



Orkney and Shetland Valuation Joint Board



Minute

Thursday, 26 November 2020, 14:00.

Microsoft Teams.

Present:

Orkney Islands Council:

Councillors Andrew Drever, Robin W Crichton, David Dawson, Barbara Foulkes and Harvey Johnston.

Shetland Islands Council:

Councillors Theo Smith, Alastair Cooper, Allison Duncan, John Fraser and George Smith.

Clerk to the Board:

- Karen A Greaves, Head of Executive Support, Orkney Islands Council.

In Attendance:

- Colin Kemp, Treasurer to the Board.
- Dennis Stevenson, Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer (for Items 1 to 3).
- Rosie Docherty, Rosie Docherty HR Consulting (for Item 4).

Orkney Islands Council:

- John W Mundell, Interim Chief Executive.
- Gareth Waterson, Head of Finance.
- Hazel Flett, Senior Committees Officer.

Shetland Islands Council:

- Maggie Sandison, Chief Executive.
- Jamie Manson, Executive Manager – Finance.
- Marie Gordon, Team Leader – HR Policy and Employment Support.
- Jan Riise, Executive Manager – Governance and Law.

Declarations of Interest:

- No declarations of interest were intimated.

Chair:

- Councillor Andrew Drever, Orkney Islands Council, Convener of the Board.

1. Disclosure of Exempt Information

The Board noted the proposal that the public should be excluded from the meeting for Item 4, as consideration of the business may involve the likely disclosure of exempt information of the class described in the relevant paragraph of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 as amended.

2. Best Value Regime – Progress Report

The Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer presented his report, copies of which had been circulated, which summarised progress for the six months covering April to October 2020. He highlighted key points relating to the Electoral Registration Service, Council Tax, Non-Domestic Rating and the Coronavirus pandemic. Regarding Shetland Office accommodation, there had been no further feedback or progress from Shetland Islands Council since a meeting on 23 September 2019 to determine whether suitable additional accommodation could be secured within 20 Commercial Road or alternatively considering a longer term view to re-location within Lerwick. This had been further highlighted to Shetland Islands Council's Estates team the previous month that an update was required.

In response to a query from Councillor Dawson regarding the 2020 Coronavirus Running Roll Appeals and the 2022 Revaluation, the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer advised that he was not aware of any additional resources from the Scottish Government to meet increased costs and/or additional workload.

In response to a query from Councillor Duncan regarding the Shetland accommodation, the Chief Executive, Shetland Islands Council, advised that the Council had developed a new strategy around estates, and she undertook to ensure this matter was picked up in that process. The COVID-19 response had impacted on use of the estate. The Executive Manager – Governance and Law further advised that, following the first lockdown, many services had not returned to full occupancy; another element was record keeping, whereby paper records could potentially be digitalised, thereby potentially freeing up accommodation.

The Chief Executive, Shetland Islands Council, referred to the outstanding costs arising from the Court of Session appeal, which would require to be picked up through the transition arrangements for finance services moving from Shetland Islands Council to Orkney Islands Council.

The Board noted:

2.1. The content of the progress report.

The Board resolved:

2.2. To delegate authority to the Treasurer to the Board to work with Shetland Islands Council to recover all sums due as a result of the Court of Session appeal.

3. Governance Review

After consideration of a report by the Chief Executive, Orkney Islands Council, copies of which had been circulated, the Interim Chief Executive, Orkney Islands Council, reminded the Board that, on 5 November 2020, they had considered an update on the audit plan, with one of the key recommendations being to address issues regarding governance and transparency. He had since contacted the Improvement Service and a draft scope for a review had been agreed. The Improvement Service was in a position to commence the review immediately, at no cost, although there may be some cost associated with training, depending on how and who delivered the training.

The Board noted:

3.1. That, on 5 November 2020, the Board considered an update on progress with the Action Plan arising from the Annual Audit Report on the 2019/20 Audit.

3.2. That one of the recommendations for improvement contained in the Action Plan was that the Board should engage an independent review of its governance framework and the effectiveness of governance within the organisation.

3.3. That the Improvement Service had confirmed it was in a position to carry out the review referred to above with immediate effect.

3.4. The proposed scope of the review as detailed in section 4.2 of the report circulated.

The Board resolved:

3.5. That the scope of the review of governance arrangements for the Orkney and Shetland Valuation Joint Board, as detailed below, be approved:

- Review of current governance framework and associated documentation.
- Benchmarking of good practice with other Valuation Joint Boards.
- Engagement with individual Board Members and Officers of the Orkney and Shetland Valuation Joint Board.
- Facilitated joint session with Board Members and Officers of the Orkney and Shetland Valuation Joint Board.
- Report with recommendations for the Board.
- Facilitation to implement training of Board Members and relevant officers on governing documents and good practice.

The Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer left the meeting at this point.

4. Independent Pay and Grading Model

On the motion of Councillor Theo Smith, seconded by Councillor Andrew Drever, the Board resolved that the public be excluded from the meeting for this item on the grounds that it involved the disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 as amended.

The Team Leader – HR Policy and Employment Support, Shetland Islands Council, introduced her report, copies of which had been circulated, which was the next phase of the pay and grading model, and referred the Board to section 4, which provided an update, including distinct decision points for the Board.

Board members sought clarification on various points of detail.

The Board noted:

4.1. The Progress Report from Rosie Docherty HR Consulting, attached as Appendix 1 to the report circulated.

The Board resolved:

4.2. What action should be taken with regard to the independent pay and grading model.

The above constitutes the summary of the Minute in terms of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 section 50C(2) as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985.

Councillor Barbara Foulkes left the meeting during consideration of this item.

5. Conclusion of Meeting

At 15:45 the Convener declared the meeting concluded.

Signed: