

AGENDA ITEM 10
REPORT NO. VAL/11/19

THE HIGHLAND & WESTERN ISLES VALUATION JOINT BOARD
EQUALITIES MAINSTREAMING AND EQUALITIES OUTCOMES PROGRESS REPORT

In June 2017 the Highland & Western Isles Valuation Joint Board published its approved Equalities Mainstreaming and Equalities Outcomes report for the period 2019-2021.

The report noted the Board's strategic position and outcomes which were summed up as follows:

The strategic position

On a broad canvass the Board's strategic position can be summed up as follows:

- So far as the electoral registration function is concerned Local Government Elections were held on 4 May 2017 closely followed by a snap UK Parliamentary General Election on 8 June 2017. No further major polls are envisaged before the next outcomes report in spring 2019. The change from household to individual electoral registration is a fundamental one and has been a prime focus for attention in the equalities field given the particular characteristics of the change of regime and the known difficulties affecting the under-registered or less-engaged groups
- Rating – the rating revaluation due to be held in 2015 was postponed until April 2017. The revaluation has been completed, and new entries have been made for shooting rights. A significant number of appeals have been received and these will require to be concluded. There will be further changes to the rating regime once the Government legislates following publication of the Non Domestic Rates Bill.

The Council Tax regime is currently a stable function. Minor changes were made to the payment ratios for the upper bands but this has yet to impact significantly on the valuation function. There are no further changes identified at this time

- So far as the Board's role as an employer is concerned, during a time of severe restraint in public expenditure, this expansion of the staff compliment will be tempered. Given these circumstances there is likely to be limited scope to affect change through the recruitment channel

Against that background and recognising that the rating and council tax function are largely property based, it seems clear that the main focus in the next two years requires to be in electoral registration.

This is not to suggest that when it comes to service delivery, there are no issues which can arise in the rating and council tax areas. These however are less likely, less obvious and plausibly may well be of a similar character as those that arise in the electoral field.

The Board's obligations as an employer must also assume a prominent position.

Accordingly the following outcomes are proposed:

Outcome One

People feel involved and are able to participate in public life and influence decision-making

This will require a number of measures to track progress which are provisionally as follows:

- Number on the register relative to population estimates
- Number of responders to household enquiry forms and invitations to register throughout the year and during the annual canvass as a proportion of the total number of households
- Number of corrections and complaints
- The existence of a comprehensive publicity engagement strategy to ensure eligible people are able to participate in the electoral process
- Integration of the equalities element with the Electoral Commission performance standards for Electoral Registration Officers (EROs)
- Ensure all property that should be taxed is included in the Valuation Roll and Council Tax list.

Outcome 2

We will improve customer satisfaction rates in particular from people with protected characteristics

In order to track this outcome the following will be required:

- We will establish public performance survey via random sampling of transactions with the department
- We will monitor performance more generally via partners' survey work, such as Electoral Commission research, Highland Council research, close monitoring of complaints, and analysis of the electoral errors that come to light
- Focus on improved materials using plain English tested with relevant groups and in partnership with other EROs and the Electoral Commission.
- Through continued use of interactive voter registration throughout the annual canvass of electors, giving the opportunity for household replies to be made via internet, SMS, telephone or by paper return

Outcome 3

Increase the proportion of staff who feel they are treated fairly

In order to track this outcome we shall require the following:

- Carry out annual employee review and development plans
- Introduce an improved induction programme for new employees
- Carry out a systematic review of HR policies
- Introduce a number of Health & Safety policies and procedures
- Promote flexible working arrangements to support employees to achieve a balance between work and their life outside work
- Ensuring reasonable adjustments are made for disabled candidates and employees
- Increase training in equalities matters for staff at each of the department's offices

- Attendance at a one day training course on equality and diversity through Highland Council's Learning and Development Team for senior management
- Increase commitment to training where there is an identified need for the organisation to improve the skills of staff
- Reduce occupational segregation where this contributes to an equal pay gap and generally seek to reduce the gender pay gap
- Gather more comprehensive employment data
- Continued commitment to the Scottish Living Wage
- Review recruitment channels

Progress to date

Since its publication of the approved report in June 2017 the Valuation Joint Board has seen changes within its senior management team due to the flexible retirement of an Assistant Assessor. The Board now operates with two Assistant Assessor & ERO posts instead of three Assistant Assessor posts previously held.

