

Highland and Western Isles Valuation Joint Board

Minutes of Meeting of the Highland and Western Isles Valuation Joint Board held in Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Monday, 20 June, 2022 at 10.35 a.m.

Present:

Representing The Highland Council:

Mr M Cameron (remote)
Mr L Fraser
Mr A Graham
Ms J McEwan (remote)
Ms K MacLean (substitute)
Mrs M Paterson

Representing Comhairle nan Eilean Siar:

Mr D Crichton (remote)

In attendance:

Mr F Finlayson, Assistant Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer
Ms M Thomson, Office & Support Manager, Assessor & Electoral Registration Service
Ms L Harrison, Accountant, Treasurer's Office (remote)
Mr A MacInnes, Administrative Assistant, Clerk's Office

Business

The Clerk's representative took the Chair at the start of meeting until the Board elected its Convener, as provided at item 3 below.

1. Apologies Leisgeulan

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr B Boyd, Ms T Collier and Mr G Murray.

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Appointment of Convener and Depute Convener Cur an Dreuchd Neach-gairm agus Iar Neach-gairm

i. Convener

In terms of Paragraph 3(1) of Schedule 2 to the Valuation Joint Boards (Scotland) Order 1995, the Board was required to appoint a Convener. (The Convener & Depute Convener, shall not, at any time, be Members of the same constituent authority).

- (i) It was recommended that remuneration for this post should be £24,467, in accordance with the Local Governance (Scotland) Act 2004 (Remuneration) Amendment Regulations 2022.

The Board **APPROVED** the remuneration for the post of Convener of £24,467.

Thereafter, nominations for the position of Convener were sought.

Mrs M Paterson, seconded by Mr A Graham moved that Mr L Fraser be appointed as Convener. There being no other candidates Mr L Fraser was duly appointed.

ii. Depute Convener

In terms of Paragraph 3(1) of Schedule 2 to the Valuation Joint Boards (Scotland) Order 1995, the Board was required to appoint a Depute Convener.

It was recommended that remuneration for this post should be £23,244 in accordance with the Local Governance (Scotland) Act 2004 (Remuneration) Amendment Regulations 2022.

The Board **APPROVED** the remuneration for the post of Depute Convener of £23,244.

Thereafter, nominations were sought for the position of Depute Convener.

Mr L Fraser, seconded by Mrs M Paterson, moved that Mr D Crichton be appointed Depute Convener. There being no other candidates Mr D Crichton was duly appointed.

4. Minutes of Meetings Geàrr-chunntas Coinneamh

The had been circulated Minutes of Meeting of 18 February and 7 March, 2022, the terms of which were **APPROVED**.

5. Matters Arising from the Minutes Gnothaichean Ag Èirigh on Gheàrr-chunntas

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

6. Recess Powers Cumhachdan Fosaidh

Recess Powers did not require to be used.

7. Departmental Report Aithisg Roinneil

There was circulated Report No VAL/11/22 by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer which outlined the main business of the department since the last meeting.

In discussion, the following main points were raised by Members:-

- Staff were thanked for all their hard work on the Local Government election held in May, 2022. This election had been carried out successfully from an Electoral Registration Officer perspective with only 2 clerical errors recorded.
- It was noted that a mix of home and office or hybrid working would shortly be adopted by most members of staff.

- The Dingwall Office would close before the end of June and provision would be made for staff within the Inverness Office. Additional space had now been taken on a short term 3 month lease within Moray House to accommodate files.
- It was highlighted that the recruitment and retention of staff remained a serious issue. Difficulties in recruiting staff had now spread across all posts. Measures to address this issue must now be taken if a serious impact on service provision was to be avoided. Also, a Senior Valuer in the Stornoway office was due to retire on 17 June after 48 years of dedicated service which was a tremendous achievement.
- It was noted that on 28 April 2022 the Elections Act 2022 received Royal Assent. The Act initiated a number of changes to electoral registration including the introduction of photographic voter identification for in-person voting, extending the franchise for overseas electors, and changes to current arrangements for postal and proxy voting. Further updates on the Elections Act 2022 would be reported to the next Board meeting.
- It was felt that the new layout of the paper copy of the Electoral Register was more complicated in its layout which made it difficult to work with. An undertaking was made to check with the supplier to see if any improvements could be made to it to make it more user friendly.
- It was requested that a Members' induction on the work of the Board be held following the next Board meeting.

Thereafter, the Board:-

- i **NOTED** the recent activities of the department as set out in the report;
- ii **NOTED** that an update on the Elections Act 2022 would be reported to the next Board meeting;
- iii **NOTED** that it would be checked with the supplier if the layout of the paper copy of the Electoral Register could be improved.
- iv **AGREED** that a Members' induction on the work of the Board would be held immediately following the next meeting of the Board.

8. Unaudited Accounts 2021/22 Cunntasan Neo-sgrùdaichte 2021/22

The Unaudited Statement of Accounts for the financial year 2021/22 were close to being finalised and would be e-mailed to Members' prior to them being submitted to the appointed auditor, Grant Thornton UK LLP.

The Board **NOTED** the position.

The meeting concluded at 11.25 a.m.