduled to take place in 2019/20 have been completed. We will continue to monitor progress with the planned reviews but have concluded that this action point is Completed.</p>

Appendix 2

Significant audit risks identified during planning

The table below sets out the audit risks we identified during our planning of the audit and how we addressed each risk in arriving at our conclusion. The risks are categorised between those where there is a risk of material misstatement in the financial statements and those relating to our wider responsibility under the [Code of Audit Practice 2016](#).

Audit risk	Assurance procedure	Results and conclusions
Risks of material misstatement in the financial statements		
1 Management override of controls ISA 240 requires that audit work is planned to consider the risk of fraud, which is presumed to be a significant risk in any audit. This includes consideration of the risk of management override of controls to change the position disclosed in the financial statements	Detailed testing of journal entries. Review of accounting estimates. Focused testing of accruals and prepayments. Evaluation of significant transactions that are outside the normal course of business.	Results: Our audit work did not identify any issues that would indicate management override of controls affecting the year-end position. Conclusion: Satisfactory
2 Estimates and judgements There is a significant degree of subjectivity in the measurement and valuation of the pension liability and non-current asset values included in the annual accounts. This subjectivity represents an increased risk of misstatement in the accounts.	Assessment of the scope, independence and competence of the professionals engaged in providing estimates, and the appropriateness of the actuarial assumptions. Focused testing of IAS19 disclosures and non-current asset valuations.	Results: Our audit work did not identify any issues with the scope, independence or competence of the expert valuers or actuary. We considered the work undertaken by management, the actuary and valuer in light of the Covid-19 pandemic and considered the impact on the year-end valuations. Refer to Exhibit 1, point 1. Conclusion: Satisfactory
Risks identified from the auditor's wider responsibility under the Code of Audit Practice		
3 Financial sustainability To date the Joint Board's budgets have been prepared and approved on an annual basis with indicative budgets provided for the following year. The need to forecast and plan for the medium to longer term is becoming increasingly critical due to increased workloads resulting from the Barclay review of non-domestic rates,	Review the three-year financial plan and the 202/21 budget setting papers. Comment on financial sustainability within our annual audit report.	Results: A three-year financial plan was presented to the Joint Board in November 2019. This set out a number of scenarios and formed the basis of the three-year budget approved in March 2020. Conclusion: Satisfactory

unplanned electoral events and reduced government funding for Individual Electoral Registration (IER). Without medium to longer term financial planning, there is a risk that the Joint Board is not fully prepared for potential changes in its funding levels and that opportunities and risks may not be fully realised or mitigated.

4 Governance documents

In previous years we have highlighted that a number of key governance documents are overdue for review and update. In response, the Assessor developed a timetable for the review of these policies. Progress against this timetable has been slower than expected and a revised timetable is being developed. Without regular review and update, there is a risk that the Joint Board's policies and procedures do not reflect current regulations and/or best practice.

Obtain a revised timetable and monitor progress against this.

Comment on governance arrangements within our annual audit report.

Results:

A revised timetable for review of key governance documents was presented to the Joint Board meeting in February 2020.

All reviews scheduled to take place in 2019/20 have been completed.

Conclusion: Satisfactory

5 Introduction of IFRS 16 Leases

The Government Financial Reporting Manual (FReM) requires IFRS 16 Leases, as adapted and interpreted by the FReM, to be applied to public sector bodies with effect from 1 April 2020. Early work is required to assess the practical implications and ensure arrangements are in place to support adoption of this IFRS.

Ongoing engagement to assess preparations for the implementation of IFRS16 Leases.

Comment on preparations for the implementation of IFRS16 within our annual audit report.

Results:

The Financial Reporting Advisory Board (FRAB) agreed, in March 2020, to delay the implementation of IFRS16 to 1 April 2021 due to Covid-19.

We will review the preparations made for implementation of IFRS 16 as part of our 2020/21 audit.

Conclusion: Satisfactory

Source: Audit Scotland

Appendix 3

Summary of national performance reports 2019/20

 2019/20 Reports	
	Apr
Social security: Implementing the devolved powers	 May
Scotland's colleges 2019	 Jun  Enabling digital government
	Jul
NHS workforce planning - part 2	 Aug
Finances of Scottish universities	 Sept
NHS in Scotland 2019	 Oct
	Nov
Local government in Scotland: Financial overview 2018/19	 Dec
Scotland's City Region and Growth Deals	 Jan  Privately financed infrastructure investment: The Non-Profit Distributing (NPD) and hub models
	Feb
	Mar  Early learning and childcare: follow-up

Grampian Valuation Joint Board

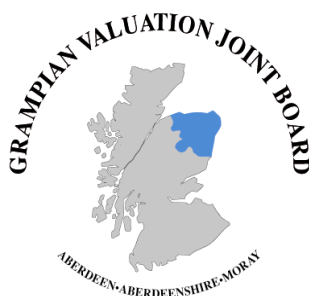
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REPORT TO: GRAMPIAN VALUATION JOINT BOARD ON 21 AUGUST 2020

SUBJECT: ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2020

BY: TREASURER TO THE BOARD

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 To submit the audited Annual Accounts for the financial year ending 31 March 2020 to the Board for consideration and approval.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that the Board:

- (a) approves that the Annual Accounts are signed, having regard to the Annual Report from the external auditor considered earlier at this meeting;
- (b) notes the surplus of £215,000 for 2019/20; and
- (c) if the Annual Accounts are approved for signing, agrees that £116,000 be returned to constituent authorities leaving a balance on the General Fund of £223,000, and an earmarked reserve for Non Domestic Rates Reform of £91,000.

3. 2019/20 ACCOUNTS

- 3.1 It is a statutory requirement that the Board meets to consider and approve for signature the audited Annual Accounts and, following the signing of the Annual Accounts, provides appropriately signed statements to the External Auditor, Audit Scotland.

- 3.2 A copy of the audited Annual Accounts for 2019/20 are appended to this report as **APPENDIX 1**. There have been two amendments made to the Annual Accounts from the unaudited accounts considered by the Board at its meeting on 19 June 2020: the pension fund actuaries provided updated figures to be used in the IAS 19 calculation in June 2020 and this has resulted in a change in the measurement of the net defined pension liability; the holiday pay accrual in the unaudited accounts was calculated using an average figure from previous years whereas the in the audited accounts the accrual has been recalculated using the actual figures as at 31 March 2020. Neither of these adjustments affects the amount which falls due to be returned to the constituent authorities.
- 3.3 The Auditor's draft Report to the Board and the Controller of Audit is the subject of a separate report to this meeting. The report confirms that there are no unadjusted misstatements in the accounts to report to those charged with governance. The Independent Auditor's report gives an unqualified opinion, which means that the financial statements give a true and fair view of the Board's financial position for 2019/20.
- 3.4 The surplus to be returned to the Constituent authorities is in proportion to the percentage of requisitions for 2019/20 and is as follows:

Authority	%	Amount to be Returned £000
Aberdeen City	39.02	45,000
Aberdeenshire	44.65	52,000
Moray	16.33	19,000
Total	100.00	116,000

If approved, the £116,000 will be returned to constituent authorities by netting off from the October requisitions.

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 **The Board generated a surplus of £215,000 in 2019/20. If the Annual Accounts are approved, £116,000 will be returned to constituent authorities leaving a balance on the General Fund of £215,000**

Author of Report:	Lorraine Paisey
Background papers:	Held within Accountancy Section, Moray Council
Ref:	LP/LJC/



GRAMPIAN VALUATION JOINT BOARD

**ANNUAL ACCOUNTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED
31 MARCH 2020**

If you need information from Moray Council in a different language or format, such as Braille, audio tape or large print, please contact:

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Jeśli potrzebują Państwo informacji od Rady Okręgu Moray w innym formacie, takim jak alfabet Braille'a, kasety audio lub druk dużą czcionką, prosimy o kontakt:

Se necessitar de receber informações por parte do Concelho de Moray num formato diferente, como Braille, cassete áudio ou letras grandes, contacte:

Ja Jums vajadzīga informācija no Marejas domes (*Moray Council*) citā valodā vai formātā, piemēram, Braila rakstā, audio lentā vai lielā drukā, sazinieties ar:

اگر آپ کو مورے کونسل سے کسی دیگر زبان یا صورت میں معلومات درکار ہوں مثلاً "بریلے، آڈیو ٹیپ یا بڑے حروف، تو مہربانی فرما کر رابطہ فرمائیں:



Treasurer to the Board, Financial Services, High Street, Elgin, IV30 1BX



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Contents

MANAGEMENT COMMENTARY	1
STATEMENT OF RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE ANNUAL ACCOUNTS	8
STATEMENT OF RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE ANNUAL ACCOUNTS (continued).....	9
ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT	10
REMUNERATION REPORT	21
COMPREHENSIVE INCOME AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT	29
MOVEMENT IN RESERVES STATEMENT	31
BALANCE SHEET	33
CASH FLOW STATEMENT	35
NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS.....	37
Note 1 Accounting Policies	37
Note 2 Accounting Standards That Have Been Issued But Have Not Yet Been Adopted	39
Note 3 Critical Judgements in Applying Accounting Policies	39
Note 4 Assumptions Made About the Future and Other Major Sources of Estimation Uncertainty	39
Note 5 Material Items of Income and Expenditure	40
Note 6 Events After The Reporting Period	40
Note 7 Expenditure and Funding Analysis and Adjustments between Accounting Basis and Funding Basis under Regulations	41
Note 8 Expenditure and Income Analysed by Nature.....	44
Note 9 Earmarked Portions of the General Fund	44
Note 10 Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure	45
Note 11 Property, Plant and Equipment.....	45
Note 12 Short Term Debtors.....	48
Note 13 Cash and Cash Equivalents	48
Note 14 Short Term Creditors	48
Note 15 Financial Instruments	49
Note 16 Usable Reserves.....	50
Note 17 Unusable Reserves.....	50
Note 18 External Audit Costs.....	54
Note 19 Cashflow	54
Note 20 Requisition and Grant Income	55
Note 21 Leases	55
Note 22 Related Parties	56
Note 23 Defined Benefit Pension Scheme.....	56
GLOSSARY OF TERMS.....	65
INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT.....	67

MANAGEMENT COMMENTARY

Strategy and objectives

Unlike local authorities that are charged with providing a wide range of services within their local authority area, the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer is charged with the provision of valuation assessment and registration services across Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council and Moray Council areas.

These strictly defined and regulated services are delivered by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer, the responsible independent statutory official, in partnership with the Grampian Valuation Joint Board. The Board is required to appoint and resource the Assessor; the constituent authorities are required to appoint and resource an Electoral Registration Officer (ERO). By agreement, the Board has undertaken this responsibility on behalf of the local authorities.

The priorities for 2019/20 were

- Conduct a full household canvass under the individual electoral registration (IER) regime;
- Publish revised registers by 1 December 2019;
- Upgrade IT systems to deliver the non-domestic rates reform changes that include more frequent revaluations, greater transparency and improved information gathering powers.
- Maximise valuation roll appeal resolution;
- Maintain a complete and accurate Valuation roll in terms of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1975;
- Maintain a complete and accurate valuation list in terms of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

Monitoring regimes

The Electoral Commission has a performance monitoring framework in place for EROs across the UK and required quantitative and qualitative performance returns. The Cabinet Office in its capacity as lead department for the implementation of individual electoral registration across the UK also required performance returns from EROs during 2019/20 as part of the roll-out of canvass reform.

Quarterly revaluation appeal resolution returns are made to the Scottish Government that in turn publishes the local and national data¹

Key performance indicators set by the Board and submitted to the Scottish Government monitor performance in terms of the valuation list and valuation roll update.

Business model

The organisation delivers the outcomes that are required by statute in a dual strand approach with the Board providing resources and oversight and the Assessor and ERO delivering the specialised professional services of valuation assessment and registration from offices in Aberdeen, Banff and Elgin.

¹ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/non-domestic-rates-revaluation-appeals/>

MANAGEMENT COMMENTARY (continued)

The Assessor and ERO works closely with the other Scottish Assessors and EROs via the Scottish Assessors' Association (SAA) to deliver a service across Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and Moray council areas that is consistent with that being delivered across all 32 local authority areas in Scotland. The sharing of expertise and representation through the SAA is a unique example of shared services across Scotland that includes a single website and data source for a wide range of stakeholders that includes citizens, business, third sector, public agencies, government and research bodies.

Appeal outcome data and performance indicators measure the effectiveness of the organisation's valuation assessment role and the Electoral Commission's performance framework monitors the registration outcomes.

During 2019/20 the organisation met all the demands placed upon it in terms of valuation assessment and registration. This was despite the necessary diversion of resources to meet the challenge of two unplanned national elections. The failure to reach an agreement on the UK leaving the European Union resulted in the necessity for European Parliamentary elections having to be conducted at short notice on 23 May 2019 and the decision of the UK government to call a snap election in the late autumn resulted in a UK Parliamentary general election being held on 12 December 2019.

Both elections impacted on the organisation's planned activities for the year with the canvass start date delayed by the European Parliamentary elections and the publication of the revised registers postponed to 1 February 2020 following autumn by-elections and the snap General election.

The risks and uncertainties that materialised during the year therefore represented the most challenging this organisation has had to address.

A fair review of the business

In terms of our priorities –

Conduct a full household canvass under the individual electoral registration (IER) regime.