A departmental reorganisation was undertaken in late 2018 with two Divisional Valuer posts being created and vacancies filled in December 2018.

At the time of writing this update report, the Electoral Registration Officer was preparing for the European Parliamentary Election being held on 23 May 2019. Preparation involved writing to over 6,500 European Citizens living within the Board's geographical area to complete a declaration confirming their right to vote at the election in the UK only and not in their home country.

The change from household to individual registration is still a prime focus for attention in terms of equalities. In Autumn 2018 a consultation was undertaken by the Cabinet Office on proposals for the reform of the annual canvass. Whilst the current model is effective overall in meeting its objectives, it has been widely recognised that it is outdated and cumbersome. The current process also leads to confusion for citizens. It is intended that canvass reform will be implemented before the 2020 annual canvass of electors.

The rating revaluation that was scheduled to take place in 2015 was postponed by Government and rescheduled for April 2017. Commitments that were given to substantially complete the revaluation by the autumn of 2016 were met. The reintroduction of shooting rights and deer forests into the Valuation Roll and a national commitment to complete the task by September 2017 was fulfilled.

Human Resource, Health & Safety and Corporate Governance policies/practices have been regularly reviewed and updated as necessary to incorporate legislation changes.

A review of the Board's Contract Standing Orders will be carried out prior to the publication of the Equalities Mainstreaming Report in 2021. The Board will update Contract Standing Orders in line with a recent procurement manual launched in late 2018 for partner councils of the Commercial and Procurement Shared Services (C&PSS) and the Highland Council's Contract Standing Orders updated in November 2017.

A breakdown of progress to date for each outcome follows below:

Outcome One

People feel involved and are able to participate in public life and influence decision-making

- Work on public engagement is undertaken throughout the calendar year and in particular prior to electoral polls or the annual canvass of electors. Work includes distribution of posters and information leaflets to a number of organisations which include secondary schools, libraries, community centres, leisure centres, local colleges and service points to name but a few. Social media messages and press releases are released through the Board's constituent authorities.
- Electorate figures have remained relatively stable on publication of the revised registers of electors published on 1 December 2017 and 1 December 2018.
- Performance standards set by the Electoral Commission in March 2016 focus on the following key areas:
 - * Framework for the delivery of registration activity (Performance Standard 1)
 - * Delivery of registration activity to maintain accurate and complete registers (Performance Standard 2)

The work of the Electoral Registration Officer focuses on meeting outcomes set in these performance standards with statistics provided on an annual basis to the Electoral Commission.

- Posters have been displayed at area offices in Inverness, Wick and Dingwall advising all customers that interpretation services are available via the lead authority, Highland Council identified providers for face-to-face interpretation services. Interpretation services are available from Global Language Services or from the Highland Council's Customer Service team who provide communication support for those who are deaf, deafened, deafblind or hard of hearing.
- Translation services are available through Language Line for telephone translations for any customer whose first language is not English. Information on how to access the service has been made available to all reception staff with laminated language identification leaflets available at all reception areas.
- Through best value, completion certificates and building warrant lists are utilised to ensure properties that should be taxed are included in the Valuation Roll and Council Tax lists.
- The Valuation Joint Board has a very low level of clerical errors and despite workload pressures in the lead up to the European Parliamentary Election there were only a total of 6 clerical errors.
- In April 2013 a new complaints handling procedure was implemented with two guides being issued to staff, Complaints Handling Procedure – internal document and Employees Guide to the Complaints Handling Procedures. This procedure will be reviewed in late 2019. The Valuation Joint Board has a very low number of complaints each year.

- A timetable of updating Human Resources policies has been completed. As part of this work a revised Equal Opportunities Policy was approved by Members of the Valuation Joint Board in June 2016.

Outcome Two

We will improve customer satisfaction rates in particular from people with protected characteristics

The following progress has been made to date:

- With the introduction of individual electoral registration, a large number of forms and letters have been produced which are based on user testing by the Cabinet Office and the Electoral Commission. Any changes to letters or outer envelopes which improve messaging for citizens are regularly reviewed and incorporated.
- Where possible the Valuation Joint Board uses plain English in its communications. Letters have been evaluated as part of GDPR implementation in 2018 to ensure best practice as part of Highland Council's corporate membership of the Plain English Campaign.
- Work on improved communication with particular target groups through engagement with individual equalities groups is carried out through the Board's public engagement strategy or work with the Electoral Commission or Scottish Government.
- The Board is currently using a small number of tablets for doorstep canvassing within Highland which have proved popular with canvassing staff and electors. Information is in real time and allows for online registration via the UK Government's digital service to be made on the doorstep, reducing the need for a paper form to be completed.
- Each of our area offices displays "Have your say about our service" questionnaires in reception areas for members of the public to complete. Most of the forms received are compliments about the service customers have received from employees of the Board. If any issues are raised these are flagged to the Office & Support Manager to investigate and take any necessary remedial action.
- The introduction of interactive voter registration to allow household returns by phone, text or internet during the annual canvass has seen an increase in the uptake of this facility, with improvements year on year since its introduction in 2015, and in 2018, reached 29% of all returns. Feedback of the service has been positive, with users indicating that the system was simple to use and that they were very satisfied with the experience.

Outcome Three

Increase the proportion of staff and job applicants who feel they are treated fairly, particularly those with protected characteristics

The Board has seen a very low turnover of staff since the publication of the report in 2017. However, the implementation of the Barclay Review will see the department employing a mixture of trainee and graduate trainee valuers over the next two years.

The following work has been or is being undertaken:

- A timetable has been produced to update employment and health & safety policies and procedures. Review work continues and regular meetings have been arranged with the Highland Council Human Resources team to discuss legislation changes and policy updates.
- A new induction programme will be implemented by 2021.
- The Board is actively seeking to become a Disability Confident employer by the end of 2019.
- The Office and Support Manager has undertaken a NCFE Level 2 Certificate in Equality and Diversity in 2019.
- The Board will review work experience opportunities and the under-representation of younger people particularly those under the age of 30.
- In April 2015 an employee review and development was introduced for staff. This is an annual review carried out by line managers and will focus on health, safety and wellbeing, workloads and performance, skills and development and communication where employees will be given the opportunity to seek any additional training relevant to their role and to highlight any underutilised skills that they may have.
- Reduction in occupational segregation – whilst there has been a reduction in the gender pay gap across the combined and full-time gap for male and female employees, the Board is still working to reduce the ratio of male/female employees. As an employer turnover in staff is low other than that engendered by retirements.
- Currently all vacancies are advertised via the myjobscotland portal unless the post is of a professional nature, which is advertised through the national press. Some development work will be undertaken over the two years to incorporate the Board's application form on the myjobscotland portal.
- Maternity leave and paternity leave arrangements are in place across the Board with advice for staff being constantly monitored and updated. Flexible working has been in place for a number of years with a larger number of staff now taking advantage of flexible working arrangements such as reduction in hours worked, flexible working patterns, flexible retirement and homeworking.
- The Valuation Joint Board promotes career progression schemes and currently has five members of staff on a career progression scheme.
- Work on analysis of employment data, recruitment monitoring statistics and equalities monitoring statistics has still to be carried out.

- The Board has committed to paying the Scottish Living Wage.

