



MINUTE OF MEETING OF THE GRAMPIAN VALUATION JOINT BOARD

FRIDAY 25 JANUARY 2008

MORAY COUNCIL CHAMBERS, ELGIN

PRESENT

Councillors I Ogilvie (Convener), J Dunbar (Depute-Convener), S Coull, J Dick, J G Duncan, J Hamilton, J Hunter, G Leslie, J Mair, A Milne and R H Shepherd.

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Councillors M Burnett, J Reynolds and M Watt.

IN ATTENDANCE

A.A. McConochie, Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer, M Wilson, Treasurer, D Whitworth, Head of Personnel Services, Moray Council, T Abdy, Accountancy Assistant, Moray Council and the Senior Committee Services Officer, Moray Council, for the Clerk to the Board.

1. MEMBERSHIP OF THE BOARD

The meeting noted that subsequent to the last meeting of the Board Councillor N Fletcher, Aberdeen City Council had resigned from the Board and had been replaced by Councillor G Leslie. The Convener welcomed Councillor Leslie to his first meeting of the Board following his appointment as a substantive member.

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

The Minute of the meeting of the Board dated 26 October 2006 was submitted and approved as an accurate record.

3. MINUTE OF THE MEETING OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES AND AUDIT SUB-COMMITTEE DATED 17 DECEMBER 2007

The Minute of the meeting of the General Purposes and Audit Sub-Committee dated 17 December 2007 was submitted and approved as an accurate record, subject to the correction of a typographical error in the second paragraph of item 3.

4. REVENUE BUDGETS FOR 2008/09, 2009/10 & 2010/11

There was submitted a report by the Treasurer inviting the Board to consider the proposed revenue budget for the next three years 2008/09, 2009/10 and 2010/11.

There was attached as Appendix 1 to the report details of the 2007/08 Revised Revenue Budget, which reflected virements made during the year, the Estimated Outturn and variance between the budget and outturn for 2007/2008. The estimated outturn for 2007/08 projected an underspend of £222,000 for the year and the meeting noted that if this was the final position as at 31 March 2008 the balance will be refunded to the constituent authorities. Details of the amounts and reasons for the variances were set out in Section 3.4 of the report.

There was also attached as Appendix 2 to the report the proposed budget for 2008/2009 together with the indicative budgets for the subsequent two years. The proposed budget of £3,883,000 has been set at £69,000 over the 2007/08 budget. The increase being attributed mainly to payroll costs of the annual inflationary pay award of 2.5%, increase in employer superannuation contributions and anniversary increments amounting to £87,000 offset by the interest earned on surplus revenue balances of £20,000.

The meeting also noted details of the indicative Revenue Budgets for 2009/10 & 2010/11 as set out in Appendix 2 to the report which include an allowance for increased property costs associated with the new office in Banff which is due to be completed during 2008/09.

As previously agreed by the Board on 26 October 2007 (para 4 (ii) of the Minute refers), the surplus for 2006/07 of £284,937 was to be returned to constituent authorities by deducting it from any requisitions calculated for 2008/09. This has reduced 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 £130,318 was used during 2006/07 for the re-furnished 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 the meeting noted that the latest estimates, including the cost of clearing the old site and furniture and equipment for the new offices, is in the region of £800,000.

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

- (i) approve the budget for 2008/2009 to be set at £3,883,721 as detailed in Appendix 2 to the report;
- (ii) approve the requisitions for 2008/09 to the constituent authorities be set at £3,598,784 as detailed in Section 6.3 of the report; and
- (iii) note the indicative budgets and requisitions for 2009/2010 and 2010/2011.

5. REVENUE MONITORING STATEMENT FOR THE PERIOD 1 APRIL TO 31 DECEMBER 2007

There was submitted a report by the Treasurer inviting the Board to consider the Revenue Monitoring Statement for the period 1 April to 31 December 2007, a copy of which was appended to the report as an Appendix.

The Treasurer spoke to the statement and the meeting noted that the transactions for the first nine months of the year resulted in an underspend, to date, of £204,000. The main reason for the underspend is £152,000 generated from employee costs relating to staff vacancies. As a result of these vacancies there has also been related underspends of £7,000 on staff travel & subsistence and £4,000 on training expenses. It was also noted that although there are other underspends, to date, on postages, IT Maintenance & Support and electoral registration amounting to £19,000 it was envisaged that these budget headings would break even as at 31 March 2008.

Following discussion, during which the Treasurer responded to questions, the Board agreed to note the Revenue Monitoring Statement for the period 1 April to 31 December 2007.

6. ELECTORAL REGISTRATION PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

There was submitted a report by the Electoral Registration Officer advising the Board of performance information in respect of Electoral Registration, which is based on the data submission made to the Electoral Commission by their deadline of 18 January 2008. There was appended to the report as Appendices 1 & 2, respectively, details of the statistical information provided to the Commission, in respect of each Council area, together with details of the narrative submission.

The meeting noted that it is understood that the Commission will evaluate the performance information provided by comparing electorate numbers with population estimates obtained from the General Register Office (Scotland). It was also noted that as Section 6h-j of the narrative submission related to personal identifiers, which had not yet been enacted in Scotland and the response therefore, at this time, was negative.

Following consideration the Board agreed to note the content of the report.

7. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Under reference to Paragraph 7 (v) of the Minute of the Board dated 11 November 2005 there was submitted a monitoring report by the Assessor in regard to non-financial key performance indicators in respect of the Valuation Roll and Council Tax for the period 30 September to 31 December 2007. There was appended to the report as Appendices 1 & 2 respectively comparative statements in respect of the Valuation Roll and Council Tax showing the positions for 2005/06, 2006/07, the performance for the first six months of the current financial year to 30 September and for the period to 31 December 2007.

The report also included two other performance measures, first reported to the Board on 26 October 2007, in regard to 'Completeness' and Accuracy' for the period 1 April to 31 December 2007 in respect of the Valuation Roll (Sections 3.1.6 & 3.1.7 of the report) and Council Tax (Sections 3.2.3 & 3.2.4 of the report).

Following discussion the Board agreed to note the report and commend staff for their efforts. In this regard it was remitted to the Assessor to convey the Board's appreciation to staff.

8. BANFF OFFICE

(i) FURNITURE

Under reference to Paragraph 3 of the Minute of the meeting of the General Purposes & Audit Sub-Committee dated 17 December 2007 there was submitted a report by the Assessor seeking the Board's approval for the acquisition of both furniture and records storage for the proposed replacement Banff Divisional Office, as detailed in Sections 3.3 & 3.4 of the report. The report also sought approval to dispense with the requirement to invite tenders given the use of an existing Aberdeen City/Aberdeenshire Council furniture supply contract and the specialist nature of the proposed storage equipment.

Following consideration the Board agree to:-

- (i) approve the proposals for furniture acquisition as set out in Sections 3.3 and 3.4 of the report; and
- (ii) dispense with the requirement to invite tenders in relation to the acquisition of both office furniture and records storage given:-
 - (a) the use of the existing Aberdeen City/Aberdeenshire furniture supply contract; and
 - (b) the specialist nature of the storage units required.

(ii) DEMOLITION

Under reference to Paragraph 3 of the Minute of the meeting of the General Purposes & Audit Sub-Committee dated 17 December 2007 there was submitted a report by the Assessor seeking approval of arrangements for the future demolition of the current Banff Office, details of which were set out in section 3 of the report.

The meeting noted that it is a condition of the planning permission granted for the construction of the replacement office that the current building be demolished within six months of completion of the replacement. The draft excambion however relates to demolition of the existing site within 2 months and that negotiations are currently in hand to reconcile the proposed excambion between Aberdeenshire and the Board and the planning permission to a time limit of 6 months.

During consideration of the report the Assessor enquired if the Board would wish to commemorate the start of work on the new Banff offices with an appropriate 'cutting the first turf' ceremony. It was agreed that this be held at 2.00 p.m. on Thursday 31 January and an invitation to attend be extended to all members of the Board.

Following consideration the Board agreed:-

- (a) to invite Aberdeenshire Council to deal with statutory consents and invitations to tender in relation to the demolition, site clearance and reinstatement of the current Banff Office, in accordance with both planning and excambion conditions; and
- (b) that the Assessor, in consultation with the Convener and the Treasurer, be granted delegated to accept, in terms of best value, the tender most advantageous to the Board.

9. DISCRETIONARY FUNCTIONS :LGPS

There was submitted a report by the Head of Personnel Services, Moray Council, advising the Board of amendments to the Local Government (Discretionary Payments and Injury Benefits) (Scotland) Regulations 1998 (Discretionary Payments Regulations). The report also invited the Board to review its current policy decisions in respect of these Regulations and to consider and approve proposed amendments required to these policy decisions. There was tabled at the meeting, an amended Appendix 1 to the report, which set out the Board's current Policy Statement 'Discretions by the Grampian Valuation Joint Board'.

Following consideration the Board agreed that, in order to meet its requirements under the Discretionary Payments Regulations, the current Grampian Valuation Joint Board Policy Statement 'Discretions by Grampian Valuation Joint Board' be amended to incorporate:-

- (i) Regulation 48 (1) Commutation of Trivial Pensions

'The Board should resolve that any pension which is less than the 1% limit should be commuted to a one off lump sum payment. This would ensure that all scheme members are aware that pensions which fall below the 1% of Lifetime Allowance will be commuted as per the Administering Authority's agreed policy'.

- (ii) Regulation 110 (4)(b) Reduction of Pension on Re-employment

'The Board should resolve not to apply abatement in cases of re-employment on or after 1st April 2007 as per the Administering Authority's agreed policy'.

10. STAFFING POLICIES

Under reference to Paragraph 7 (ii) of the Minute of the Board dated 27 October 2006 there was submitted a report by the Head of Personnel Services, Moray Council, seeking the Board's approval for the implementation of staffing policies in regard to a Code of Conduct for Employees, Anti Fraud & Corruption, Confidential Reporting and a Grievance Policy and Procedure, which had been amended to take account of revisions to national conditions of service and amendments agreed during consultation with the Trade Union and Moray Council Personnel Section.

The report also invited the Board to consider approval of a draft Disability Equality Scheme, which had been prepared in consultation with the Trade Union and Moray Council's Equal Opportunities Officer. A copy of the draft Scheme was appended to the report.

Following consideration the Board agreed to:-

- (i) the implementation of the Code of Conduct for Employees, the Anti Fraud and Corruption Policy, the Confidential Reporting Policy and the Grievance Policy and Procedure, all as per the amendments agreed during consultation;
- (ii) approve and implement the Disability Equality Scheme, as appended to the report; and
- (iii) that a copy of the amended staffing policies referred to above be forwarded to Members for their information.

11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The meeting noted that the next meeting of the Board will be held in Elgin on Friday 20 June 2008.