The canvass of 282,999 households achieved a return rate of 79%. Over time we have increased the number of households who respond to the canvass by the cost-effective automated response channels such as online, text or automated telephone options from 79,606 in 2016 to 107,977 for the 2019 canvass. The overall return rate of 79% is however lower than return rates of 83% and 85% achieved during 2017 and 2018 respectively and commensurate with the return rate in 2016 however the interruption of the canvass by three by-elections and the snap General election means that comparison with previous years is difficult as registration activity immediately prior to the elections would mean that the register of electors was probably more accurate by December 2019 than in previous years. A high canvass return rate simply means that our household information is more complete. The fact that would-be electors must also apply to register to vote on an individual basis even once making a canvass return for their household has meant that registration volumes year on year have tended to decline unless elections take place.

MANAGEMENT COMMENTARY (continued)

The public interest in the winter snap election led to a high volume of registration applications. During the period from 27 October to 26 November 2019 27,223 successful registration applications were handled by the organisation. This contrasts to less than 5,000 ahead of the European Parliamentary election of 23 June 2019.

Publish revised registers 1 December 2019;

Publication of the revised registers may be postponed if by-elections take place during the canvass period. In order to focus resources on the by-elections and UK snap election we postponed publication of revised registers to 1 February 2020. Statistical returns from the canvass have been submitted to the Electoral Commission which has subsequently confirmed that all EROs in Scotland met the Commission's performance standards. The overall growth in electorate from 1 December 2018 to 1 February 2020 was over 3% with the Westminster franchise electorate rising from 405,885 to 419,702 and the local government franchise electorate rising from 432,135 to 445,690. The organisation's success in increasing registration levels is referenced by with National Records of Scotland reporting an increase in the electorate of Aberdeen by 5.6%².

Maximise valuation roll appeal resolution;

The 2017 revaluation had a significant impact on ratepayers in the North East and the volume of appeals is greater than had been the case in previous revaluation years. The sensitivity of the situation was principally due to the slowdown in the NE property market that became apparent after the valuation date of 1 April 2015 but before the revaluation values came into force on 1 April 2017. The service has continued to be severely challenged by ratepayers pursuing appeals against their rateable values and the resultant appeal resolution process has continued to be particularly demanding throughout 2019/20 in terms of expertise and resources. For the second year running the organisation has however resolved a record volume of appeals with revaluation appeals against 3,832 properties resolved and further 933 running roll appeals resolved. In terms of accuracy, for the third consecutive year losses in rateable value through resolution of revaluation appeals in Grampian is the lowest in Scotland³.

The arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic in Scotland in early 2020 resulted in a large volume of appeals being lodged on the grounds that the pandemic had had an impact on value. Over 7,800 appeals were received between 31 December 2019 and 31 March 2020 with the vast majority being lodged during the last two weeks of March 2020. The organisation, although rebased from operational offices to home-based working on 23 March had arrangements in place to log, verify and acknowledge receipt of this unprecedented volume of running roll appeals and also deal with a completely new service priority that was introduced by the introduction of business support grants and awards that were based on the valuation roll as at 17 March 2020. Survey staff responded to high volumes of priority enquiries generated by the Covid-19 support grant regime.

² <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files//statistics/electoral-stats/1-dec-2019/electoral-stats-19-report.pdf>
page 11

³ <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/statistics/2019/08/non-domestic-rates-revaluation-appeals/documents/2019-20/non-domestic-rates-revaluation-appeals-2019-20-q4-bulletin/non-domestic-rates-revaluation-appeals-2019-20-q4-bulletin/govscot%3Adocument/RVAPP%2B2019-20%2BQ4%2B-%2BPublication%2B-%2BBulletin.pdf>

MANAGEMENT COMMENTARY (continued)

Maintain a complete and accurate valuation list in terms of the Local Government Finance Act 1992

The last two priorities use of quantitative target based performance indicators rather than qualitative measures and as such can at times be misleading. The extraordinary demands of the appeal resolution process along with staff retirements and the pandemic related unprecedented volume of appeals lodged, Covid-19 business grant enquiries and the move to home-based working have all impacted on the organisation's performance. Our performance on updating the council tax valuation list slipped from 94% to 90% of new dwellings being added to the list within 90 days and we maintained our 2018/19 performance for updating the valuation roll to the extent that 59% of updates were made within the 90 day timeframe. In doing so we missed our performance targets of 94% of new dwellings being banded in the 90 day timeframe and 70% of valuation roll updates within the same 90 day timeframe.

Apart from the established priorities for 2019/20, the failure of the Board to set a budget in its February 2020 meeting led to a diversion of resources into a new strand of contingency planning and the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020 resulted in an additional service priority and a move from office-based to home-based working that had not featured in the organisation's programme for 2019/20.

However, on taking a fair view and in particular reflecting on the extraordinary events and challenges that the organisation met, including two unscheduled national elections, unprecedented levels of appeal activity, new service priorities and operational re-basing, the organisation has addressed and met its original priorities and at the same time embraced unprecedented new priorities with an agility and professionalism that has ensured uninterrupted service delivery.

Future developments

The priorities over the next two years have been reassessed as a result of the current pandemic. The overarching priority is to continue to operate across all three service strands; valuation for rating, council tax and electoral registration, whilst ensuring the safety and well-being of employees and the public.

In relation to the valuation roll, the completion of the revaluation appeal process and preparations necessary to deliver the next revaluation of non-domestic properties reflecting the reforms currently being implemented by government is absolutely critical. This has the added challenge in the short-term of an interruption to the valuation appeal committee hearing schedule and the high volume of pandemic-related appeals. At present the government has decided to not extend appeal disposal deadlines that require all revaluation appeals to be resolved by 31 December 2020 and the pandemic-related running roll appeals lodged prior to 31 March 2020 resolved within 12 months. At the same time we need to continue with our work to increase our capacity to meet the additional workloads of a three-year revaluation cycle.

We also have the challenge of implementing the electoral canvass reform during 2019/20 and preparing for the Scottish Parliamentary election scheduled for 6 May 2021. We are addressing the franchise extensions of 2019/20 to include prisoners and foreign nationals and are also focussing on arresting the decline in the registration of young voters.

Finally from a governance viewpoint we need to continue with our process of updating and modernising our governance arrangements to streamline and improve efficiency across the organisation whilst also seeking to ensure that we maximise our efficiency in terms of costs and service delivery.

MANAGEMENT COMMENTARY (continued)

Prior to March 2020, these priorities involved many unknowns from the reactive nature of appeal resolution to the health emergency of a global pandemic. Whilst we are able to be proactive in our process planning and system upgrades for NDR and electoral reforms as we have the primary legislation now in place, there remain barriers as the detail of the secondary legislation in relation to appeals and the new information gathering powers has yet to be produced. At the same time, our operational agility will continue to be severely tested by the combined effects of the health and valuation implications of the pandemic.

Key performance indicators (KPI's)

The organisation's code of corporate governance established a KPI reporting and three-year review regime. They seek to quantify the effectiveness of the organisation's activities in relation to updating the valuation roll of non-domestic property assessments and the valuation list of domestic property council tax band allocations. The Management Team utilise the KPI information to monitor performance and where appropriate re-direct resources. The Assessor and ERO provides performance reports at every meeting of the Board and an annual public performance report is published online.

The Electoral Commission is currently consulting on a new performance framework for electoral registration officers and for 2019/20 focussed on both qualitative and quantitative performance monitoring. The Commission has confirmed that we met its 2019/20 performance standards.

Financial Performance for 2019/20

The public sector in Scotland continues to face severe financial pressures. In setting the 2019/20 budget the Board was conscious of the need of the constituent authorities to achieve savings. With employee costs representing over 76% of the revenue expenditure budget, there was little scope to make efficiencies without impacting on the level of service.

At the meeting of the Board on the 1 February 2019, the revenue budgeted net expenditure of £4.463m for 2019/20 was approved (2018/19 £4.292m), a 3.99% increase.

The actual net expenditure was £4.248m (2018/19 £4.088m) resulting in an underspend of £0.215m for the year. Of this total, £0.008m was transferred into the General Fund Reserve, the maximum permitted under the Board's Reserves Policy, and a further £0.091m into the new earmarked Non Domestic Rates (NDR) Reform Reserve. The remaining £0.116m will be returned to the constituent authorities.

The Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement shows a deficit of £0.549m on the provision of services for the year. After allowing for the reversal of statutory charges for

International Accounting Standard 19 (IAS19) of £0.625m and depreciation totalling £0.023m, this gives the £0.099m surplus.

Note 7 to the Accounts reconciles the net expenditure charged to the General Fund; the surplus of £0.099m, to the Net Expenditure charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Account; the deficit on provision of services of £0.549m.

The table below shows a summary of the figures for the main variances between budget and actual for the year to 31 March 2020. These figures are reported to the Board throughout the year, and exclude IAS19 charges, depreciation and impairment of assets.

MANAGEMENT COMMENTARY (continued)

	2019/20 Budget £000	2019/20 Actual £000	2019/20 Variance £000
Employee benefit expenses	3,461	3,292	169
Other service expenses	1,090	1,070	20
Support service recharges	57	57	-
Requisitions	(4,463)	(4,463)	-
Government grants and other service income	(143)	(166)	23
Interest and investment income	(2)	(5)	3
Net (Under)/over spend Against Budget	-	(215)	215

Of the £0.169m underspend in Employee expenses, £0.166m relates to vacant posts and £0.003m of training. Other service expenses were under spent by £0.020m; this includes slippage in ICT expenditure of £0.048m and an under spend on Electoral Registration bulk mailing costs of £0.049m. This was offset by overspends on Postages of £0.044m and Valuation Appeals of £0.026m, and other marginal overspends totalling £0.007m.

Government grants and other service income exceeded budget by £0.023m; government grant funding received for IER was above the anticipated level and sales of electoral registers were also above budget.

Principal risks and uncertainties

The organisation maintains and reviews an operational and strategic risk register.

The principal risks and uncertainties relate to a dynamic valuation assessment and registration statutory framework, challenges in terms of financial resources and also securing sufficient expertise to deliver our services. The global pandemic however has introduced an overlay of challenges to operational activities that have a major influence on all decision making within the organisation.

Apart from the normal control measures in terms of financial and operational planning, the Assessor and ERO is seeking to mitigate risk and uncertainty through partnership working via the Scottish Assessors Association (SAA) and also external agencies. In his capacity as former President he is a member of the SAA Executive. The Assessor and ERO is also a member of the Electoral Management Board for Scotland, the RICS rating and local taxation practice group and the Institute of Revenues Rating and Valuation. He has devised the SAA stakeholder consultation framework and since 2014 been called upon to give evidence to parliamentary committees on many occasions. Through these roles the organisation has a unique insight, not only into potential developments in the valuation assessment and registration fields, but also into the resilience planning being undertaken by bodies such as the Electoral Management Board. This insight serves to assist risk identification and minimise uncertainties in what has become an extremely unpredictable and challenging business environment.

Going Concern

The accrual of pension liabilities has a significant impact on the Balance Sheet at 31 March 2020 which shows an excess of liabilities over assets of £3.333m (£4.173m at 31 March 2019). The North East Scotland Pension Fund is required to carry out actuarial valuations every three

MANAGEMENT COMMENTARY (continued)

years. Future actuarial valuations of the North East Scotland Pension Fund will consider the appropriate employee/employer's rate to meet the commitments of the Fund and the constituent authorities of the Board are required to fund the liabilities of the Board as they fall due. Accordingly, it has been considered appropriate to adopt a going concern basis for the preparation of these Annual Accounts.

Councillor Graham Leadbitter
Convener

Ian H Milton BSc(Hons) FRICS IRRV AEA(Cert-Scotland)
Assessor & Electoral Registrations Officer

Lorraine Paisey CA
Treasurer

21 August 2020

STATEMENT OF RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

The Board's Responsibilities

The Board is required to: -

- make arrangements for the proper administration of its financial affairs and to secure that the proper officer of the Board has the responsibility for the administration of those affairs (section 95 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973). In the Valuation Joint Board, that officer is the Treasurer to the Board.
- manage its affairs to secure economic, efficient and effective use of resources and safeguard its assets.
- ensure the Annual Accounts are prepared in accordance with legislation (The Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014), and so far as is compatible with that legislation, in accordance with proper accounting practices (section 12 of the Local Government Scotland Act 2003).
- approve the Annual Accounts for signature.

I confirm that these Annual Accounts were approved for signature by the Board at its meeting on 21 August 2020

Signed on behalf of the Grampian Valuation Joint Board.

Councillor Leadbitter
Convener

21 August 2020

STATEMENT OF RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE ANNUAL ACCOUNTS (continued)

The Treasurer's Responsibilities

The Treasurer to the Board is responsible for the preparation of the Board's Annual Accounts in accordance with proper practices as required by legislation and as set out in the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2019/20 (the Accounting Code).

In preparing these annual accounts, the Treasurer has: -

- selected suitable accounting policies and then applied them consistently;
- made judgements and estimates that were reasonable and prudent;
- complied with legislation;
- complied with the local authority Accounting Code (in so far as it is compatible with legislation);
- kept adequate accounting records which were up to date;
- taken reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

I certify that the financial statements give a true and fair view of the financial position of the Board at the reporting date and the transactions of the Board for the year ended 31 March 2020.

Lorraine Paisey CA
Treasurer

21 August 2020

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

Scope of responsibility

The Board was established in terms of The Valuation Joint Boards (Scotland) Order 1995 and is the valuation authority for Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council and Moray Council. The Board is responsible for the provision of valuation assessment services for local taxation purposes. Through an agreement to share services, the Board also provides electoral registration services for the same three constituent authorities.

The Board is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards. It must ensure that public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively.

The Board is considered to be a local authority in terms of the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Act 1994 and has a duty to deliver continuous improvement as set out in the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003. In discharging this overall responsibility, the Board is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs and facilitating the effective exercise of its valuation and registration functions. This includes arrangements for the management of risk.