Equal Pay Statement and Staffing Information

Under the statutory regime there is a requirement to publish an equal pay statement and to publish information as to the characteristics/demographics of the Board's employees and the gender pay gap. The equal pay statement is attached as Appendix 1. The terms are the same as those which are proposed for approval by the lead authority, the Highland Council. The updated statistical material is set out in Appendix 2 with the gender pay gap information set out in Appendix 3.

Reporting

The Board is required annually to report and publish information on equalities matters. It is intended to accommodate this requirement by including a section in the annual report that is produced each year which will draw together performance, equalities and financial information from 2018.

Review

It is a requirement to review equalities practices, policies and outcomes from time to time. A suitable timeframe for review is after the introduction of the revised performance standards by the Electoral Commission in 2020 and canvass reform later in that year.

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IV1 1QY

21 June 2019

HIGHLAND & WESTERN ISLES VALUATION JOINT BOARD

EQUAL PAY STATEMENT

1. The Highland & Western Isles Valuation Joint Board is committed to the principle of equal pay for all its employees and aims to identify and eliminate any sex bias in its pay systems relating to any of the protected characteristics defined in the Equalities Act 2017 (the Board recognises the specific duty relating to gender, disability and ethnicity).
2. It is in the interest of the Board to ensure that it has fair and just pay systems. It is important that employees have confidence in the process of eliminating bias and the Board is committed to achieving this through consultation with employees and the recognised trade unions.
3. The Board believes that in eliminating bias in its pay systems, it is sending a positive message to its employees and the Highland/Western Isles Community. It makes good business sense to have fair and transparent reward systems and it also helps the Board to control costs.
4. The Board recognises that occupational segregation in the workforce may have a negative effect on equal pay gaps. The Board is committed to monitoring and analysing areas of occupational segregation and implementing actions to address these.
5. Previous analysis of pay data suggests that the greater availability of part time work in senior grades could have a positive impact on pay gaps. The Board is committed to taking action to achieve this.
6. The Board's objectives are to:
 - Monitor gender pay gaps, occupational segregation and the availability of part time and flexible working arrangements
 - Identify and eliminate any unfair, unjust or unlawful practices that impact on pay
 - Take appropriate remedial action
7. The Board will:
 - Operate a pay strategy for Scottish Joint Council (SJC) employees that ensures equal pay for work of equal value and conditions of employment
 - Operate a Flexible Working Policy that opens opportunities to all employees through the pay grades
 - Challenge expectations that employees in higher grades should work long or unpredictable hours

- Appoint on merit, properly assessing the abilities of candidates for recruitment and promotion
- Make reasonable adjustments to support employees to undertake work at higher grades
- Provide support and training to both female and male employees returning to work
- Maintain a culture that challenges stereotypes around an employee's ability to carry out work at higher grades
- Respond to grievances and complaints to the Board on equal pay
- Consult and plan actions in consultation with employees and Trade Unions
- Review progress every two years

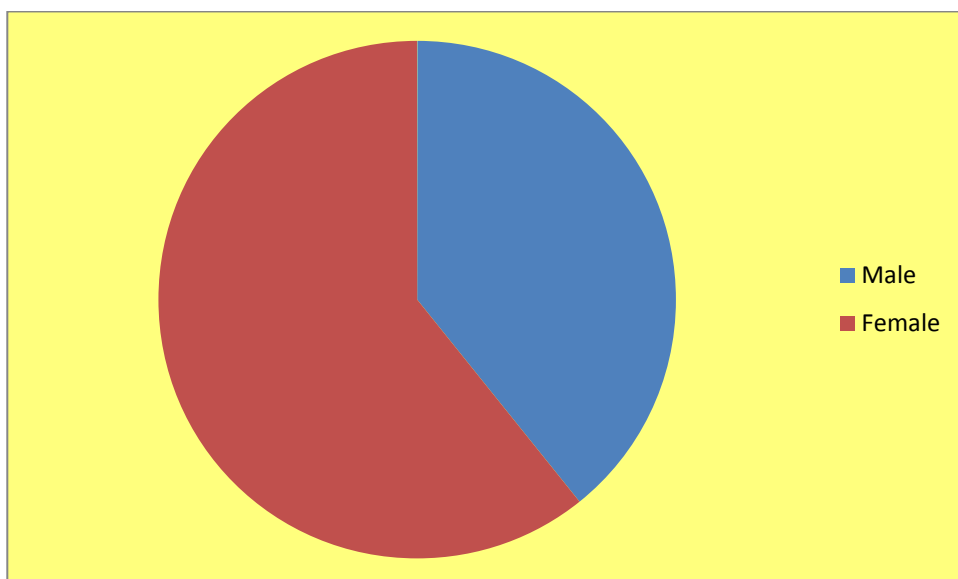
Moray House
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HIGHLAND & WESTERN ISLES VALUATION JOINT BOARD

