

Highland and Western Isles Valuation Joint Board

Minutes of Meeting of the Highland and Western Isles Valuation Joint Board held in Council Headquarters, Inverness on Friday 29 March 2019 at 10.35 a.m.

Present:

Representing The Highland Council:

Mr A Graham
Mr J Gray
Mr L Fraser
Mr A MacKinnon
Mrs M Paterson

Representing Comhairle nan Eilean Siar:

Mr J Mackay

In attendance:

Mr W Gillies, Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer
Mrs M Grigor, Finance Manager, Treasurer's Office
Mr S Wright, Trainee Accountant, Treasurer's Office
Mr A MacInnes, Administrative Assistant, Clerk's Office

Mr J Gray in the Chair

Business

**1. Apologies
Leisgeulan**

An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Mr A MacLeod.

**2. Declarations of Interest
Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt**

There were no declarations of interest.

**3. Revenue Budget 2019/22
Buidseat Teachd-a-Steach 2019/22**

There was circulated Report No. VAL/6/19 by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer which set out for approval a proposed revenue budget for financial years 2019/22.

At the Board's meeting held on 25 January, 2019 a budget proposal was considered and it was agreed that a decision on the budget be deferred pending further discussion. Discussion had since taken place with representatives of the constituent Councils and there had been further engagement with the Treasurer. A revised budget had now been agreed with the Treasurer, taking account of these discussions.

Members were generally content with the revised budget and noted that 3% of the increase in budget was due to Valuation Appeal Committee costs which the Assessor had no control over. The Scottish Government were also proposing changes for

Valuation Appeals. It was intended that there would be a two stage appeal process. Firstly appeals would be considered by the Assessor and appeals refused at this stage could then be heard at a second stage by the Scottish Tribunal Service. This would increase pressures on the workload of the Assessor's department. The Government had acknowledged that what they were introducing would be more costly to Assessors and Valuation Boards and there would be enhanced funding for this through Local Authority Grant Aided Expenditure.

It was noted that computing charges were approximately 12% of total expenditure. The computer provision was provided through The Highland Council contract with Wipro. There had been no reduction in computer charges as yet, but it was anticipated that there should be future savings from this contract. An update on this issue would be provided at the next meeting.

Reference was made to failed attempts to fill vacancies for qualified valuation staff. This was a concern for all Assessors in Scotland as there was a shortage of Chartered Surveyors. In the short term there had been a move to advertise for trainee valuer/ valuer in order to fill these posts. Insofar as a longer term solution to the recruitment difficulties was concerned, The Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors had been contacted to see if they can increase the flow of Chartered Surveyors. Also, through the Scottish Assessors Association there had been contact with Edinburgh Napier University as to whether courses could be arranged for those wishing to become Chartered Surveyors.

Going forward, there was a need to ensure that Constituent Authorities were receiving value for money from the service provided by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer and that the Assessor had reasonable financial provision to carry out his duties.

Following further discussion, the Board:-

- i **AGREED** the revenue budget for financial years 2019/22; and
- ii **NOTED** that an update would be provided to the next meeting on progress with anticipated savings on computer charges.

The meeting concluded at 11.00 a.m.