Responsibility for delivery - members and officers

In terms of the above Order, the Board membership comprises 6 members appointed by Aberdeen City Council, 6 members appointed by Aberdeenshire Council and 3 members appointed by The Moray Council.

To fulfil its operational role, the Board is responsible for the appointment of an Assessor, and deposes as appropriate, in terms of section 27 of the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Act 1994. In practice the Assessor and deposes manage the provision of valuation assessment and electoral registration services on a day to day basis, with the Board providing resources, a governance framework and a monitoring regime for financial and operational performance.

The Assessor is also appointed as the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) for the Board's three constituent authorities. This too is a statutory position with the ERO and deposes appointed in terms of section 8 of the Representation of the People Act 1983.

The Board has approved and adopted a local code of corporate governance that is reviewed biennially and is available at www.grampian-vjb.gov.uk

The purpose of the governance framework

The governance framework comprises the systems, processes, cultures and values by which the Board is directed and controlled, and the activities used to engage with the community. It enables the Board to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate, cost-effective valuation assessment and registration services.

The system of internal control is a significant part of that framework and is designed to manage risk to an acceptable level, and provide reasonable, but not absolute, assurance that the statutory requirements of the Assessor and ERO are met and policies, aims and objectives can be delivered. The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of the Board's policies, aims and objectives,

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT (continued)

to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

The governance framework

The key elements of the systems and processes that comprise the Board's governance arrangements are described in terms of the seven principles of good governance defined in the framework and summarised as follows:

Governance Principle 1 - behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law.

The Board's code of conduct provides a clear standard in terms of conduct and behaviour, as does the Board's personnel related policies that deal with mainstreaming equalities into the fabric of the organisation, dignity of the individual, whistleblowing, special leave and personal development. These policies go beyond behavioural matters and reflect the positive approach to workforce development to the extent that career development schemes are in place across all three service strands; non-domestic property valuation assessment, domestic property valuation assessment and electoral registration. As such, career pathways are available to almost all staff.

In order to avoid duplication the Board relies on the registers of interests and gifts maintained by the relevant constituent authorities for elected members. A register of gifts is maintained for the organisation's officials and a register of interests for senior officials is being implemented. The Assessor and ERO and deputies are bound by the policies of the Board and also must adhere to the professional standards regime set by the RICS.

Issues relating to actions taken or not taken by officials can be addressed internally through the complaints handling procedure. This is the fourth year of operation of the more open and accessible reporting procedure. This procedure has enabled the organisation to improve service delivery by taking account of stakeholder feedback that in previous years had not been effectively captured or recorded.

The organisation maintained its commitment to combating fraud during the year by assisting with the National Fraud Initiative. The Assessor and ERO also works closely with the Electoral Commission, the Electoral Management Board and Police Scotland, has participated in their resilience focussed sessions and pre-election briefings. If necessary, suspected fraudulent registration or absent vote applications are referred to the Police Scotland single point of contact.

Governance Principle 2 – ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.

The Board's decision-making processes are well established with decisions concerning finance, performance and governance being taken by the Board. Standing orders and regulations govern how decisions are made and appropriate legal, financial and other professional advice is considered as part of the decision-making process.

At an operational level, stakeholder involvement falls within the domain of the Assessor and ERO. The engagement work following the 2017 revaluation has continued with the focus being on appeal resolution and NDR reform. The Assessor and ERO's engagement strategy in terms of maintaining a high level of accessibility and visibility in the public domain continued

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT (continued)

with detailed presentations being given to the professional bodies such as the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors and Institute of Revenues, Rating & Valuation along with acceptance of an invitation to address a North East of Scotland business breakfast.

On a wider footing, the Assessor and ERO completed his period of office as President of the Scottish Assessors' Association and in that capacity chaired meetings of the Scottish Ratepayers Forum and Scottish Rating Surveyors Forum, the two principal fora of the national consultation framework established by the Scottish Assessors Association. The Assessor and ERO also co-chaired the UK and Ireland Harmonisation Steering Committee that works to further understanding and harmonisation of rating practice across the four jurisdictions.

The Board's performance management framework is reviewed regularly to drive continuous improvement and ensure effective monitoring of progress and outcomes against stated objectives. Reporting arrangements include regular updates to the Board, the Electoral Commission, the Electoral Management Board, the Scottish Government, and online publication of annual performance reports.

Protocols are in place to meet requests made under the Freedom of Information Act and Assessors through the Scottish Assessors' Association have established procedures to improve the response standards where common requests for information are made.

Governance Principle 3 – defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits.

The Board, being focussed around delivery of specialised valuation and registration services has a limited role to play in the wider community planning aspects anticipated by the governance framework set out by CIPFA/Solace. The Board is therefore conscious of the need to ensure that its mode of operation and the delivery of the valuation and registration services reflect the responsibilities towards the communities in Grampian in terms of devolved service delivery models that support the sustainability of communities across the whole region and minimise natural resource demands. In terms of the two specialised services the Board delivers, they are foundation stones to local government and democracy at local, national and international levels, as they provide the means to raise local taxation and to conduct elections/referendums.

Operational outcomes for these services are essentially driven by statute and it is pertinent to this governance principle that moves are underway to improve the sustainability and economic and social benefits through reform to local taxation and electoral registration.

Local taxation has continued to be the subject of intense scrutiny during the last year and The Assessor and ERO, as a member of the government's Barclay Implementation Advisory Group, has continued to work with other stakeholders to ensure that Scotland has a more sustainable and effective system for NDR. The Group reported in March 2019⁴ but work in relation to the NDR (Scotland) Bill and the future shape of the appeal process has continued throughout 2019/20 and into 2020/21..

The electoral registration regime has undergone a period of intense change following the introduction of individual electoral registration in 2014 and enfranchisement of 16 and 17 year olds in 2016. The Scottish and UK governments have implemented major reforms to the annual canvass that will take effect from 1 July 2020. These reforms address the concerns over the unsustainable nature of the annual canvass that had been raised by many EROs and the Electoral Commission by allowing EROs to compare electoral registers to other trusted

⁴ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/barclay-implementation-advisory-group-final-report/pages/2/>

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT (continued)

data sources to identify and focus canvass resources on those addresses where comparison data suggests that there has been a recent change in household composition. The widening of the franchise in Scotland to include prisoners and non-Commonwealth foreign nationals that come into effect during 2020/21 address social and democratic inequalities.

Governance Principle 4 – determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of intended outcomes.

As a specialised outcome – orientated organisation; our activities of producing, maintaining and defending valuation rolls, lists and electoral registers; essentially drive the organisation's agenda. The Board and the Assessor and ERO recognise the financial challenges they face and through established reporting arrangements ensure that Board members have full detail of resource inputs and performance outputs. Regular and detailed financial reports are made to the Board and the outcomes for the organisation that are essentially driven by statute, are monitored in terms of performance.

The Management Team focus on these outcomes and work closely to innovate and optimise them.

Governance Principle 5 - developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it.

Roles of elected members and officers are clearly defined and constructive working relationships are achieved to ensure clear relationships between the Board, the Assessor and ERO, corporate stakeholders and the public. The Assessor and Treasurer to the Board conducted a workshop as part of their ongoing commitment of engagement with board members to ensure that the Board, the Treasurer and the Assessor have not only a knowledge of the respective positions but also an understanding and appreciation of what lies behind the outcomes that the organisation delivers.

Standing orders regulate the form and content of board meetings and the Board's financial regulations provide a framework for financial decisions. Performance reports are made at each board meeting and the Board's key performance indicators are subject to regular periodic review.

As part of its commitment to lifelong learning, the Board uses the IRRV Scottish conference as a cost effective source of professional training for both members and officials. To foster a personal development culture and seek to retain personnel the organisation operates an internal recruitment procedure that encourages personal development and ultimately improves leadership capacity.

New employees receive induction training on arrival and in the vast majority of cases are able to participate in a career grade development scheme that seeks to promote personal and professional development. Surveyors, who are members of the RICS, are subject to additional compulsory continuing professional development training that is monitored by the RICS.

The organisation's training officer is responsible for monitoring training provision and recording progress. The training officer is also responsible for identifying appropriate training opportunities and the distribution of training opportunities is reported in public performance reports / equalities mainstreaming reports.

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT (continued)

Functions and roles of statutory posts including the Clerk, Treasurer and Assessor and ERO are clearly defined and the postholders work closely together to achieve the objectives of the organisation.

Governance Principle 6 – managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management.

The Board's decision-making process is well established with governance, finance and performance issues being reported at board meetings that take place in public (unless exempt under statutory provision) and the board reports are published online and made available to the media. Rules and procedures govern how decisions are made and appropriate legal, financial and other professional advice is considered as part of the decision-making process. Scrutiny is secured through internal and external audit.

Decisions of the Assessor and ERO are subject to public scrutiny, scrutiny via an appeal and complaint process to the respective judicial bodies and external stakeholders that monitor performance such as the Electoral Commission and the Electoral Management Board for Scotland. In addition the SAA website provides practice notes that provide details on how rateable values are determined and allows individual taxpayers to look up the assessment of every non-domestic and domestic property in Scotland.

Risk management is a fundamental part of the organisation's decision making process and as such is a standing item on the Assessor and ERO's management team quarterly agenda, with the Board reviewing the risk register on an annual basis.

To mitigate against and control risk the Board's system of internal control is based on a framework of financial regulations that are revised and updated periodically and supplemented by regular management information, administrative procedures, management supervision and a code of corporate governance. Establishing and maintaining an effective system of internal control is a management function. The Board, through its consideration of reports by internal and external auditors, monitors the effectiveness of internal control procedures.

Policies to combat fraud, theft, bribery and corruption are in place, not only in order to protect public finance, but also to ensure the veracity of the statutory rolls, lists and registers that the Assessor and ERO is required to provide. The Assessor and ERO works closely with Police Scotland at a local and national level and through the requirement to work with the Government Digital Service our IT facilities must meet and maintain Public Service Network accreditation. The organisation has also achieved the UK Government's Cyber Essentials Plus accreditation.

A performance management system is in place which calls for reporting of established performance measures to the Board throughout the year. An annual Public Performance Report is also published

Strong financial management procedures are secured through the work of the Treasurer appointed in terms of s.95 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973. This officer provides advice to the Board and Assessor and ERO on all financial matters and ensures the timely production and reporting of budget estimates, budget monitoring reports and annual accounts.

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT (continued)

Governance Principle 7 – implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability.

Board business is conducted through an established cycle of quarterly meetings held in public (unless exempt under statutory provision) in both Aberdeen and Elgin. Meeting dates are published in advance. Reports follow a corporate style and include: the purpose of the report, information relevant to the matter under consideration, a conclusion and recommendations. Minutes of meetings are prepared and are available via the Board's website.

Information is disseminated in many forms targeted at different audiences for different purposes ranging from statutory returns that follow prescribed layouts, through to media releases and presentations which may be focussed on specific groups of service users. The organisation's website is frequently updated with news items to ensure that the Grampian community is kept up to date.

Assurance and accountability oversight is a key role for the Board which comprises members of a variety of political backgrounds. The Board receives reports on the work of the internal auditor and the external auditor placing particular focus on recommendations arising from audit work and on the corrective actions proposed by the officials of the Board.

Review of effectiveness of governance arrangements

The review of effectiveness of the governance framework including the system of internal control is pursued throughout the year by various means involving:

- **The Board**

In practice, governance arrangements are monitored over the year with board meetings taking place four times during each year. Every time the Board meets, it considers reports on financial and operational performance. It also considers annual public performance and audit reports along with reports on governance.

- **The management team**

The management team which has overall responsibility for good governance arrangements, comprises the Assessor and ERO, two deputies, four assistant assessors and the principal admin officer. The management team is scheduled to meet on a quarterly basis and considers corporate issues such as finance, personnel, performance and risk management along with an overview of service related issues that are handled by two service orientated groups – the technical and admin groups.

- **The technical and admin groups**

These two groups also normally meet quarterly and focus on specialised service related planning and delivery. These groups foster co-operative working across the Aberdeen, Banff and Elgin offices of the organisation and also benefit from input from the Scottish Assessors Association representatives. They provide technical solutions to valuation assessment and electoral registration issues. Membership includes the management team and team leaders, with input from other members of staff too, that seeks to capture the widest range of expertise and experience and also provide an inclusive insight into the decision making process to all members of the organisation.

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT (continued)

- **The Assessor and ERO**

The Assessor and ERO has the statutory responsibility for the valuation rolls, valuation lists and electoral registers. The Assessor is essentially the chief executive for the organisation and has a wide range of financial, personnel, governance and reporting responsibilities.

- **The Treasurer**

The Treasurer has statutory responsibility for the Board's financial affairs in terms of Section 95 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973. This officer provides relevant financial advice and support to the Assessor and ERO and elected members at meetings of the Board and otherwise as required. The Board's financial management arrangements generally conform to the governance requirements of the CIPFA statement on the role of the chief financial officer, and whilst the Treasurer is not a member of the management team, she is actively involved in, and is able to influence, decision-making processes.

The Treasurer is responsible for ensuring that an effective system of internal financial control is maintained. The system of internal financial control can provide only reasonable and not absolute assurance that assets are safeguarded, that transactions are authorised and properly recorded, and that material errors or irregularities are either prevented or detected within a timely period.

The system of internal financial control is based on a framework of regular management information, financial regulations, administrative procedures (including segregation of duties), management supervision and a system of delegation and accountability. The system includes comprehensive budget setting and monitoring arrangements and the preparation of regular financial reports indicating actual expenditure against forecasts that are reported at each board meeting.