EQUALITIES MONITORING AS AT 31 MARCH 2019

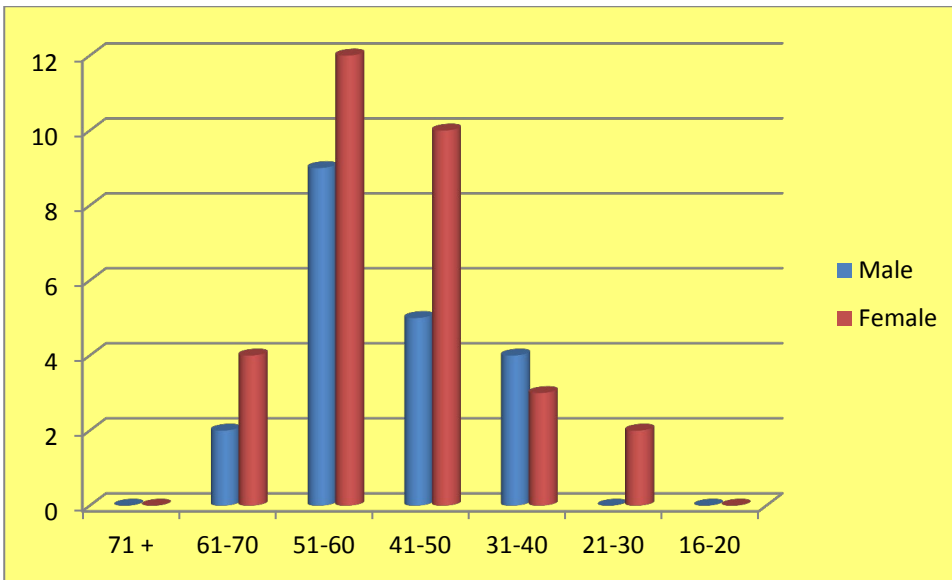
Employees by Gender

Male	Female
20	31



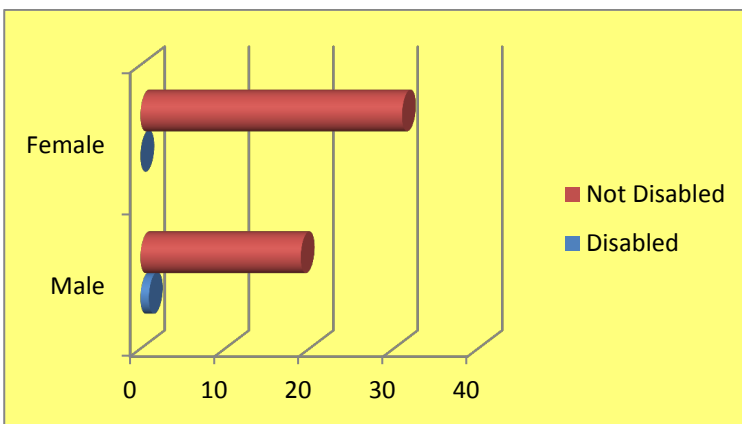
Employee Age Distribution

Age Range	Male	Female
71+	0	0
61-70	2	4
51-60	9	12
41-50	5	10
31-40	4	3
21-30	0	2
16-20	0	0



