

# MINUTE OF MEETING OF THE GRAMPIAN VALUATION JOINT BOARD

28 JANUARY 2005

COUNCIL OFFICE, ELGIN

## PRESENT

Councillors A. Wilson (Convenor), M. Burnett (Vice-Convenor), J.C. Davidson, B. Falconer, S.D.I Longmore, J.A. McGregor, J.A. Mair, A Ritchie, (substituting for Councillor M P Cullen), R Sim (substituting for Councillor W P Watt) and G. Urquhart.

## APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Councillors B Craig, M.P. Cullen, G.G. Lumsden, P. McDonald, S. McDonald, J. Porter and W P Watt.

## ALSO PRESENT AS AN OBSERVER

Councillor R Hossack, Moray Council.

## IN ATTENDANCE

A.A. McConochie, Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer, M Wilson, Treasurer, the Head of Personnel Services, Moray Council and R Ritchie for the Clerk to the Board.

### **1. 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 Items 6 & 7 so as to avoid disclosure of exempt information of the class described in paragraphs, 8 and 9 of Part I of Schedule 7A of the Act.

### **2. MINUTE OF MEETING OF THE BOARD DATED 23 OCTOBER 2003**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Board dated 22 October 2004 was submitted and approved.

### **3. 2005/06, 2006/07 & 2007/08 REVENUE BUDGET**

There was submitted a report by the Treasurer inviting the Board to consider the proposed revenue budget for the next three financial years 2005/6, 2006/07 and 2007/08.

There was attached as Appendix 1 to the report details of the 2004/2005 Revised Revenue Budget which reflected virements made during the year, the Estimated Outturn and Variance between Budget and Outturn for 2004/2005. The Estimated Outturn for 2004/05 projected an underspend of £168,000 for the year and the meeting noted that if this is the final audited position at 31 March 2005, the balance will be refunded to the Constituent Authorities. The meeting noted that the main reason for this surplus is vacant posts, which are all already filled, or expected to be filled by the end of February 2005. The exception to this is an Administration Officer's post, which has been put on hold until the results of the outcome of the Administration Review are known.

There was also attached as Appendix 2 to the report the proposed budget for 2005/2006 together with the indicative budgets for the subsequent two years. The proposed budget has been set at £114,000 over 2004/05, representing an increase of just over 3.4%, which can be mainly attributed to payroll costs of anniversary increments and the annual inflationary pay award. The meeting also noted that the overtime budget has been reduced by £20,000 as the 2004/05 revaluation exercise is near to completion and a one-off £10,000 to purchase new desks and chairs to coincide with Aberdeenshire Council's refurbishment of Woodhill House. The meeting also noted that taking into account known appeals and previous experience following a Revaluation Exercise the budget for valuation appeals has been set at £40,000. As agreed at the meeting of the Board on 22 October 2004 (Branch 3 of the Minute refers) the revenue surplus of £301,561 had been deducted from the requisitions to the constituent authorities for 2005/2006 resulting in a total requisition of £3,198,439 which takes the requisition to 8% below the GAE guideline figure.

The meeting also noted that as part of ongoing treasury management of the Boards finances the Assessor and the Treasurer were currently looking at areas of potential efficiency savings in an effort to maintain the requisitions below the GAV and that a report thereon would be submitted to a future meeting of the Board.

Following consideration, during which the Treasurer responded to Members questions, the Board agreed to:-

- (i) approve the Budget for 2005/2006 to be set at £3,500,000 as detailed in Appendix 2 to the report;
- (ii) approve the requisitions for 2005/06 to the Constituent Authorities to be set at £3,198,439 as detailed in Section 6.3 of the report;
- (iii) note the indicative budgets for 2006/2007 and 2007/2008, as set out in Appendix 2 to the report.

#### **4. REMIT FOR GRADING REVIEW**

Under reference to Branch 10 of the Minute of the Board dated 7 July 2004 there was submitted a report by the Head of Personnel Services, Moray Council inviting the Board to consider the terms of reference for the Grading Review to be carried out across all posts within the Board and providing an update on the timetable for the work. Details of proposed terms of reference were set out in Appendix 1 to the report,

The meeting noted that the Assessor and Depute Assessor posts are not included in this review as they are on Chief Officer conditions and, as such, have already been reviewed and that the review was anticipated to take about 6 months to complete.

Following consideration the Board agreed to:-

- (i) approve the terms of reference for the Grading Review, as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report;
- (ii) note the timetable for progressing the work; and
- (iii) note that further reports will be submitted to the Board in relation to the outcome of the Review.

#### **5. SCOTTISH ASSESSORS PORTAL**

There was submitted a report by the Assessor updating the Board on progress with the Assessors' Portal partially funded by the Modernising Government Fund 2 (MGF2) and inviting the Board to consider continued funding for 2005/06-2006/07 in relation to further development related to an MGF3 application made by the Scottish Assessors' Association

The meeting noted that the Portal was launched (initially to Assessors and limited users in the Scottish Executive) in July 2004 following the final stage of initial development work, the loading of nearly 2.7 million records in relation to the Valuation Rolls and Council Tax Lists of all 14 Assessors. The initial public launch on 16 August 2004 was welcomed by positive feedback from a range of users including Ordnance Survey, Local Authorities, property professionals and citizens.

The report also advised that the Assessors' Portal is the only one of the five DNA-S (Definitive National Addressing for Scotland) Themes which has so far reached all Scotland coverage. Work on the other Themes is progressing with local authorities at different stages in constructing local address gazetteers. Information from the Assessors' site is contributing to this effort.

Proposals to take advantage of funding provided under the Executive's MGF3 scheme were invited in April 2004 and a bid was made to further develop the Portal. This was costed at £750,000 but in respect of the first module the Executive was prepared to meet the total cost of £90,000 leaving Assessors to fund 25% of the balance, amounting to £165,000, the Grampian share of that amounting to £19,000 over 2 years.

Following consideration the Board agreed note the report and include funding amounting to £9,000 in the Budget for 2005/06 and £10,000 in the Budget for 2006/07.

#### **6. BANFF DIVISIONAL OFFICE (Paras. 8 & 9)**

Under reference to Branch 7 of the Minute of the Board dated 28 October 2004 there was submitted a report by the Assessor updating the Board on progress in regard to the temporary Banff Divisional Office accommodation.

Following discussion, during which the Assessor responded to questions, the Board agreed:

- (i) to note the content of the report and instructed the Assessor to continue discussions with Aberdeenshire Council and to report further thereon to the next meeting of the Board; and
- (ii) that in the event of the agreement of the Board being required to a resolution to this matter, prior to the next meeting of the Board in July 2005, then, given the urgency, it be delegated to the General Purposes Sub-Committee to consider and respond on behalf of the Board.

#### **7. WOODHILL HOUSE (Para. 8 & 9)**

The Assessor reported orally in regard to what he understood to be Aberdeenshire Council's refurbishment proposals at Woodhill House insofar as it will affect the Board's staffing accommodation. He advised the Board that whilst he understood the programme would be over a two year period starting in March 2005 he had written formally seeking clarification as to when and how the refurbishment programme is to proceed and was still awaiting a response. He also advised the Board that any proposed moves would require to be completed by August 2006 in order to be ready for the annual canvas and that the cost of moving, including IT infrastructure would be met by Aberdeenshire Council.

Following discussion the Board agreed to note the position and that should it be necessary to obtain the Board's consent in respect of any issues arising during the proposed refurbishment programme, prior to a scheduled meeting of the Board it be delegated to the General Purposes Sub-Committee to respond on behalf of the Board.