- **Internal Audit**

Internal Audit is an assurance function that primarily provides an independent and objective opinion to the Board on the control environment comprising risk management, internal control, and governance by evaluating its effectiveness in achieving the organisation's objectives. It objectively examines, evaluates and reports on the adequacy of the control environment as a contribution to the proper, economic, efficient and effective use of resources.

The Internal Audit Manager is accountable on a day-to-day basis to the Treasurer and to the Board. Internal Audit operates in accordance with Public Sector Internal Audit Standards and in line with the requirements of the Standards is subject to periodic external inspection. An action plan developed following the 2018/19 inspection has been used to strengthen compliance, with a number of recommendations made implemented during 2019/20 and further work planned to address all remaining issues in the current financial year.

Internal audit and the subsequent report by the external auditors in their annual audit letter and in other reports, informs the effectiveness of the financial control environment as an element of the Board's governance arrangements. No fundamental control weaknesses were reported during the period covered by this statement. It is the opinion of the Internal Audit Manager that reasonable assurance can be placed on the Board's internal financial control systems in place for the year ended 31 March 2020 – TBC BY INTERNAL AUDIT.

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT (continued)

• External Agencies

In addition to the various internal review processes and the financial audit referred to above, there are a number of bodies that the organisation is required to report to/submit governance arrangement for approval. The Information Commissioner collects data on responses to requests for information and will intervene where it considers enforcement action is required. The Keeper of Records reviewed and approves records management arrangements.

The way the organisation delivers its valuation and registration services is also subject to scrutiny by external agencies, with the valuation assessment aspect reported to the Scottish Government and subject to a case by case scrutiny on appeal; and the Electoral Commission and Electoral Management Board reviewing and reporting on the performance of the ERO.

Ultimately this organisation has possibly one of the largest service communities in the Grampian area providing registration services to 445,000 citizens, and property valuation assessments for 315,000 properties. Such a wide and comprehensive reach throughout the Grampian region also provides a barometer for the success or otherwise of the organisation's service delivery.

Taking an overview of all the components of the governance framework in place, both internal and external; individual and corporate, leads us to conclude that the governance arrangements in place have proven to be effective during 2019/20.

Significant governance issues

Securing good governance has been and remains of prime importance to elected members and senior officials of the Board; a considerable task at a time when budgets are under significant pressure and major changes such as NDR and electoral reform are being implemented.

In the 2018/19 governance Statement, the key challenges facing the organisation for 2019/20 were to -

- Upgrade our operational capacity in terms of workforce, processes and IT systems to meet the challenges of moving to a 3 year revaluation cycle for Revaluation 2022.
- Maintain the drive to improve and streamline our governance arrangements progress equalities mainstreaming and performance monitoring and widen our existing customer consultation framework.
- Optimise the new electoral registration system to capitalise upon information sources.
- Continue to manage the resourcing required to ensure that this organisation presents no barriers to Revaluation 2017 appeal resolution.
- Manage the organisation's resources to ensure that all existing business as usual statutory commitments are met.

Significant progress was made towards meeting these challenges during 2019/20 however the degree of success was tempered by the diversion of resources to meet the challenge of two unplanned national elections. The failure to reach an agreement on the UK leaving the European Union resulted in the necessity for European Parliamentary elections having to be

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT (continued)

conducted in the UK on 23 May 2019 and the decision of the UK government to call a snap election in the late autumn resulted in a UK Parliamentary general election being held on 12 December 2019.

Both elections impacted on the organisation's planned activities for the year with the canvass start date delayed by the European Parliamentary elections and the publication of the revised registers postponed to 1 February 2020 following autumn by-elections and the snap General election.

Finally the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020 resulted in a move from office-based to home-based working that had not featured in the organisation's programme for 2019/20.

Against this background, the increase in our operational capacity in terms of workforce, processes and IT has only been partly met. Recruitment has been difficult and the pandemic resulted in the resignation of one trainee who returned to their family residence overseas prior to the travel restrictions. Plans to recruit to fill new posts and also vacated posts due to retiral during Spring 2020 have also been interrupted by the pandemic. Process redesign and IT system development has however proceeded and in some areas accelerated by the pandemic. Significant progress has been made in upgrades to in-house valuation software and procuring software necessary to manage the new civil penalty regime for Assessor Information Notices. Offsite hybrid mail facilities originally procured to meet electoral registration requirements have been adapted for other operational document mailing requirements.

The drive to improve and streamline governance arrangements has been maintained but progress on mainstreaming and performance monitoring has been limited by the extraordinary operational demands encountered during 2019/20.

The development windows for optimisation of the electoral registration system to include data mining functionality were taken up by the two national elections and as such this priority, which is part of the canvass reform agenda, is currently being addressed.

The organisation has met the resource challenge of Revaluation 2017 appeal resolution. This challenge is extremely demanding and reactive as the Assessor must respond to cases that are made by the thousands of appellants.

Despite the challenges, all business as usual statutory commitments were met.

Looking ahead the key challenges for 2020/21 are

- Meet all operational demands whilst not compromising employee or public safety during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Continue to upgrade our operational capacity in terms of workforce, processes and IT systems to meet the challenges of moving to a 3 year revaluation cycle for Revaluation 2022.
- Maintain the drive to improve and streamline our governance arrangements progress equalities mainstreaming and performance monitoring and widen our existing customer consultation framework.
- Optimise the new electoral registration system to capitalise upon information sources.

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT (continued)

- Continue to manage the resourcing required to ensure that this organisation meets all statutory commitments including the Valuation Appeal Committees' Revaluation 2017 appeal disposal deadline of 31 December 2020.

To meet these key challenges we have a number of actions in place or planned for 2020/21:

- We have established a Crisis Management Team to maximise our agility to meet the challenges of the pandemic with advice and support from health and safety advisors and IT specialists.
- We have initiated a project to review our systems, their interaction and service delivery options.
- We are working with colleagues Assessors to broaden the services we provide and formalise our consultation process at a national level and anticipate scaling consultation to local levels too.
- We are working with colleague EROs in Scotland to establish innovative working practices that seek to optimise our registration output.
- We have established a dedicated appeals lead to manage the challenging demands of appeal resolution and are working with colleague Assessors to seek to optimise appeal resolution.

Concluding Remarks

In our respective roles as Convener of the Board and Assessor and ERO, we are committed to good governance and recognise the contribution it makes to securing delivery of service outcomes in an effective and efficient manner. This annual governance statement summarises current governance arrangements, provides evidence of progress and affirms our commitment to ensuring that the Board's governance framework is responsive to the dynamic and challenging environment in which we serve.

We will monitor the implementation of the actions planned and subsequent progress towards meeting the key challenges of 2020/21.

Councillor Graham Leadbitter
Convener

Ian H Milton BSc(Hons) FRICS IRRV AEA(Cert-Scotland)

Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer

21 August 2020

REMUNERATION REPORT

This report has been written to provide details of the Grampian Valuation Joint Board's remuneration arrangements for its senior councillors and senior employees. This is required under the Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2014.

All information disclosed in the tables 1 to 6 in this Remuneration Report is audited by the external auditors Audit Scotland. The other sections of the Remuneration Report are reviewed by Audit Scotland to ensure that they are consistent with the financial statements.

Remuneration of Councillors, Senior Councillors, Convener and Depute Convener

The remuneration of councillors is regulated by The Local Governance (Scotland) Act 2004 (Remuneration and Severance Payments) Amendment Regulations 2018. These regulations set out the amounts a councillor may be paid for being a Convener or Depute Convener of a Joint Board. This is inclusive of any amounts payable to them as either a councillor or senior councillor of their own Local Authority.

The Board consists of 15 members comprising 6 from Aberdeen City Council, 6 from Aberdeenshire Council and 3 from Moray Council. The local authority of which the Convener or Depute Convener is a member pays the remuneration appropriate to the member's work with the Joint Board. Conveners receive a remuneration which when added to their existing remuneration as a Councillor/Senior Councillor equals 75 percent of the Leader of a "Band A" council, i.e. £21,840 per annum. The Depute Convener's remuneration is calculated on the basis of the basic salary plus 75 percent of the difference between the basic salary and the Convener's salary, i.e. £20,748 per annum. These rates are effective for the year ending 31 March 2020.

The Board has an arrangement with each Council which remunerates the Convener and Depute Convener/s to reimburse the Council for the additional costs of that councillor arising from them being a Convener or Depute Convener of the Board.

Councillor Leadbitter is Convener of the Grampian Valuation Joint Board. He receives a Special Responsibility Allowance from Moray Council. This allowance is paid for in full by Moray Council and will be included in their remuneration report. Consequently no additional award is due for undertaking duties for the Valuation Board.

Councillor Cormie has been Depute Convener of the Board from 30 June 2017. The Board pays a Special Responsibility Allowance to the Depute Convener of the Board. Details of his salary are included in the remuneration report for Aberdeen City Council.

All other Councillors' expenses are paid directly by the authority that they serve and will also be included in the individual authority's remuneration report.

Remuneration of Senior Councillors, Convener and Depute Convener (Table 1)

Councillor Name and Responsibility	Salary, fees and allowances	Total Remuneration 2019/20	Total Remuneration 2018/19
	£	£	£
Councillor Leadbitter Convener	-	-	425 (Full Time Equivalent £2,125)
Councillor Cormie Depute Convener	3,358	3,358	3,109
Total	3,358	3,358	3,534

No taxable expenses were paid in 2019/20.

Remuneration of Councillors (Table 2)

Grampian Valuation Joint Board paid the following salaries, allowances and expenses for all councillors (including senior councillors) during the year. It includes expenses met directly by the Board and expenses reimbursed to Councillors.

Type of Remuneration	2019/20	2018/19
	£	£
Salaries	3,358	3,534
Expenses	1,049	557
TOTAL	4,407	4,091

Remuneration of Senior Employees

The Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2014 require remuneration information to be disclosed for senior employees as defined below:

- i. A person who has responsibility for the management of a local authority to the extent that the person has power to direct or control the major activities of the authority whether solely or collectively with other persons.
- ii. A person who holds a post that is politically restricted by reason of section 2(1) (a), (b) or (c) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.
- iii. A person whose annual remuneration, including any annual remuneration from a local authority subsidiary body is £150,000 or more.

These regulations apply equally to Joint Boards and remuneration disclosure is therefore required for the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) and two Depute Assessor and Depute Electoral Registration Officers who are deemed to be senior employees for the Grampian Valuation Joint Board. Details are shown on Table 3 below.

The salary of senior employees is set by reference to national arrangements. The Scottish Joint Negotiating Committee (SJNC) sets the terms and conditions and pay bandings for senior employees but remuneration levels and payscales are set locally and were last agreed by the Board on 23 January 2004.

Remuneration of Senior Employees of the Board (Table 3)

Name and Post Title	Salary, fees and allowances	Taxable Expenses	Total Remuneration 2019/20	Total Remuneration 2018/19
	£	£	£	£
Ian Milton Assessor & ERO	115,691	609	116,300	109,342
Gavin Oag Depute Assessor & ERO	88,040	713	88,753	85,717
Mark Adam Depute Assessor & ERO	86,054	822	86,876	77,594
TOTAL	289,785	2,144	291,929	272,653

The Treasurer and the Clerk to the Board do not receive remuneration from the Valuation Joint Board. The duties of the posts are covered by the post holders' substantive posts in Moray Council. Details of their salaries are included in the remuneration report for Moray Council.

Pension Benefits

Pension benefits for Councillors and Local Government employees are provided through the North East Scotland Pension Fund, a Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS).

Councillors' pension benefits are based on career average pay. For benefits earned up to 31 March 2020, the councillor's pay for each year or part year ending 31 March (other than the pay in the final year commencing 1 April) is increased by the increase in the cost of living, as measured by the appropriate index (or indices) between the end of that year and the last day in the month in which their membership of the scheme ends. The total of the revalued pay is then divided by the year of membership to calculate the career average pay. This is the value used to calculate the pension benefits.

The Board pay a contribution to the Pension Fund for the Convener and Depute Convener's pensions if they are members of the scheme and this is based on a percentage of the cost of the Special Responsibility Allowance. Details are shown on Table 4 below.

For local government employees, up until 31 March 2015 pension benefits accrued are based on final salary. This means that pension benefits are based on the final year's pay and the number of years that person has been a member of the scheme. Benefits earned from 1 April 2015 are based on 'career average'. The scheme's normal retirement age for both councillors and employees is 65 for benefits up to 31 March 2015 and the State Pension Age for benefits built up after 1 April 2015.

The Scottish Public Pension Authority has issued a new look up table for the amended 2019/20 employee contribution rates. These new rates are to be used from 1st April 2019, using the member's actual take home pay as at 1st April 2019. Prior to this, from 1 April 2009, a five tier contribution system was used, with contributions from scheme members being based on how much pay falls into each tier. This is designed to give more equality between the cost and benefits of scheme membership. Prior to 2009 contributions rates were set at 6% for all non-manual employees.

If a person works part-time, their contribution rate is worked out on the whole-time pay rate for the job, with actual contributions paid on actual pay earned.

