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**REPORT TO:** Grampian Valuation Joint Board on 30 June 2023

**SUBJECT:** Staff Vacancies, Recruitment and Upskilling Existing Staff

**BY:** The Depute Assessor & ERO (Aberdeenshire)

**1. Reason for Report**

1.1 To update the Board on the current level of staff vacancies, recruitment and the upskilling of existing staff.

**2. Recommendation**

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

**3. Background**

3.1 At the January 2023 meeting of the Board, it was requested that the Board be updated at each meeting on the level of vacancies and the steps being taken to improve the situation.

**4. Current Vacancies**

4.1 The Board currently has 12 vacant posts: -

<b><u>Section</u></b>	<b><u>Establishment (FTE)</u></b>	<b><u>Number of vacancies (FTE)</u></b>
IT	3	1
Secretarial	4	2
Valuation	29	9
Clerical	29	0
Technical	15	0

As previously advised, the IT post is currently unfilled and unadvertised pending a review of the organisation's IT requirements.

The Secretarial posts are also unfilled and unadvertised, pending a review of secretarial requirements. One post has been reprofiled and a job evaluation exercise has been carried out by Moray HR.

The Clerical team has no vacancies following a successful round of recruitment.

A round of recruitment in March received a number of responses and we were able to fill a Technical Assistant post that had fallen vacant due to retirement and also to recruit another Graduate Trainee Valuer, who will take up employment on 10 July 2023.

As detailed in the previous report, the Valuation posts have been the subject of multiple rounds of advertising. We made another attempt to fill the posts by placing adverts at the end of May in “myjobscotland” and also on the “RICS Recruit” website, which is the dedicated platform of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) for valuation and surveying career opportunities. Unfortunately, at the time of preparing this report, the latest round of advertising has failed to generate any interest in these vacant posts. We have also continued to advertise the various posts on our own website and have circulated the links to these posts to other assessor’s offices.

Since the last report was presented to the Board, one member of the valuation team and one member of the technical team have started maternity leave. In an attempt to alleviate the impact of the loss of a Principal Valuer during the period of maternity leave, we have temporarily appointed one of our most experienced valuers to a Senior Valuer position.

- 4.2 As previously reported, the staffing situation has clearly had an impact on the key performance indicators (KPI) and this is likely to remain the case until the staffing situation in the valuation team improves.
- 4.3 The welfare of our staff continues to be a high priority. We actively engage with our staff to determine whether there are problems emerging from their workloads, other work-related factors, or personal issues. The “Time for Talking” employee assistance service, continues to be available to staff should they feel they require external help.

## **5. Action Being Taken**

- 5.1 As I have previously reported, the assistance of Moray Council HR has been requested in order to find ways to address the current staffing situation. The planned meeting between the Assessor and Moray Council HR has had to be postponed, but Moray Council HR have provided us with a copy of their draft Corporate Recruitment Action Plan. Unfortunately, at this stage, it does little more than illustrate that the problems the Grampian Assessor is facing in recruitment are mirrored for professional posts in the Moray Council and does not provide any real solutions, or suggestions as to how to mitigate the recruitment issue.

- 5.2 We have promoted the availability of the Napier University graduate apprenticeship degree course in Construction and Built environment to our staff and had some interest about undertaking the course. Two members of staff have taken up this opportunity, with one candidate aiming to join the course this year. It is anticipated he may gain direct entry to the course at its second-year level, subject to a check on his existing qualifications. The other member of staff would have also started in the second year of the course this year but has had to defer entry until next year for personal reasons.

This course will enable us to upskill members of our existing workforce, allowing them to enrol on the RICS Assessment of Professional Competence (APC) before the end of the course. This should then provide an avenue to these staff to become Chartered Surveyors, thus allowing us, in time, to start to fill these professional posts where we are receiving no applications when they are advertised externally. Obviously, this is not going to be a “quick-fix” to our recruitment issues as there will be a considerable lead time, even with direct entry to the second year of the course, before candidates graduate and then pass their APC. It also depends on the member of staff completing their course and being successful in their APC.

- 5.3 We will continue to discuss and explore avenues in which we may improve recruitment and the upskilling of our existing staff, including: -
- a) A review and refresh of information for applicants and the positioning of jobs/careers with the Board in conjunction with Moray Council HR
  - b) Promotion of the benefits of working for the Board
  - c) Further investigation of ways to promote flexibility and further exploring the suitability for remote and flexible working
  - d) Targeted recruitment advertising via social media
  - e) Look at ways to liaise with local schools, colleges and universities regarding current and future staffing requirements
  - f) Gather information on salary levels for comparable jobs/organisations to determine if recruitment difficulties are due to disparity in salary

## **6. Conclusion**

- 6.1 Further work with Moray Council HR is required as a priority when resources on both sides permit. It is hoped that now one member of staff has committed to enrol on the graduate apprenticeship degree course that this may encourage other members of the organisation to consider doing the same. We will continue to try to recruit through our normal channels in the hope that we may be able to find suitably qualified candidates, who may be looking to change job, or relocate to the Grampian area. It is recommended that we continue with the course of action set out above and report back to the Board at the next meeting.

Author of Report: James A Barron Depute Assessor & ERO