



REPORT TO: GRAMPIAN VALUATION JOINT BOARD ON 27 JANUARY 2023

SUBJECT: STAFF VACANCIES, RECRUITMENT & UPSKILLING EXISTING STAFF

BY: THE DEPUTE ASSESSOR AND ERO (ABERDEENSHIRE)

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 To report on the current level of staff vacancies, attempts to recruit staff and potential avenues to upskill existing staff to fill vacancies in the Valuation Section.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Board consider and note the contents of this report.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 At the Board meeting on 28 October 2022, it was requested that a report be presented at this meeting detailing the current level of vacancies across our organisation, the steps taken to try to fill these vacancies and, in light of the difficulties encountered so far in recruiting staff in certain posts, what actions could be considered to try to fill these posts.

4. CURRENT VACANCIES

- 4.1 The Board currently has 16 vacant posts;

<u>Section</u>	<u>Number of vacancies</u>
IT	1
Secretarial	2
Clerical	3
Valuation	10

The IT post is currently unfilled and unadvertised pending a review of the organisation's IT requirements.

The Secretarial posts are unfilled and unadvertised following the reprofiling of one of the posts and pending the outcome of a job evaluation exercise being carried out by Moray Council's Human Resources Section.

The Clerical posts are in the process of being advertised.

The Valuation posts have been the subject of multiple rounds of advertising, continue to be advertised on our website and are of the most concern from an operational standpoint. During October, in the lead up to the publication of the Draft Valuation Roll, 11 members of the valuation staff carried out over 400 hours of paid overtime work. These figures do not include the extra hours of work carried out by the Assessor and Deputies as they are not entitled to any additional financial payments or time in lieu.

- 4.2 As illustrated in the Valuation Roll and Council Tax report, the staffing situation has clearly had an impact on the key performance indicators (KPI), as the focus of the valuation staff had to be on the publication of the Draft Valuation Roll at the end of November and preparing for the publication of the final Roll in March.
- 4.3 In addition to the impact on organisational KPIs there is a potential for burnout and stress related issues amongst the staff who are handling the statutory duties involved with the 2023 Revaluation, non-domestic appeals, day-to-day Valuation Roll maintenance and enquiries, maintenance of the Council Tax Valuation List and the increased number of proposals and enquiries that have been experienced in recent years.
- 4.4 We are acutely aware that these pressures may impact our staff and that this could further deplete the number of staff available to carry out our statutory functions, either through stress related illnesses, or by staff leaving the organisation.
- 4.5 The welfare of our staff is vital. We are therefore engaging with our staff on a one-to-one basis to determine whether there are problems emerging from the workloads and deadlines we face. We actively adjust duties, if we can, to try to mitigate any issues and encourage staff to use the "Time for Talking" employee assistance service, which includes general advice and information, a 24hr helpline and counselling services, should they feel they require help.

5. ACTION BEING TAKEN

- 5.1 The assistance of Moray Council HR has been requested in order to find ways to address the current staffing situation and a further meeting between the Assessor and Moray Council HR is planned for the coming weeks.
- 5.2 Some potential actions that are being discussed/explored are;
 - a) A review and refresh of information for applicants and the positioning of jobs/careers with the Board
 - b) Promotion of the benefits of working for the Board

- c) Investigation of ways to promote flexibility and further exploring the suitability for remote and flexible working, including looking into options around paid accommodation/travel for specific number of trips to the area per month
- d) Targeted recruitment advertising via social media
- e) Graduate apprenticeships. An initial approach has been made to all staff informing them of the existence of this route to career progression and inviting initial expressions of interest.
- f) Liaison with local schools, colleges and universities regarding future requirements
- g) Development of succession planning at senior levels of the organisation and where specific skill sets are critical to posts
- h) Gathering of information of salary levels in comparable jobs/organisations to determine if recruitment difficulties are due to disparity in salary

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The work with Moray Council HR is still at an early stage and it is recommended that we continue with this course of action for the time being and report back to the Board as discussions and actions progress.**

Author of Report: James A Barron Depute Assessor & ERO