A LGPS member's contribution depends upon his or her full time equivalent pay. The tables of rates for 2018/19 and 2019/20 are shown below and can be found on the LGPS website: <http://scotlgps2015.org/content/what-will-new-scheme-cost-me>

Pension Benefits (continued)

Tiered Contribution Pay Rates

Whole time pay 2018-19	Contribution rate 2018/19	Whole time pay 2019-20	Contribution rate 2019/20
On earnings up to and including £21,300	5.50%	On earnings up to and including £22,441	5.50%
On earnings above £21,300 and up to £26,100	7.25%	On earnings above £22,442 and up to £29,193	Between 5.6% - 6.0%
On earnings above £26,100 and up to £35,700	8.50%	On earnings above £29,194 and up to £36,652	Between 6.1% - 6.5%
On earnings above £35,700 and up to £47,600	9.50%	On earnings above £36,653 and up to £51,713	Between 6.6% - 7.5%
On earnings above £47,600	12.00%	On earnings above £51,714 and up to £58,259	Between 7.6% - 8.0%
		On earnings above £58,260 and up to £78,008	Between 8.1% - 9.0%
		On earnings above £78,009 and up to £118,012	Between 9.1% - 10.0%
		On earnings above £118,013	10.1% and over

There is no automatic entitlement to a lump sum. Members may opt to give up (commute) some pension for a lump sum up to the limit set by the Finance Act 2004. Up until 31 March 2015, the accrual rate guarantees a pension based on 1/60th of the final pensionable salary and years of pensionable service. (Prior to 2009 the accrual rate guaranteed a pension based on 1/80th and a lump sum based on 3/80th of the final pensionable salary and years of pensionable service). From 1 April 2015, the accrual rate guarantees a pension of 1/49th of pensionable pay for each year. At the end of each year the benefits are revalued and increased by inflation.

The value of the accrued benefits has been calculated on the basis of the age at which the person will first become entitled to receive a full pension on retirement without reduction on account of its payment at that age; without exercising any option to commute pension entitlement into a lump sum; and without any adjustment for the effects of future inflation. The pension figures shown relate to the benefits that the person has accrued as a consequence of their local government service, and not just their current appointment.

Senior Councillors (Table 4)

	In-year pension contributions	
	For the year to 31 March 2020	For the year to 31 March 2019
	£	£
Councillor Leadbitter Convener	-	82 (Full year equivalent £410)
Councillor Cormie Depute Convener	648	600
Total	648	682 (Full year equivalent £1,010)

The above amounts show the in-year contributions relating to the Special Responsibility Allowance shown in Table 1. The total pension benefits relating to Councillor Leadbitter are detailed in the remuneration report of Moray Council and those relating to Councillor Cormie are detailed in the remuneration report of Aberdeen City Council.

Senior Employees (Table 5)

The pension entitlements of Senior Employees for the year to 31 March are shown in the table below, together with the contribution made by the Board to each Senior Employees' pension during the year.

	In-year pension contributions			Accrued pension benefits	
	For the year to 31 March 2019	For the year to 31 March 2020		As at 31 March 2020	Difference from March 2019
	£	£		£	£
Ian Milton Assessor and ERO	20,942	21,570	Pension	57,317	3,806
			Lump Sum	103,559	3,016
Gavin Oag Depute Assessor & ERO	16,393	16,884	Pension	38,899	2,806
			Lump Sum	63,231	1,842
Mark Adam Depute Assessor & ERO	14,834	15,279	Pension	39,208	2,657
			Lump Sum	69,467	2,023
Total	52,169	53,733		371,681	16,150

All senior employees shown in the tables above are members of the North East Scotland Pension Fund. The pension figures shown relate to the benefits that the person has accrued as a consequence of their total local government service and not just their current appointment.

General Disclosure by Pay Band

The Regulations require information to be provided for the number of persons whose remuneration is £50,000 or more. This information is disclosed in bands of £5,000 and is shown overleaf.

General Disclosure by Pay Band (Table 6)

The Table includes the remuneration of the senior employees detailed in Table 3.

Remuneration Band	Number of Employees	
	2019-20	2018-19
£50,000 - £54,999	5	6
£55,000 - £59,999	5	3
£75,000 - £79,999	-	1
£85,000 - £89,999	2	1
£105,000 - £109,999	-	1
£115,000 - £119,999	1	-
	<hr/> 13 <hr/>	<hr/> 12 <hr/>

Councillor Graham Leadbitter
Convener

Ian H Milton BSc(Hons) FRICS IRRV AEA(Cert-Scotland)
Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer

21 August 2020

COMPREHENSIVE INCOME AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2020

This Statement shows the accounting cost in the year of providing services in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices. This differs from the expenditure to be funded from the requisitions raised by the Board from the three constituent Local Authorities in accordance with statute. The effect on the General Fund is shown in the Movement in Reserves Statement and Note 7 Expenditure and Funding Analysis and Adjustments between Accounting Basis and Funding Basis under Regulations.

			2018/19				2019/20
£000	£000	£000			£000	£000	£000
Expenditure	Income	Net		Note	Expenditure	Income	Net
5,116	(171)	4,945	Rating and Council Tax Valuation and Electoral Registration		4,952	(166)	4,786
5,116	(171)	4,945	Cost Of Services		4,952	(166)	4,786
94	(3)	91	Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure	10	115	(5)	110
		(4,157)	Requisitions and Non-Specific Grant Income	20			(4,347)
		879	Deficit on Provision of Services	8			549
		(49)	Surplus on revaluation of Property, Plant and Equipment	11			-
		206	Remeasurement of the Net Defined Benefit Liability	23			(1,389)
		157	Other Comprehensive (Income) and Expenditure				(1,389)
		1,036	Total Comprehensive (Income) and Expenditure				(840)

MOVEMENT IN RESERVES STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2020

This Statement shows the movement in the year on the different reserves held by the Board, analysed into usable reserves (those that can be applied to fund expenditure) and unusable reserves. The Statement shows how the movements in the year are broken down between gains and losses incurred in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices and the statutory adjustments required to return to the amounts chargeable against requisitions for the year. The Increase or Decrease line shows the statutory General Fund movements in the year.

2018/19	General Fund £000	Capital Fund £000	Total Usable Reserves £000	Unusable Reserves (Note 17) £000	Total Board Reserves £000
Balance at 31 March 2018	153	55	208	(3,345)	(3,137)
Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure	(879)	-	(879)	(157)	(1,036)
Adjustments between accounting basis & funding basis under regulations (Note 7)	941	(55)	886	(886)	-
Increase / (Decrease) in Year	62	(55)	7	(1,043)	(1,036)
Balance at 31 March 2019	215	-	215	(4,388)	(4,173)
2019/20					
Balance at 31 March 2019	215	-	215	(4,388)	(4,173)
Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure	(549)	-	(549)	1,389	840
Adjustments between accounting basis & funding basis under regulations (Note 7)	648	-	648	(648)	-
Increase / (Decrease) in Year	99	-	99	741	840
Balance at 31 March 2020	314	-	314	(3,647)	(3,333)

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 MARCH 2020

The Balance Sheet shows the value as at the Balance Sheet date of assets and liabilities recognised by the Board. The net assets of the Board (assets less liabilities) are matched by the reserves held by the Board.

31 March 2019			31 March 2020
£000		Note	£000
<u>753</u>	Property, Plant & Equipment	11	<u>730</u>
753	Long Term Assets		730
42	Short Term Debtors	12	39
<u>613</u>	Cash and Cash Equivalents	13	<u>651</u>
655	Current Assets		690
<u>(558)</u>	Short Term Creditors	14	<u>(476)</u>
(558)	Current Liabilities		(476)
<u>(5,023)</u>	Other Long Term Liabilities	23	<u>(4,277)</u>
(5,023)	Long Term Liabilities		(4,277)
<u>(4,173)</u>	Net Liabilities		<u>(3,333)</u>
	Usable reserves	16	
<u>215</u>	General Fund		<u>314</u>
215	Total		314
	Unusable Reserves	17	
262	Revaluation Reserve		257
490	Capital Adjustment Account		472
(5,023)	Pensions Reserve		(4,277)
<u>(117)</u>	Employee Statutory Adjustment Account		<u>(99)</u>
(4,388)	Total		(3,647)
<u>(4,173)</u>	Total Reserves		<u>(3,333)</u>

The notes on Pages 37 to 64 form part of the Financial Statements.

Lorraine Paisey CA
Treasurer

21 August 2020

The unaudited Annual Accounts were issued on 31 May 2020 and the audited Annual Accounts were authorised for issue on 21 August 2020 by Lorraine Paisey, Treasurer. Any events that would affect the Balance Sheet at 31 March 2020 have been considered up to this date.

CASH FLOW STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2020

The Cash Flow statement shows the changes in cash and cash equivalents of the Board during the financial year. The statement shows how the Board generates and uses cash and cash equivalents by classifying cash flows as operating, investing and financing activities. The amount of net cash flows arising from operating activities is a key indicator of the extent to which the operations of the Board are funded by way of requisition and grant income or from the recipients of services provided by the Board. Investing activities represent the extent to which cash outflows have been made for resources which are intended to contribute to the Board's future service delivery, i.e. assets.

31 March 2019		31 March 2020
£000		£000
	(879) Net deficit on the provision of services	(549)
1,107	Adjust net deficit on the provision of services for non cash movements (Note 19)	587
<u>228</u>	Net cash flows from Operating Activities	<u>38</u>
	(63) Investing Activities	-
<u>165</u>	Net increase/(decrease) in cash and cash equivalents	<u>38</u>
448	Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the financial year	613
<u>613</u>	Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the financial year	<u>651</u>

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS

Note 1 Accounting Policies

1 General Principles

The Annual Accounts summarise the Board's transactions for the 2019/20 financial year and its position at the year-end of 31 March 2020. The Board is required to prepare Annual Accounts by the Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014, which section 12 of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 requires to be prepared in accordance with proper accounting practices. These practices primarily comprise the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2019/20 and the Service Reporting Code of Practice 2019/20, supported by International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) and statutory guidance issued under section 12 of the 2003 Act. The principal accounting policies have been applied consistently throughout the year. The accounting convention adopted in the Annual Accounts is principally historical cost, modified by the revaluation of property, plant and equipment.

2 Accruals of Income and Expenditure

Income and expenditure are accounted for in the year in which they take place, not simply when cash payments are made or received. Where income and expenditure has been recognised but cash has not been received or paid, a debtor or creditor for the relevant amount is recorded in the balance sheet. Where the debts may not be settled, the balance of debtors is written down and a charge made to revenue for the income that might not be collected.

3 Charges to Revenue for Non-Current Assets

The service is charged with the following amounts to record the cost of holding non-current assets during the year:

- Depreciation attributable to the assets used by the relevant service
- Revaluation and impairment losses on assets used by the service where there are no accumulated gains in the Revaluation Reserve against which the losses can be written off.

4 Requisitions and Contributions

Requisitions and contributions relating to capital and revenue expenditure are accounted for on an accruals basis and recognised immediately in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as income, except to the extent that the grant or contribution has a condition(s) (as opposed to restrictions) that the Board has not satisfied.

5 Cash and Cash Equivalents

The Board uses Moray Council's bank account for financial transactions and the balance is invested in the Council's Loans Fund. This balance is repayable on demand and therefore treated as a cash equivalent and is included in the Balance Sheet at amortised cost, which equates to the actual cash value at 31 March 2020.

Note 1 (continued)

6 Benefits Payable During Employment

Short-term employee benefits are those due to be settled within 12 months of the year-end. They include such benefits as wages and salaries, paid annual leave and paid sick leave for current employees and are recognised as an expense for services in the year in which employees render service to the Board. An accrual is made for the cost of holiday entitlements earned by employees but not taken before the year-end which employees can carry forward into the next financial year.

7 Termination Benefits

Termination benefits are amounts payable as a result of a decision by the Board to terminate an officer's employment before the normal retirement date or an officer's decision to accept voluntary redundancy in exchange for those benefits and are charged on an accruals basis in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement at the earlier of when the Board can no longer withdraw the offer of those benefits or when the Board recognises costs for a restructuring.

8 Going Concern

The Pension Fund overall liability demonstrates the Board's commitment to pay retirement benefits in the long term. As a consequence there is a significant impact on the net worth of the Board as recorded on the Balance Sheet, which shows a net liability. Statutory arrangements for the funding of the deficit mean that the financial position of the Board remains assured. On the basis of this funding arrangement, the Board considers it appropriate that the Annual Accounts should follow the going concern basis of accounting.

9 Overheads and Support Services

The costs of overheads and support services are charged to those that benefit from the supply or service in accordance with the costing principles of the CIPFA Service Reporting Code of Practice (SeRCOP). The total absorption costing principle is used – the full cost of overheads and support services are shared between users in proportion to the benefits received.

10 Value Added Tax

VAT is included in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement only to the extent that it is irrecoverable. The net amount due to or from HM Revenue and Customs in respect of VAT is included as part of debtors or creditors.

11 Reserves

The Board sets aside specific amounts as reserves for future policy purposes. Reserves are created by appropriating amounts out of the General Fund Balance in the Movement in Reserves Statement. When expenditure to be financed from a reserve is incurred, it is charged to the appropriate service in that year to score against the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. The reserve is then appropriated back into the General Fund Balance in the Movement in Reserves Statement so that there is no net charge against requisitions for the expenditure. Certain reserves are kept to manage the accounting processes for non-current assets, retirement and employee benefits and do not represent usable resources for the Board.

Note 2 Accounting Standards That Have Been Issued But Have Not Yet Been Adopted

The Code requires the Board to identify any accounting standards that have been issued but have yet to be adopted and could have a material impact on the accounts.

This applies to the adoption of the following new or amended standards within the 2019/20 Code:

- Amendments to IAS 28 Investments in Associates and Joint Ventures: Long-term interests in Associates and Joint Ventures
- Annual improvements to IFRS Standards 2015-2017 Cycle
- Amendments to IAS 19 Employee Benefits: Plan Amendment, Curtailment or Settlement

The Code requires implementation from 1 April 2020 and there is, therefore, no impact on the 2019/20 Financial Statements.

The above amendments are not anticipated to have a material impact on the information provided in the Financial Statements.

