



Minute of Meeting of the Grampian Valuation Joint Board

Friday, 01 February 2019

Woodhill House, Aberdeen,

PRESENT

Councillor Frank Brown, Councillor Charles Buchan, Councillor Bill Cormie, Councillor Theresa Coull, Councillor Alan Donnelly, Councillor Gordon Graham, Councillor Andy Kille, Councillor Graham Leadbitter, Councillor Ron McKail, Councillor Sandy Stuart, Councillor Brian Topping, Councillor Judy Whyte, Councillor Neil MacGregor (for Councillor Christian Allard), Councillor Sandra Macdonald (for Councillor John Reynolds)

APOLOGIES

Councillor Christian Allard, Councillor John Reynolds, Councillor Michael Roy

IN ATTENDANCE

Also in attendance at the above meeting were Councillor Neil McGregor substituting for Councillor Allard, Councillor Sandra MacDonald substituting for Councillor Reynolds, Ian Milton, Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer, Lorraine Paisey, Treasurer to the Board and Tracey Sutherland, Committee Services Officer (Moray Council).

1. Declaration of Group Decisions and Members Interests *

In terms of Standing Order 25 and the Councillor's Code of Conduct, there were no declarations from group leaders or spokespersons in regard to any prior decisions taken on how Members will vote on any item on the agenda or any declarations of Members' interests in respect of any item on the agenda.

2. Minute of Previous Meeting on 16 November 2018

The minute of the meeting of the Board dated 16 November 2018 was submitted and approved by the Board.

3. Revenue Budget Monitoring Statement 1 April to 31 Dec 2018

A report by the Treasurer to the Board was submitted to consider the Revenue Budget Monitoring Statement for the period 1 April to 31 December 2018.

The Board noted that an estimated underspend of £144,000 is predicted. Of this, an estimated £62,000 would be transferred to the General Fund, with refunds to the constituent authorities totalling £82,000.

Following a lengthy discussion Councillor Kille proposed and seconded by Councillor Whyte that the entire £144,000 estimated underspend is returned to the constituent authorities.

As an amendment, Councillor Leadbitter, seconded by Councillor Cormie, moved that the estimated underspend be divided as detailed in the report.

On a division there voted:-

For the motion (7)	Councillors A Kille, J Whyte, A Donnelly, G Graham, R McKail, S MacDonald and F Brown
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For the Amendment (7)	Councillors G Leadbitter, B Cormie, N MacGregor, C Buchan, T Coull, S Stuart and B Topping
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Abstentions (0)

There being an equality of votes Councillor Leadbitter with the casting vote, voted for the amendment and the amendment became the finding of the meeting.

Therefore, the Board agreed to note:-

- i) the revenue monitoring statement for the period 1 April 2018 to 31 December 2018; and
- ii) the estimated outturn forecast for the financial year 2018/19

4. Revenue Budget 2019-20

A report by the Treasurer to the Board asked the Board to consider and agree the Revenue budget for 2019/20 and the requisitions to the three constituent authorities.

During consideration of the report Councillor McKail requested a report on the options for reducing the office space used by the Assessor and ERO staff by making effective use of technology and current space. In response the Assessor and ERO agreed to carry out an option appraisal and bring a report back to a future meeting of the Board.

Councillor Leadbitter questioned whether there would be any scope for the Assessor and ERO to speak to the constituent Local Authorities regarding the use of pool cars. In response the Assessor and ERO agreed to provide a report to a future meeting of the board on the practicalities of introducing pool cars.

Following further consideration, Councillor McKail proposed a motion, seconded by Councillor Donnelly to approve a budget of £4,292,000 which is in line with the

2018/19 budget. With the savings being achieved from a reduction in staffing but gave no indication of which staff.

In response, Councillor Leadbitter queried that it would be difficult to set a reduced budget without knowing where the £171,000 reduction could be saved. He further added that the motion was not competent as no alternative figures have been produced.

Councillor Kille added that legal advice had been sought from legal advisers in Aberdeenshire Council who had advised that the motion was competent.

Councillor Whyte suggested that there should be a budget setting meeting prior to the meeting where the next year's budget is set. Councillor Kille agreed that the Board should consider an alternative way of setting the budget.

In response the Treasurer confirmed that the lateness of the Scottish Government budget announcement had prevented an earlier report to the Board as she had hoped to provide an interim paper for the October/November meeting. The Treasurer agreed that for future years an interim report would be provided to the board to allow members the opportunity to discuss the proposals. The Treasurer further added that the requisitions for 2019/20 needed to be agreed at this meeting.

Councillor Leadbitter, seconded by Councillor Topping proposed an amendment that the budget be agreed as set out in the recommendations of the report.

On a division there voted:-

For the motion (7)	Councillors A Kille, J Whyte, A Donnelly, G Graham, R McKail, S MacDonald and F Brown
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For the Amendment (7)	Councillors G Leadbitter, B Cormie, N MacGregor, C Buchan, T Coull, S Stuart and B Topping
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Abstentions (0)

There being an equality of votes Councillor Leadbitter with the casting vote, voted for the amendment and the amendment became the finding of the meeting.

Therefore, the Board agreed to:

- i) note the changing legislation framework within which the Assessor's services work as set out in paragraph 3.2;
- ii) note the level of uncertainty regarding key expenditure assumptions as set out in Section 4 of this report;
- iii) approve the budget for 2019/20 is set at £4,463,000 as detailed in Appendix 1, which includes £99,000 to meet the additional demands of the Non Domestic Rates reform; and
- iv) approve the requisitions to the constituent authorities for 2019/20 are set at £4,463,000 as detailed in the table at paragraph 6.2.

5. Annual Audit Plan 2018-19

A report was submitted by the External Auditor to update the Board on the Audit Plan for 2018/19.

Following consideration the Board noted the update on f the Audit Plan for 2018/19.

6. Internal Audit Plan

A report was submitted by the Treasurer advising the Board of the planned internal audit coverage of the Assessor's Services for the financial year ended 31 March 2019.

Following consideration the Board agreed to note the report.

7. Register of Electors

A report by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer updated the Board on the performance details following the publication of the revised registers on 1 December 2018 and update the Board on current developments in electoral registration.

Following consideration the Board noted the content of the report.

8. Valuation Roll and Council Tax

A report was submitted by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer to advise the Board of current activities and performance levels achieved during the period 1 April to 31 September 2018.

Following consideration of the report Members agreed to note the current position.

9. Governance

A report by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer asked the Board to consider the updates to the employment policy framework and the requirement to ensure that related party returns and registers of interest are maintained.

Following consideration the Board agreed to:

- i) approve the update on the employment policy framework for 2018 for Health and Work, Recruitment and Selection, Code of Conduct and smoking;
- ii) identify related parties within the annual accounts in relation to members and senior officers; and
- iii) introduce a register of interests returns for senior officers.

10. Question Time ***

Councillor Topping asked whether training could be organised before or after a future meeting on the Board.

In response the Assessor and ERO confirmed that training could take place following the next meeting of the Board on 21 June 2019 covering the work of the Assessor staff and also include governance in terms of the responsibilities between Officers and Board Members.