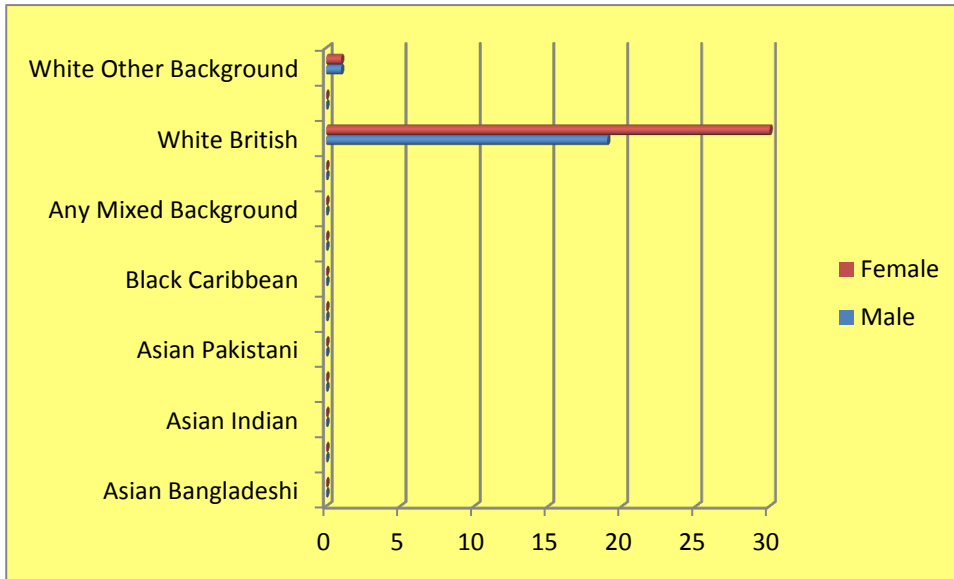
Disability

	Male	Female
Disabled	1	0
Not Disabled	19	31



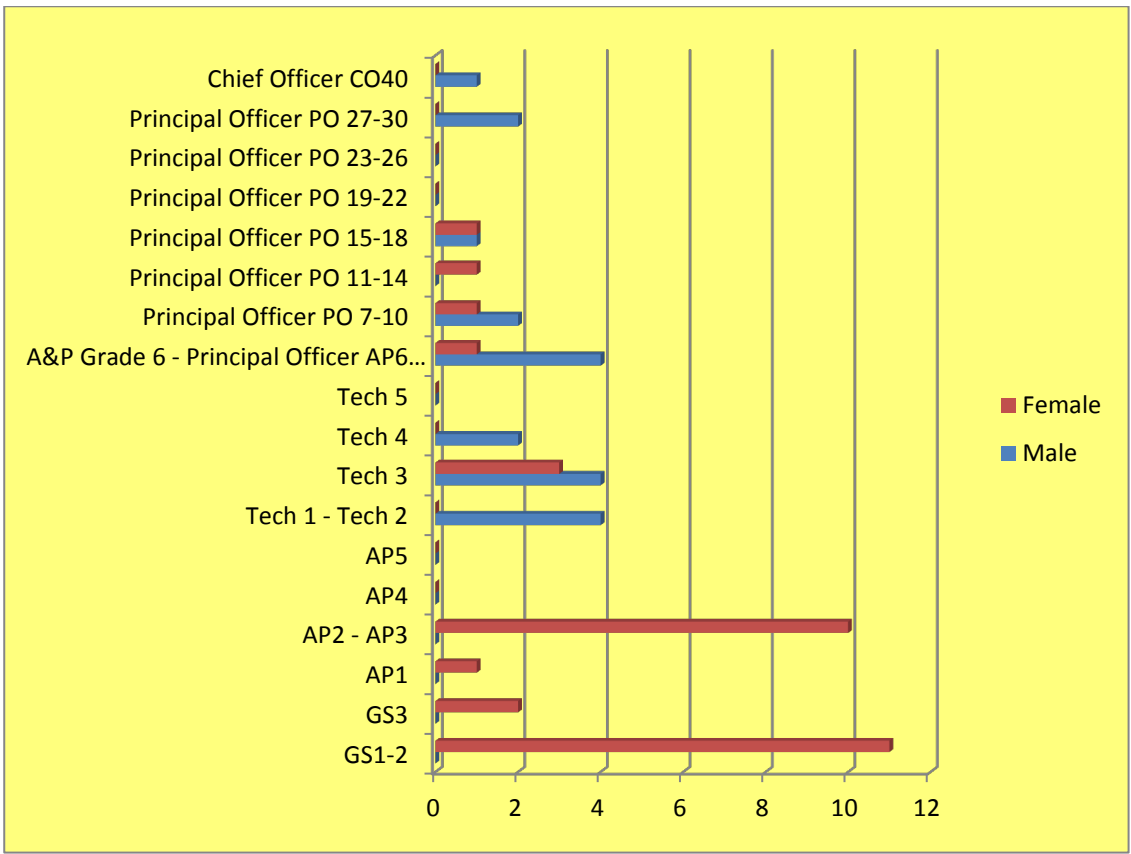
Ethnic Group

Ethnicity	Male	Female
Asian Bangladeshi	0	0
Asian Chinese	0	0
Asian Indian	0	0
Asian Other	0	0
Asian Pakistani	0	0
Black African	0	0
Black Caribbean	0	0
Black Other	0	0
Any Mixed Background	0	0
Other Ethnic Background	0	0
White British	19	30
White Irish	0	0
White Other Background	1	1



Average Salary

Salary Grade	Male	Female
GS1-2	0	11
GS3	0	2
AP1	0	1
AP2 – AP3	0	10
AP4	0	0
AP5	0	0
Tech 1 – Tech 2	4	0
Tech 3	4	3
Tech 4	2	0
Tech 5	0	0
A&P Grade 6 - Principal Officer AP6 PO3-6	4	1
Principal Officer PO 7-10	2	1
Principal Officer PO 11-14	0	1
Principal Officer PO 15-18	1	1
Principal Officer PO 19-22	0	0
Principal Officer PO 23-26	0	0
Principal Officer PO 27-30	2	0
Chief Officer CO40	1	0



HIGHLAND & WESTERN ISLES VALUATION JOINT BOARD

GENDER PAY GAP DATA AS AT 1 APRIL 2019

Combined Gap

Male	Female
£406.4294 – combined salary for all 20 male employees	£421.1359 – combined salary for all 31 female employees
Average hourly rate = £20.32 per hour	Average hourly rate = £13.58

Gender pay gap – difference between the average male and female pay rates. It is calculated by dividing the average female hourly pay rate by the average male hourly pay rate.

$$£13.58 / £20.32 \text{ per hour} \times 100/1 - 100 = -33.16\%$$

Full Time Gap

Male	Female
£316.1643 - combined salary for all 18 full time male employees	£309.6419 – combined salary for all 23 full time female employees
Average hourly rate = £17.56 per hour	Average hourly rate = £12.90

Full time gender pay gap is the gap between the average hourly rate of female employees who work full time and male employees who work full time.

$$£12.90 / £17.56 \text{ per hour} \times 100/1 - 100 = -26.53\%$$

Part Time Gap

Male	Female
£37.0706 – combined salary for all 2 part time male employees	£111.494 – combined salary for all 8 part time female employees
Average hourly rate = £18.53 per hour	Average hourly rate = £13.93

Part time gender pay gap is the gap between the average hourly pay rate of female employees who work part time and male employees who work full time.

$$£13.93 / £18.53 \text{ per hour} \times 100/1 - 100 = -24.8\%$$

	Combined Gap	Full Time Gap	Part Time Gap
All employees	-33.16%	-26.53%	-24.8%

Positive figures indicate a pay gap to the detriment of female employees while negative figures indicate a pay gap to the detriment of male employees