Note 3 Critical Judgements in Applying Accounting Policies

In applying the accounting policies set out in Note 1, the Treasurer has had to make certain judgements about complex transactions or those involving uncertainty about future events.

The critical judgements made in the Annual Accounts are:

- There is a high degree of uncertainty about future levels of funding for local government and hence to funding for the Board. However, the Board has determined that this uncertainty is not yet sufficient to provide an indication that the assets of the Board might be impaired as a result of a need to close facilities and reduce levels of service provision.

Note 4 Assumptions Made About the Future and Other Major Sources of Estimation Uncertainty

The Annual Accounts contains estimated figures that are based on assumptions made by the Board about the future or that are otherwise uncertain. Estimates are made taking into account historical experience, current trends and other relevant factors. However, because balances cannot be determined with certainty, actual results could be materially different from the assumptions and estimates.

The items in the Board's Balance Sheet at 31 March 2020 for which there is significant risk of material adjustment in the forthcoming financial year are as follows:

Note 4 (continued)

Item	Uncertainties	Effect if Actual Results Differ From Assumptions
Pension Liability	Estimation of the net liability to pay pensions depends on a number of complex judgements relating to the discount rate used, the rate at which salaries are projected to increase, changes in retirement ages, mortality rates and expected returns on pension fund assets.	The effects on the net pensions liability of changes in individual assumptions can be measured. For instance, a 0.1% increase in the discount rate assumption would result in a decrease in the pension liability of £0.604m.
Valuation of Property, Plant & Equipment	Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there is significant uncertainty in property markets.	It is not yet known what the impact will be, but there is potential for asset values to change significantly.

Note 5 Material Items of Income and Expenditure

Where material items of income and expenditure are not disclosed on the face of the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, the Code requires that the nature and amount of these items are disclosed in a note to the accounts. The following items are regarded as material:

	2018/19	2019/20
Nature	£000	£000
Grant income from the UK Government for Individual Electoral Registration (IER)	160	152

The grant received for Individual Electoral Registration (IER) is intended to fund the additional costs incurred by the Board.

Note 6 Events After The Reporting Period

The unaudited Annual Accounts were issued on 31 May 2020 by Lorraine Paisey, Treasurer. Any events that would affect the Balance Sheet at 31 March 2020 have been considered up to this date.

Note 7 Expenditure and Funding Analysis and Adjustments between Accounting Basis and Funding Basis under Regulations

The Expenditure and Funding Analysis shows how annual expenditure is used and funded from resources (requisitions and government grants) by the Board in comparison with those resources consumed by the Board in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices. It also shows how this expenditure is allocated for decision making.

Income and Expenditure accounted for under generally accepted accounting practices is presented more fully in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

31 March 2019			31 March 2020		
Net Expenditure chargeable to General Fund £000	Adjustments between Funding and Accounting Basis £000	Net Expenditure in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement £000	Net Expenditure chargeable to General Fund £000	Adjustments between Funding and Accounting Basis £000	Net Expenditure in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement £000
4,098	847	4,945	4,253	533	4,786
4,098	847	4,945	4,253	533	4,786
(4,160)	94	(4,066)	(4,352)	115	(4,237)
(62)	941	879	(99)	648	549
(153)			(215)		
(62)			(99)		
(215)			(314)		

Note 7 (continued)

Adjustments between the Funding and Accounting Basis

	2018/19			
	Adjustment for Capital Purposes £000	Net Change for Pensions Adjustments £000	Other Differences £000	Total Adjustments £000
Rating and CT valuation & Electoral Registration	(5)	845	7	847
Net Cost of Services	(5)	845	7	847
Other Income and Expenditure	-	94	-	94
Difference between the General Fund Deficit and the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (Surplus) or Deficit	(5)	939	7	941

	2019/20			
	Adjustment for Capital Purposes £000	Net Change for Pensions Adjustments £000	Other Differences £000	Total Adjustments £000
Rating and CT valuation & Electoral Registration	23	528	(18)	533
Net Cost of Services	23	528	(18)	533
Other Income and Expenditure	-	115	-	115
Difference between the General Fund Deficit and the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (Surplus) or Deficit	23	643	(18)	648

Note 7 (continued)

a) Adjustments for Capital Purposes

This column adds in depreciation and impairment and revaluation gains and losses in the services line.

b) Net Change for the Pensions Adjustments

This column reflects the removal of pension contributions and the addition of IAS 19 Employee Benefits pension related income and expenditure.

For the service this reflects the removal of the employer pension contributions made by the Board as allowed by statute and the replacement with current service costs and past service costs.

c) Other Differences

This column adjusts for differences between the amounts debited/credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement and amounts payable/receivable recognised under statute.

For the service this reconciles the impact of accruals for accumulating compensated absences e.g. holiday pay as required by IAS19 Employee Benefits, to the salaries actually payable in the financial year in accordance with statute.

Note 8 Expenditure and Income Analysed by Nature

The Board's expenditure and income is analysed as follows:

Expenditure and Income

	2018/19 £000	2019/20 £000
	Rating, Council Tax Valuation and Electoral Registration	Rating, Council Tax Valuation and Electoral Registration
Employee benefit expenses	4,058	3,803
Other service expenses	998	1,069
Support service recharges	58	57
Depreciation, amortisation and impairment	2	23
Interest payments	94	115
Total Expenditure	5,210	5,067
Requisitions	(4,157)	(4,347)
Government grants and other service income	(171)	(166)
Interest and investment income	(3)	(5)
Total Income	(4,331)	(4,518)
(Surplus) or deficit on the provision of services	879	549

Note 9 Earmarked Portions of the General Fund

Portions of the General Fund are earmarked for specific purposes as described below. Underspends or overspends against budget for these activities are transferred in or out of the earmarked funds at the year end.

	General Services £000	NDR Reform £000	Total £000
Balance at 1 April 2018	153	-	153
Increase/(Decrease) 2018/19	62	-	62
Balance at 31 March 2019	215	-	215
Increase/(Decrease) 2019/20	8	91	99
Balance at 31 March 2020	223	91	314

NDR Reform

The purpose of this fund is to ring-fence funding received from constituent authorities to implement reforms to the Non-Domestic Rating system. The Non-Domestic Rates (Scotland) Bill will take effect from 1 April 2020.

Note 10 Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure

	2018/19 £000	2019/20 £000
Pensions interest cost and expected return on pensions assets	94	115
Interest receivable and similar income	(3)	(5)
	91	110

Note 11 Property, Plant and Equipment

Recognition

All expenditure on the acquisition, creation, enhancement or replacement of an asset or part of an asset is capitalised, providing the asset yields benefit for more than one year to the Board and the services it provides and the cost can be reliably measured.

Where a component is replaced or restored, the carrying amount of the old component is derecognised and the new component reflected in the carrying amount.

Measurement

New assets are measured at cost. Cost includes the original purchase of the asset and the costs attributable to bringing the assets to its working condition for its intended use.

Assets are measured at current value which is Existing Use Value for Land and Buildings and Depreciated Historic Cost for Equipment and Furniture which is used as a proxy for current value.

Derecognition

The carrying amount of an item of property, plant and equipment is derecognised when an asset is disposed of or when no future economic benefits or service potential are expected from its use. The value of the asset in the Balance Sheet and any receipt is written to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as part of the gain or loss on disposal.

The gain or loss on disposal is not a charge against Requisitions, as the cost of non current assets is fully provided for under separate arrangements for Capital Financing. The carrying amount of the non current asset disposal is transferred to the Capital Adjustment Account and the disposal proceeds transferred to the Capital Fund and reported in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

Depreciation

Depreciation is provided for on all items of property, plant and equipment with a finite useful life by the systematic allocation of their depreciable amount over their useful lives. An exception is made for land where it can be demonstrated that it has an unlimited useful life.

Each part of an item of property, plant and equipment with a cost that is significant in relation to the total cost of the item is depreciated separately. Depreciation is calculated using the

straight-line method. In the year of acquisition, a full year's depreciation is provided for on all assets. In the year of disposal, no depreciation is charged.

The following useful lives and depreciation rates have been used in the calculation of depreciation:-

Other Land & Buildings - 35-60 years, land is not depreciated

Vehicles, Plant, Furniture & Equipment - 10 years

Impairment

Assets are assessed at each year end as to whether there is any indication that an asset may be impaired. Where indications exist and any possible differences are estimated to be material, the recoverable amount of the asset is estimated and, where this is less than the carrying amount of the asset, an impairment loss is recognised.

Where an impairment loss is reversed subsequently, the reversal is credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, up to the amount of the original loss, adjusted for depreciation that would have been charged if the loss had not been recognised.

Revaluations

The Board carries out a rolling programme that ensures that all Property, Plant and Equipment required to be measured at current value is revalued at least every five years. The last revaluation of Land and Buildings was done with effect from on 1 April 2018 and the next revaluation is scheduled during 2023/24. All valuations were carried out by Moray Council's Head of Estates in accordance with the methodologies and bases for estimation set out in the professional standards of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors. Valuations of vehicles, plant, furniture and equipment are based on depreciated historic cost as a proxy for current values.

Note 11 (continued)

	Other Land and Buildings £000	Vehicles, Plant, Furniture & Equipment £000	Total Property, Plant and Equipment £000
Cost or valuation			
At 1 April 2018	696	228	924
Additions	-	62	62
Revaluation increases recognised in the Revaluation Reserve	-	-	-
Revaluation increases recognised in the Provision of Services	-	-	-
At 31 March 2019	696	290	986
Accumulated Depreciation and Impairment			
At 1 April 2018	69	212	281
Depreciation written out to the Revaluation Reserve	(49)	-	(49)
Depreciation written out to the Provision of Services	(20)	-	(20)
Depreciation charge	14	7	21
At 31 March 2019	14	219	233
Net Book Value			
at 31 March 2018	627	16	643
at 31 March 2019	682	71	753
Cost or valuation			
At 1 April 2019	696	290	986
At 31 March 2020	696	290	986
Accumulated Depreciation and Impairment			
At 1 April 2019	14	219	233
Depreciation charge	14	9	23
at 31 March 2020	28	228	256
Net Book Value			
at 31 March 2019	682	71	753
at 31 March 2020	668	62	730

Note 12 Short Term Debtors

	2018/19 £000	2019/20 £000
Prepayments	31	39
Other Receivables	11	-
	42	39

Note 13 Cash and Cash Equivalents

	2018/19 £000	2019/20 £000
Temporary Investment in the Moray Council Loans Fund	613	651

Note 14 Short Term Creditors

	Restated 2018/19 £000	2019/20 £000
Trade Payables	136	147
Other Payables	422	329
	558	476

Note 15 Financial Instruments

Classifications

A financial instrument is a contract that gives rise to a financial asset of one entity and a financial liability or equity instrument of another. Non-exchange transactions, such as those relating to taxes and government grants, do not give rise to financial instruments.

Financial Liabilities

A financial liability is an obligation to transfer economic benefits controlled by the Board and can be represented by a contractual obligation to deliver cash or financial assets or an obligation to exchange financial assets and liabilities with another entity that is potentially unfavourable to the Board.

The majority of the Board's financial liabilities held during the year are measured at amortised cost and comprised:

- Creditors for requisitions due to be returned to constituent authorities
- Trade payables for goods and services received

Financial Assets

A financial asset is a right to future economic benefits controlled by the Board that is represented by cash, equity instruments or a contractual right to receive cash or other financial assets or a right to exchange financial assets and liabilities with another entity that is potentially favourable to the Board. The financial assets held by the Board during the year are accounted for under the following classification:

- Amortised cost (where cash flows are solely payments of principal and interest and the business model is to collect those cash flows) comprising:
 - temporary investment in the Moray Council Loans Fund
 - trade receivables for goods and services provided

Financial assets held at amortised cost are shown net of a loss allowance reflecting the statistical likelihood that the borrower or debtor will be unable to meet their contractual commitments to the Board.

Financial Instruments – Balances

The financial liabilities disclosed in the Balance Sheet are analysed across the following categories:

	2018/19	2019/20
	£000	£000
Short Term Creditors - Amortised Cost	558	476

The financial assets disclosed in the Balance Sheet are analysed across the following categories:

	2018/19	2019/20
	£000	£000
Temporary Investment in the Moray Council Loans Fund	613	651
Short Term Debtors - Amortised Cost	42	39

Note 16 Usable Reserves

General Fund

The creation of a General Fund was agreed by the Board at its meeting on 28 January 2011. This was introduced to provide the Assessor with some flexibility to investigate any spend-to-save projects which would require one-off expenditure in order to deliver future budget savings. The reserve also acts as a contingency for any unexpected costs in future years. Transfers are restricted to 3% of revenue budget in any one year subject to the reserve having a cumulative balance not exceeding 5% of revenue budget.

	2018/19 £000	2019/20 £000
Usable Reserves		
General Fund	215	223
Earmarked NDR Reform Reserve	-	91
	215	314

Note 17 Unusable Reserves

	2018/19 £000	2019/20 £000
Revaluation Reserve	262	257
Employee Statutory Adjustment Account	(117)	(99)
Capital Adjustment Account	490	472
Pension Reserve	(5,023)	(4,277)
	(4,388)	(3,647)

Note 17 (continued)

Revaluation Reserve

The Revaluation Reserve contains gains made by the Board arising from increases in the value of its Property, Plant and Equipment.

The reserve contains only revaluation gains accumulated since 1 April 2007, the date that the Reserve was created. Accumulated gains arising before that date are consolidated into the balance on the Capital Adjustment Account.

