

MINUTE OF MEETING OF THE GRAMPIAN VALUATION JOINT BOARD

FRIDAY 26 JANUARY 2007

MORAY COUNCIL CHAMBERS, ELGIN

PRESENT

Councillors A. Wilson (Convenor), M. Burnett (Vice-Convenor), J Hunter, S DI Longmore, G G Lumsden, J A McGregor, J A Mair, J Porter, G Urquhart and W P Watt

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Councillors B Craig, J C Davidson, D Falconer and P MacDonald,

IN ATTENDANCE

A.A. McConochie, Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer, M Wilson, Treasurer, D Whitworth, Head of Personnel Services, Moray Council, M Bruce, External Auditor and the Senior Committee Services Officer, Moray Council, for the Clerk to the Board.

1. MEMBERSHIP

Given that this was likely to be the last meeting of the Board prior to the Local Government elections in May 2007 the Convenor paid tribute to the members and staff of the Board for their support during the past eight years. Members who had indicated that they would not be standing for re-election in May expressed their appreciation of the support and friendship they had received during their membership of the Board and wished the Board and its staff well for the future.

2. EXEMPT INFORMATION

The Meeting agreed, in terms of Section 50A (4) and (5) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, as amended, that the public and media representatives be excluded from the Meeting during consideration of the items of business appearing at the relevant paragraphs of this Minute as specified below so as to avoid disclosure of exempt information of the class described in the appropriate paragraph of Part I of Schedule 7A of the Act.

<u>Para No. of Minute</u>	<u>Para No. of Schedule 7A</u>
8	9
9	1

3. MINUTE OF MEETING OF THE BOARD DATED 27 OCTOBER 2006

The Minute of the meeting of the Board dated 27 October 2006 was submitted and approved as an accurate record.

Arising therefrom:-

Register of Electors

Under reference to paragraph 5 of the Minute and in response to a question the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) advised the meeting that, in the interests of economy, a copy of the register which closely matched the current ward boundaries of Elected Members or one new ward were available on request in csv or in pdf format. He also advised that one copy per candidate would be made available to candidates (including the choice of a paper copy once

they had declared their intention (submitted papers to the Returning Officer). This would also apply to the absent voters register.

The meeting also noted that the pilot door-to-door canvass in Aberdeen Central commenced on Friday 26 January and that the ERO was still awaiting guidance from the Electoral Commission in regard to additional duties to be placed on EROs in regard to encouraging electoral participation.

4. MINUTE OF THE MEETING OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES AND AUDIT SUB-COMMITTEE DATED 24 NOVEMBER

The Minute of the meeting of the General Purposes and Audit Sub-Committee dated 24 November 2006 was submitted and approved as an accurate record.

5. REVENUE BUDGETS FOR 2007/08, 2008/09 & 2009/10

There was submitted a report by the Treasurer inviting the Board to consider the proposed revenue budget for the next three years 2007/08, 2008/09 and 2009/10.

There was attached as Appendix 1 to the report details of the 2006/07 Revised Revenue Budget, which reflected virements made during the year, the Estimated Outturn and variance between the budget and outturn for 2006/2007. The estimated outturn for 2006/07 projected and underspend of £165,000 for the year and the meeting noted that if this was the final position as at 31 March 2006 the balance will be refunded to the constituent authorities. The meeting noted that the main reasons for the surplus is vacant posts, some of which were kept vacant to fund the Job Evaluation Exercise. The meeting also noted that four of these posts have now been deleted from establishment and there has also been some difficulty in filling some of the vacant professional posts.

There was also attached as Appendix 2 to the report the proposed budget for 2007/2008 together with the indicative budgets for the subsequent two years. The proposed budget of £3,814,614 has been set at £216,000 over the 2006/07 budget. £111,000 of this amount relates to the new duties from the Electoral Administration Act and the balance of £105,000 represents an increase of just over 2.9%, which can be mainly attributed to payroll costs of the annual inflationary pay award, increase in employer superannuation contributions and anniversary increments. The meeting also noted that the total costs for the Job Evaluation exercise over 5 years is £162,000 which is slightly higher than the £150,000 previously reported. The staffing establishment has been reduced by 4 posts in order to fund this in 2007/08.

The meeting also noted that, as previously agreed by the Board on 27 October 2006 (para 3 (b) of the Minute refers), the surplus for 2005/06 of £279,000 was to be returned to constituent authorities by deducting it from any requisitions calculated for the 2007/08 Budget which has reduced the requisitions by 7%.