	2018/19 £000	2019/20 £000
Balance at 1 April	218	262
Revaluations		
Upward revaluation of assets not posted to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	49	-
Difference between fair value depreciation and historical cost depreciation written off to the Capital Adjustment Account	(5)	(5)
Balance at 31 March	262	257

Employee Statutory Adjustment Account

The Employee Statutory Adjustment Account absorbs the differences that would otherwise arise on the General Fund Balance from accruing for compensated absences earned but not taken in the year, e.g. annual leave entitlement carried forward at 31 March. Statutory arrangements require that the impact on the General Fund Balance is neutralised by transfers to or from the Account.

	2018/19 £000	2019/20 £000
Balance at 1 April	(110)	(117)
Settlement or cancellation of accrual made at the end of the preceding year	110	117
Amounts accrued at the end of the current year	(117)	(99)
Balance at 31 March	(117)	(99)

Note 17 (continued)

Capital Adjustment Account

The Capital Adjustment Account absorbs the timing differences arising from the different arrangements for accounting for the consumption of non-current assets and for financing the acquisition, construction or enhancement of those assets under statutory provisions.

The Account also contains revaluation gains accumulated on Property, Plant and Equipment before 1 April 2007, the date that the Revaluation Reserve was created to hold such gains.

	2018/19 £000	2019/20 £000
Balance at 1 April	425	490
Reversal of items relating to capital expenditure debited or credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement		
Charges for depreciation and impairment of non- current assets	(2)	(23)
Adjusting amounts written out of the Revaluation Reserve	5	5
Net written out amount of the cost of non-current assets consumed in the year	3	(18)
Capital financing in the year:		
Use of Capital Fund to finance new capital expenditure	55	-
Capital Expenditure charged against the General fund	7	-
Balance 31 March	490	472

Note 17 (continued)

Pensions Reserve

The Pensions Reserve absorbs the timing differences arising from the different arrangements for accounting for post employment benefits and for funding benefits in accordance with statutory provisions. The Board accounts for post employment benefits in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as the benefits are earned by employees accruing years of service, updating the liabilities recognised to reflect inflation, changing assumptions and investment returns on any resources set aside to meet the costs. However, statutory arrangements require benefits earned to be financed as the Board makes employer's contributions to pension funds or eventually pays any pensions for which it is directly responsible. The debit balance on the Pensions Reserve therefore shows a substantial shortfall in the benefits earned by past and current employees and the resources the Board has set aside to meet them. The statutory arrangements will ensure that funding will have been set aside by the time the benefits come to be paid.

	2018/19	2019/20
	£000	£000
Balance at 1 April	(3,878)	(5,023)
Remeasurements of the net defined benefit liability/asset	(206)	1,389
Reversal of items relating to retirement benefits debited or credited to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	(1,423)	(1,130)
Employer's pensions contributions and direct payments to pensioners payable in the year	484	487
Balance at 31 March	(5,023)	(4,277)

Note 18 External Audit Costs

The agreed external audit fee for 2019/20 was £0.007m for work undertaken in accordance with the Code of Audit Practice (2018/19 £0.007m).

Note 19 Cashflow – Analysis of Net Deficit on the provision of services for non cash movements

	2018/19 £000	2019/20 £000
Depreciation/Impairment charges	(2)	(23)
Pension Liability	(939)	(643)
Increase/(Decrease) in Debtors	(24)	(3)
Decrease/(Increase) in Creditors	(142)	82
	<u>(1,107)</u>	<u>(587)</u>

Note 20 Requisition and Grant Income

The Board credited the following requisitions to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. The requisitions are based on population.

	2018/19	2019/20
	£000	£000
Credited to Requisitions and Non Specific Grant Income:		
Requisition from Aberdeen City Council	1,677	1,741
Requisition from Aberdeenshire Council	1,914	1,993
Requisition from Moray Council	701	729
	4,292	4,463
Returned to constituent authorities:		
Aberdeen City Council	(53)	(45)
Aberdeenshire Council	(60)	(52)
Moray Council	(22)	(29)
	(135)	(126)
Total Requisition & Grant Income	4,157	4,337

Note 21 Leases

Operating Leases – Board as Lessee

Operating lease payments are reflected in the Cost of Services heading in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, as the rentals become payable. The Board does not have any finance leases.

The Board pays Aberdeenshire Council for the rental of their offices within Woodhill House under the terms of an operating lease. The amount paid under these terms in 2019/20 was £0.125m (£0.125m in 2018/19).

The future minimum lease payments due under non-cancellable leases in future years are:

	2018/19	2019/20
	£000	£000
Not later than one year	125	125
Later than one year and not later than five years	500	500
More than five years	375	250
	1,000	875

Note 22 Related Parties

The Board is required to disclose material transactions with related parties - bodies or individuals that have the potential to control or influence the Board or to be controlled or influenced by the Board. Disclosure of these transactions allows readers to assess the extent to which the Board might have been constrained in its ability to operate independently or might have secured the ability to limit another party's ability to bargain freely with the Board.

Constituent Authorities

The constituent authorities have the potential to control or influence the Board as they provide the majority of the Board's funding. Details are shown in Note 20. The Board also made payments to the constituent authorities in the normal course of business. The amounts are detailed below:

	2018/19 £000	2019/20 £000
Aberdeen City Council	76	82
Aberdeenshire Council	199	209
Moray Council	73	91

The amounts owed to the constituent authorities for requisitions and normal business activities at 31 March were:

Aberdeen City Council	57	50
Aberdeenshire Council	72	52
Moray Council	92	94

Members

Members of the Board have direct control over the Board's financial and operating policies. The total of members' allowances paid is shown in the Remuneration Report. There were no other material transactions with members other than the allowances shown in the Remuneration Report.

Note 23 Defined Benefit Pension Scheme

Participation in Pension Scheme

As part of the terms and conditions of employment of its officers, the Board makes contributions towards the cost of post-employment benefits. Although these benefits will not actually be payable until the employees retire, the Board has a commitment to make the payments for those benefits and must disclose them at the time that employees earn their future entitlement.

The Board participates in the North East Scotland Pension Fund (NESPF), a Local Government Pension Scheme, which is administered by Aberdeen City Council. Up until 31 March 2015 pension benefits accrued are based on final salary. This means that pension benefits are based on the final year's pay and the number of years that person has been a member of the scheme. Benefits earned from 1 April 2015 are based on career average salary. The Scheme is a funded defined benefit scheme, meaning that the Board and employees pay contributions into a fund, calculated at a level intended to balance the pension liabilities with investment assets over a period of time.

There are also arrangements in place for the award of discretionary post retirement benefits upon early retirement. This is an unfunded defined benefit arrangement under which liabilities are recognised when awards are made. However, there are no investment assets built up to meet these pensions liabilities and cash has to be generated to meet actual pension payments as they eventually fall due.

The North East Scotland Pension Fund is operated under the regulatory framework for the Local Government Pension Scheme and the governance of the scheme is the responsibility of the Pensions Committee. The Committee is comprised of nine elected members of Aberdeen City Council. Policy is determined in accordance with the Pensions Fund Regulations. Following the introduction of The Local Government Pension Scheme (Governance) (Scotland) Regulations 2015, the Pension Fund took the opportunity to review its governance arrangements. To comply with these regulations, the Pension Fund implemented a Pension Board with representation from Unions and Employers from the 1 April 2015. With the introduction of the Pension Board, the Joint Investment Advisory Committee was disbanded.

The principal risks to the scheme are the longevity assumptions, statutory changes to the scheme, changes to inflation, bond yields and the performance of the investments held by the scheme. These are mitigated to a certain extent by the statutory requirements to charge the General Fund the amounts required by statute as described in the accounting policy note.

Transactions relating to Post-employment Benefits

In relation to the North East Scotland Pension Fund, the Board recognises the cost of retirement benefits in the reported cost of services when they are earned by employees, rather than when the benefits are eventually paid as pensions. However, the charge required to be made against requisitions is based on the cash payable in the year, so the real cost of post employment/retirement benefits is reversed out in the Movement in Reserves Statement. The following transactions have been made in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement and Movement in Reserves Statement during the year:

Note 23 (continued)

COMPREHENSIVE INCOME AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT

	2018/19	2019/20
	£000	£000
Cost of Services:		
Past Service Cost	546	138
Current Service Cost and administration expenses	783	877
Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure:		
Net Interest Expense	94	115
Total Post Employment Benefit Charged to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	1,423	1,130
Other Post Employment Benefit Charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.		
Remeasurement of the Net Defined Benefit Liability comprising:		
Expected return on pension fund assets	(1,615)	1,508
Remeasurements (liabilities)	1,821	(2,897)
Total Post Employment Benefit Charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.	206	(1,389)
MOVEMENT IN RESERVES STATEMENT		
Reversal of net charges made to the Surplus or Deficit for the Provision of Services for post employment benefits in accordance with the Code	1,423	1,130
Actual amount charged against requisitions for pensions in the year	484	487

Note 23 (continued)

Pensions Assets and Liabilities Recognised in the Balance Sheet

The change in the net pensions liability is analysed into the following components:

Current Service Cost: The increase in liabilities as a result of years of service earned this year.

Net Interest on the Net Defined Benefit Liability: The change during the year in the net defined benefit liability that arises from the passage of time – charged to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line of the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. It is the difference between the interest (increase) in the value of the liabilities as the benefits are one year closer to being paid and the interest on pension assets based on assets held at the start of the year. The calculation is based on the discount rate in force at the beginning of the year.

Remeasurements: This comprises the Return on Plan Assets (excluding amounts included in the Net Interest on the Net Defined Benefit Liability) and Actuarial Gains and Losses which are changes in the net pensions liability that arise because events have not coincided with assumptions made at the last actuarial valuation or because the actuaries have updated their assumptions – charged to the Pensions Reserve as Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure.

Contributions Paid to the Pension Fund: Cash paid as employer's contributions to the pension fund in settlement of liabilities; not accounted for as an expense.

The amount included in the Balance Sheet arising from the Board's obligation in respect of its defined benefit plan is as follows:

	31 March 2019	31 March 2020
	£000	£000
Present value of the defined benefit obligation	(38,218)	(36,369)
Fair value of plan assets	33,195	32,092
Net liability arising from defined benefit obligation	(5,023)	(4,277)

Note 23 (continued)

The reconciliation of the Board's share of the present value of the North East Scotland Pension Fund's defined benefit liability is as follows:

	2019	2020
	£000	£000
1 April	(35,079)	(38,218)
Current Service Cost	(773)	(867)
Interest on pension liabilities	(900)	(907)
Remeasurements:		
Experience gain/(loss)	-	93
Gain/(Loss) on financial assumptions	(1,821)	601
Gain/(Loss) on demographic assumptions	-	2,203
Contributions by scheme participants	(228)	(166)
Benefits Paid	1,129	1,030
Past Service Cost	(546)	(138)
31 March	(38,218)	(36,369)

The reconciliation of the movements in the Board's share of the fair value of the North East Pension Fund's assets is as follows:

	2019	2020
	£000	£000
1 April	31,201	33,195
Interest on plan assets	806	792
Remeasurements (assets)	1,615	(1,508)
Administration expenses	(10)	(10)
Employer Contributions	484	487
Contributions by scheme participants	228	166
Benefits Paid	(1,129)	(1,030)
31 March	33,195	32,092

Note 23 (continued)

The Board's share of the Pension Fund's assets is:

	31 March 2019		
	Quoted Prices in Active Markets	Prices not Quoted in Active Markets	Totals
	£000	£000	£000
U.K. Equities	9,979	-	9,979
Overseas Equities	10,805	-	10,805
U.K Government Bonds	1,534	-	1,534
Other Government Bonds	471	-	471
Other U.K. Bonds	23	-	23
Other non U.K. Bonds	388	-	388
Property	-	2,437	2,437
Private Equity	-	1,524	1,524
Private Debt	-	146	146
Private Equity Infrastructure	-	252	252
Infrastructure Pooled fund	793	-	793
Private Equity Real Estate	-	405	405
Multi Asset Credit	-	767	767
Diversified Growth Funds	-	2,327	2,327
Cash Instruments	-	1,344	1,344
Total Assets	23,993	9,202	33,195

	31 March 2020		
	£000	£000	£000
U.K. Equities	8,956	-	8,956
Overseas Equities	8,789	-	8,789
U.K Government Bonds	1,390	-	1,390
Other Government Bonds	716	-	716
Other U.K. Bonds	32	-	32
Other non U.K. Bonds	590	-	590
Property	-	2,344	2,344
Private Equity	-	1,668	1,668
Private Debt	-	461	461
Private Equity Infrastructure	-	579	579
Infrastructure Pooled fund	687	-	687
Private Equity Real Estate	-	395	395
Multi Asset Credit	-	2,695	2,695
Diversified Growth Funds	-	2,152	2,152
Cash Instruments	-	638	638
Total Assets	21,160	10,932	32,092

Note 23 (continued)

Basis for Estimating Assets and Liabilities

The most recent valuation was carried out as at 31 March 2017 and has been updated by Mercer Limited, independent actuaries to the North East Scotland Pension Fund, in order to assess the liabilities of the Fund as at 31 March 2020. Liabilities have been assessed on an actuarial basis using the projected unit credit method, an estimate of the pensions that will be payable in future years dependent on assumptions about mortality rates, salary levels etc. The principal assumptions used by the actuary have been:

	31 March 2019	31 March 2020
Financial assumptions:		
Discount rate	2.40%	2.40%
Rate of increase in salaries	3.70%	3.60%
Rate of increase in pensions	2.30%	2.20%
Rate of CPI inflation	2.20%	2.10%
Mortality assumptions:		
Longevity at 65 for current pensioners:		
Men	22.9	21.5
Women	25.0	24.2
Longevity at 65 for future pensioners:		
Men	25.8	23.1
Women	28.1	26.3

Sensitivity Analysis

The estimation of the defined benefit obligations is sensitive to the actuarial assumptions set out in the table above. The sensitivity analyses below have been determined based on reasonably possible changes of the assumptions occurring at the end of the reporting period, and assume for each change that the assumption analysed changes while all the other assumptions remain constant. The assumption in longevity, for example, assumes that life expectancy increases or decreases for men and women. In practice, this is unlikely to occur, and changes of the assumptions may be interrelated. The estimations in the sensitivity analysis have followed the accounting policies for the scheme, i.e. on an actuarial basis using the projected unit credit method. The methods and types of assumptions used in preparing the sensitivity analysis below did not change from those used in the previous period.

The effects of a 0.1% increase/decrease in the rate for discounting scheme liabilities, the rate of inflation, and the rate of increase in salaries, a 1 year increase/decrease in life expectancy, and a +/-1% change in the 2019/20 investment returns, are shown in the table below:

Note 23 (continued)

Sensitivity Analysis as at 31 March 2020

	Central	Sensitivity 1	Sensitivity 2	Sensitivity 3	Sensitivity 4	Sensitivity 5
		+ 0.1% p.a. discount rate	+ 0.1% p.a. inflation	+ 0.1% p.a. pay growth	1 year increase in life expectancy	+1% change in 2019/20 investment returns
	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s
Liabilities	36,369	35,765	36,983	36,497	37,353	36,369
Assets	(32,092)	(32,092)	(32,092)	(32,092)	(32,092)	(32,411)
Fund Deficit	4,277	3,673	4,891	4,405	5,261	3,958

	Central	Sensitivity 1	Sensitivity 2	Sensitivity 3	Sensitivity 4	Sensitivity 5
		- 0.1% p.a. discount rate	- 0.1% p.a. inflation	- 0.1% p.a. pay growth	-1 year increase in life expectancy	-1% change in 2019/20 investment returns
	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s
Liabilities	36,369	36,973	35,755	36,241	35,385	36,369
Assets	(32,092)	(32,092)	(32,092)	(32,092)	(32,092)	(31,773)
Fund Deficit	4,277	4,881	3,663	4,149	3,293	4,596

Note 23 (continued)

Funding Strategy Statement (FSS)

The FSS sets out how the administering authority balances the potentially conflicting aims of affordability of contributions, transparency of process, stability of employers' contributions, and prudence in the funding basis.

The Pension Committee's long-term funding objective is to achieve and maintain assets equal to 100% of projected accrued liabilities, assessed on an ongoing basis. The current actuarial valuation of the Fund is effective as at 31 March 2017 and the results indicate that overall the assets represented 107% of projected accrued liabilities at the valuation date. Investments that would most closely match the pension liabilities would be gilts, predominantly index-linked, reflecting the nature of the Fund's liabilities. However, the Fund invests in other assets, in the expectation that these will provide higher returns albeit without any guarantee that higher returns will be achieved over any particular year. The benefit of higher investment return is that, over the long term, a higher level of funding should achieve lower employer contribution rates. However the additional investment returns from growth assets come with a price: greater volatility relative to the liabilities thus introducing risk. There is a trade-off between the benefits of additional investment return from greater exposure to growth assets and the greater predictability from having greater exposure to liability matching assets.

The asset proportions of the Fund at 31 March 2020, with March 2019 in brackets were: equities, including alternatives 82.2% (81.3%), bonds 8.5% (7.3%), property 7.3% (7.4%) and cash 2.0% (4.0%). This is based on the Board's proportion of assets held as supplied by the actuary, rather than the proportions held by the fund as a whole.

Impact on the Board's Cash Flows

While the Fund's main objective is to ensure solvency of the NESPF they also aim to keep employers' contributions at as constant a rate as possible. Following the 2017 valuation the Pensions Committee has agreed a strategy with the scheme's actuary to achieve a funding level of 100% over an average surplus spread period of 24 years and have maintained an employer contribution rate requirement of 19.3% for local authorities across the scheme. During the valuation process employer rates are set for a period of three years with the next triennial valuation due as at 31 March 2020 to determine a funding level and set the rates for 2021/22 onwards.

The projected employer contributions expected to be made to the Local Government Pension Scheme in the year to 31 March 2021 is £0.488m.

The weighted average duration of the liabilities for scheme members at the 31 March 2017 valuation is 17 years.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

EXPENDITURE

Employee Benefit Expenses

Includes direct and indirect employee expenses.

Direct expenses include salaries and overtime, employer's national insurance and superannuation contributions.

Indirect employee expenses include relocation cost, interview expenses, training and staff advertising.

Other Service Expenses

Includes

- rent, rates, repairs and maintenance and premises-related expenditure at the area offices in Banff, Elgin and Woodhill House headquarters.
- all costs associated with the hire or use of transport, including staff travel allowances and public transport and
- the cost of purchasing equipment, furniture and materials used in the operation or administration of the service, including printing and stationery, canvass expenses and valuation appeal panel costs.

Support Services

This is a charge from Moray Council for services that support the Board in its provision of services to the public. These include Legal Services, Financial Services, Internal Audit and Human Resources.

Depreciation

Depreciation is a charge to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, reflecting the decline in value of assets as a result of their usage or ageing.

Impairment

Impairment is a charge to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, reflecting that the recoverable amount of an asset is less than its carrying amount.

INCOME

Requisitions

Funding received from the constituent authorities for which the Board provides a service.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS (continued)

OTHER TERMS

CIPFA

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy

LASAAC

Local Authority (Scotland) Accounts Advisory Committee

IFRS

International Financial Reporting Standard

The Code

The Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom

SeRCOP

Service Reporting Code of Practice

Fair Value

IFRS 13 defines fair value as the price that would be received to sell an asset or paid to transfer a liability in an orderly transaction between market participants at the measurement date (i.e. an exit price). When measuring fair value, an entity uses the assumptions that market participants would use when pricing the asset or liability under current market conditions, including assumptions about risk.

Current Value

For operational land and buildings, current value is the amount that would be paid for the asset in its existing use.

Economic Cost

The total cost of performing an activity or following a decision or course of action.

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

Independent auditor's report to the members of Grampian Valuation Joint Board and the Accounts Commission

Report on the audit of the financial statements

Opinion on financial statements

I certify that I have audited the financial statements in the annual accounts of Grampian Valuation Joint Board for the year ended 31 March 2020 under Part VII of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973. The financial statements comprise the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, Movement in Reserves Statement, Balance Sheet, Cash Flow Statement, and notes to the accounts, including a summary of significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRSs) as adopted by the European Union, and as interpreted and adapted by the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2019/20 (the 2019/20 Code).

In my opinion the accompanying financial statements:

- give a true and fair view in accordance with applicable law and the 2019/20 Code of the state of affairs of the Grampian Valuation Joint Board as at 31 March 2020 and of its income and expenditure for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with IFRSs as adopted by the European Union, as interpreted and adapted by the 2019/20 Code; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, The Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014, and the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003.

Basis for opinion

I conducted my audit in accordance with applicable law and International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)), as required by the [Code of Audit Practice](#) approved by the Accounts Commission for Scotland. My responsibilities under those standards are further described in the auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of my report. I was appointed under arrangements approved by the Accounts Commission on 10 April 2017. The period of total uninterrupted appointment is four years. I am independent of Grampian Valuation Joint Board in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to my audit of the financial statements in the UK including the Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standard, and I have fulfilled my other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. Non-audit services prohibited by the Ethical Standard were not provided to the Grampian Valuation Joint Board. I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion.

Emphasis of matter: property valuations

I draw attention to Note 4 'Assumptions made about the future and other major sources of estimation uncertainty' of the accounts, which describes the effects of a material uncertainty, caused by Covid-19, on the property valuations included in the annual accounts. My opinion is not modified in respect of this matter.

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT (continued)

Conclusions relating to going concern basis of accounting

I have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the ISAs (UK) require me to report to you where:

- the use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is not appropriate; or
- the Treasurer has not disclosed in the financial statements any identified material uncertainties that may cast significant doubt about Grampian Valuation Joint Board's ability to continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting for a period of at least twelve months from the date when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Risks of material misstatement

I report in a separate Annual Audit Report, available from the [Audit Scotland website](#), the most significant assessed risks of material misstatement that I identified and my conclusions thereon.

Responsibilities of the Treasurer and Grampian Valuation Joint Board for the financial statements

As explained more fully in the Statement of Responsibilities for the Annual Accounts, the Treasurer is responsible for the preparation of financial statements that give a true and fair view in accordance with the financial reporting framework, and for such internal control as the Treasurer determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the Treasurer is responsible for assessing the Grampian Valuation Joint Board's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless deemed inappropriate.

The Grampian Valuation Joint Board is responsible for overseeing the financial reporting process.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

My objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes my opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT (continued)

The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control. The capability of the audit to detect fraud and other irregularities depends on factors such as the skilfulness of the perpetrator, the frequency and extent of manipulation, the degree of collusion involved, the relative size of individual amounts manipulated, and the seniority of those individuals involved. I therefore design and perform audit procedures which respond to the assessed risks of material misstatement due to fraud.

A further description of the auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of my auditor's report.

Other information in the annual accounts

The Treasurer is responsible for the other information in the annual accounts. The other information comprises the information other than the financial statements, the audited part of the Remuneration Report, and my auditor's report thereon. My opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and I do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon except on matters prescribed by the Accounts Commission to the extent explicitly stated later in this report.

In connection with my audit of the financial statements, my responsibility is to read all the other information in the annual accounts and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or my knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If I identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, I am required to determine whether there is a material misstatement in the financial statements or a material misstatement of the other information. If, based on the work I have performed, I conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, I am required to report that fact. I have nothing to report in this regard.

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT (continued)

Report on other requirements

Opinions on matters prescribed by the Accounts Commission

In my opinion, the audited part of the Remuneration Report has been properly prepared in accordance with The Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014.

In my opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- the information given in the Management Commentary for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements and that report has been prepared in accordance with statutory guidance issued under the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003; and
- the information given in the Annual Governance Statement for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements and that report has been prepared in accordance with the Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework (2016).

Matters on which I am required to report by exception

I am required by the Accounts Commission to report to you if, in my opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept; or
- the financial statements and the audited part of the Remuneration Report are not in agreement with the accounting records; or
- I have not received all the information and explanations I require for my audit.

I have nothing to report in respect of these matters.

Conclusions on wider scope responsibilities

In addition to my responsibilities for the annual accounts, my conclusions on the wider scope responsibilities specified in the Code of Audit Practice are set out in my Annual Audit Report.

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT (continued)

Use of my report

This report is made solely to the parties to whom it is addressed in accordance with Part VII of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 and for no other purpose. In accordance with paragraph 120 of the Code of Audit Practice, I do not undertake to have responsibilities to members or officers, in their individual capacities, or to third parties.

Maggie Bruce
Senior Audit Manager
Audit Scotland
1st Floor, Room F03
The Green House
Beechwood Business Park North
Inverness
IV2 3BL

21 August 2020



REPORT TO: Grampian Valuation Joint Board on 21August 2020

SUBJECT: Operational update

BY: The Assessor & ERO

1. Reason for report

1.1 To update members on current operational activity

2. Recommendation

2.1 **The Board consider and note the content of this report.**

3. Current operational activity

3.1 The registration and lands valuation services have operated continuously since the lockdown on 24 March 2020.

3.2 Updates to the valuation roll, council tax valuation list and electoral registers have been implemented. Operational capacity is however restricted due to the move to home-working, cessation of face to face meetings with the public and suspension of site visits. These operational constraints however coincide with the slow-down in construction and property sales activity.

3.3 Significant support to the NDR teams in the constituent authorities has been provided in relation to the Covid-19 business grant related enquiries.

3.4 Citations have been issued on behalf of the secretaries to the Valuation Appeal Committees for the autumn diet of Valuation Appeal Committee hearings and valuation roll appeal resolution discussions and negotiations are being conducted to seek to maximise appeal resolution ahead of any hearings that the independent appeal committees may hold. There are 1,996 revaluation 2017 appeals that the Committees are required to dispose of prior to 31 December 2020. In addition, there are 1,976 running roll appeals that the Committees are also required to dispose of by the same date.

3.5 Preparations are in hand to issue citations for a further 9,463 appeals that the Committees are required to dispose of by 31 March 2021. This is an extraordinarily high volume of appeals; the majority having been lodged during late March seeking a reduction in rateable value due to the onset of the pandemic.

- 3.6 Valuation personnel are also engaged in council tax proposal discussions in order to seek to resolve disputed council tax bandings. Any unresolved proposals are referred to the Valuation Appeal Committees as appeals and scheduled for hearing.
- 3.7 The annual canvass commenced on 5 August and letters to the 280,000 households in the Grampian area are being issued on a phased basis during August. Automated response services are provided and are supported by limited call handling capacity operated from the Aberdeen, Banff and Elgin offices.
- 3.8 Preparations are in hand to service by-elections scheduled to take place this autumn and risk assessment work in conjunction with the corresponding Returning Officers is being carried out.
- 3.9 Planning for the 2021 Scottish Parliamentary election has commenced and contingency arrangements may be required to address the potential for a significant increase in absent voting.
- 4.0 Preparations for the 2022 revaluation have been interrupted by the delay in the provision of secondary legislation that has held up the issue of Assessor Information Notices.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 The organisation has continued to deliver its statutory services throughout the lockdown period.
- 4.2 The organisation faces significant challenges in the short to medium term in relation to the resolution of appeals ahead of the 31 December 2020 deadline, the extraordinary volume of appeals lodged in March 2020, the 2021 elections and the 2022 revaluation.

Author of Report: Ian H Milton