In regard to the Capital Fund the meeting noted that the balance of just over £1.1 million, after expenditure on furniture and fittings of £70,000 was used during 2006/07 for the re-furbished office in Woodhill House, is, as previously agreed, being retained to address accommodation issues, including the replacement of the office at Banff. In this regard a physical site investigation for contaminated land will be undertaken before the end of the financial year and once completed a detailed report will be submitted to the Board with the plans and costs for the new office at Banff and that any surplus, following completion of the replacement offices, will be returned to the constituent authorities.

Following consideration during which the Treasurer and the Assessor responded to Member's questions, the Board agreed to:-

- (i) approve the budget for 2007/2008 to be set at £3,814,614 as detailed in Appendix 2 to the report;

- (ii) approve the requisitions for 2007/08 to the constituent authorities be set at £3,535,151 as detailed in section 6.3 of the report; and
- (iii) note the indicative budgets for 2008/2009 and 2009/2010.

6. PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

There was submitted a report by the Assessor advising the Board of performance information in respect of the period 1 April 2005 to 31 December 2006 together with the comparative figures for the financial year 2005/06 and 2004/05.

The meeting noted that given 2005/06 was a revaluation year it had not been possible to compare directly the change in the total net annual value and rateable value with previous years because the valuation base has moved to reflect more up to date levels of valuation.

There were appended to the reports, as Appendices 1 and 2, performance indicators in respect of the Valuation Roll and Council Tax Valuation List.

The meeting noted that although the figures for part years require to be treated with caution performance had been maintained in relation to the Valuation Roll and improved in relation to the Council Tax List. The meeting also noted that almost 40% of Revaluation appeals had been dealt with, that the department was on target to meet the statutory deadline of 31 December 2008 and loss on appeal amounted to only 0.2% against an overall estimate of loss of 5%.

The Board agreed:-

- (i) to note the content of the report and accompanying performance information;
- (ii) that it be remitted to the Assessor to convey the Board's appreciation of the performance improvement to all those concerned.

7. FORMAL COMPLAINT

There was submitted a report by the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) bringing to the Board's attention details of a formal complaint received on 30 October 2007, which was formally acknowledged on the same day advising that the complaint would be investigated and responded to within 10 working days.

The Clerk to the Board read out the terms of the complaint, a copy of which was made available on request. The report detailed the investigation into the complaint and the consideration of the complaint and the ERO's response. The meeting also noted that the complaint highlighted the necessity to ensure that the time taken to extract reminder addresses and then print and dispatch reminder forms must be kept to an absolute minimum. In this regard steps will be taken to ensure that this delay is minimised for future canvasses.

The Board agreed to note the report.

8. WOODHILL HOUSE

There was submitted a report by the Assessor advising the Board of the service of notice by Aberdeenshire Council of an intention to review the rent payable by the Board in respect of its' occupation of office accommodation within Woodhill House. The Assessor advised the Board of the options available and sought instructions from the Board as to how it would wish to proceed.

Following consideration the Board agreed to:-

- (i) note the intention of Aberdeenshire Council to review the rental payment for Woodhill House with effect from 28 March 2007;

- (ii) instruct the Assessor to enter into appropriate negotiations with Aberdeenshire Council in regard to the Board securing a longer term arrangement in relation to its accommodation requirements;
- (iii) instruct the Assessor to report back to the Board or the General Purposes and Audit Sub-Committee as appropriate in relation to such negotiations.

9. UPDATE ON GRADING REVIEW (PARA. 1)

Under reference to Paragraph 9 of the Minutes of the Board dated 27 January and 7 July 2006, respectively there was submitted a report by the Head of Personnel Services, Moray Council, updating the Board on the grading review implemented with effect from 1 October 2006.

The report also advised of the arrangements which have been put in place in respect Appeals and the appointment of an independent Chair for the Appeals Panel. The report also sought homologation of a decision taken to extend the protection arrangements to include a second employee, whose situation came to light following incremental rises applied from 1 April 2006.

Following consideration the Board agreed to:-

- (i) homologate the decision to proceed with implementation in the knowledge that two employees would require pay protection arrangements on the same terms as previously agreed;
- (ii) note the arrangements that had been made for the Appeals training and the hearing of the Appeals; and
- (iii) note the appointment of a Chair for the Appeals Panel.

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The meeting noted that the next meeting of the Board will be held in Elgin on Friday 6 July 2007.