



## **Management Team Minutes** **Wednesday 29 July 2020 at 9.30am**

**Present:** Assessor & ERO, Head of Valuation Services, Divisional Assessor (Revaluation Team), Divisional Assessor (Survey Team), Principal Admin. Officer and Office Manager.

**Action  
Req'd  
by:**

### **1.0 APOLOGIES**

None.

The DA (Survey Team) was welcomed to her first meeting in her new role.

### **PREVIOUS MINUTES**

The previous minute was approved subject to minor amendments.

### **MATTERS ARISING**

#### **Personnel (Item 4.1)**

Overtime was offered to technical staff in order that any outstanding tasks or general duties were progressed.

#### **Training and PDR's (Item 4.4)**

The DA's emailed staff for interest in joining the Training Group. It was agreed that the Registration, Information and Database Officer would join the group.

#### **Suggestion Box (Item 9.1)**

All staff were emailed to ascertain the requirement for the continuation of the suggestion box. Responses received were in favour of retaining the suggestions box.

#### **Audit Internal/External (Item 9.5)**

The Assessor is progressing with the review of the Risk Management Strategy.

#### **Property Matters (Item 9.18)**

The emergency lighting issue was reported to SAC Property Maintenance.

## PERSONNEL

It was noted that the DA (Survey Team) and the Valuer (Survey Team) have both recently retired. The Management Team wished them both a long and happy retirement.

The OM was also welcomed back from long term sickness absence.

## **2.0** REPORTS

### 2.1 Non-Domestic

#### Processing of changes to the VR

It was noted that the PV (Revaluation Team) is authorising changes within the valuation roll.

Currently 72 changes have been processed during the last few weeks. A FAQ document has been produced to help with any questions in connection with this task.

#### Update on Survey Cards

There are currently 64 survey cards still to be processed. All cards have been taken out of the office by the relevant members of the survey team except for one member who still requires to collect his cards from the office.

Outstanding cards are as follows:

East	537
North	509
South	729

The planning and building warrants are continuing to be processed.

#### Update on Desktop Surveys

It was agreed that staff would undertake as many desktop surveys as possible.

**DA's**

Progress will be measured towards end August/September. The DA's will monitor.

**DA's**

#### Issue of AINs and Bulk Landlord Returns

It was reported that secondary legislation is not yet in place to send out the fixed penalty notices. There will be a soft launch when everything is in place. The Scottish Government, through the 14 Assessors, will send out letters regarding the process.

**DA's**

It was agreed that the DA's would liaise with the RIDO regarding the landlord returns. Information regarding the returns will be coordinated through the RIDO.

The Assessor reported that it would be beneficial if we could receive information into the office. Information from emails etc is being forwarded to TSU. More will be known after the next Assessors' Committee Meeting on 20 August 2020. In the interim some information will be received via the portal.

It was agreed that the old self-catering unit forms can be issued and the bulk landlord returns can also be issued.

Covid Appeal Courts have been arranged for January, February and March 2021 Courts. The SAA are trying to engage with the Scottish Rating Surveyors Forum and the Scottish Ratepayers Forum regarding various matters including the MCC appeals.

Discussion took place on the type of subjects that may be affected. The Assessor will communicate with the SAA with a suggested strategic approach.

#### Performance

The Assessor has no concerns at present regarding performance.

## 2.2 Council Tax

### Processing Changes to the CT List

It was noted that we have currently processed 73 changes to the CT List, the majority of which are new entries. There are a number of CT proposals and appeals to be processed.

The above breaks down to: 18 entries still to be processed, 17 of which are new entries and 1 CT proposal. 91 in total since we commenced home working.

### Update on Outstanding Survey Cards

A total of 115 outstanding survey cards are shown on our systems which are a combination of new entries, sold houses and deletions.

The DA (ST) has 92 reports to authorise on top of the 115 changes. Some of these will be looked at again, but it was stated that due to volume, a proportionate amount of time should be spent on these as it is crucial we push forward with service delivery.

15 entries are shown on the system as reduced and these are a mix of valid and invalid proposals and appeals.

The Assessor reported that she is happy to speak to the Board regarding performance due to processes not being in place at the start of lock down. It took approximately 3-4 weeks to have a number of Technical Staff on line.

It was agreed that bands for sold houses will be increased where the evidence supports this. Staff should spend appropriate time on these.

### Point of Sale surveys/band changes

The DA should look at outstanding work and prioritise the work.

**DA(ST)**

The outstanding survey cards should be on the system. The DA's will ascertain if the team all have them at home.

**DA's**

Discussion took place on the various spreadsheets. It was agreed that if possible we should consolidate these into the update only change sheet. The BSDO may be able to run a report to aid with updating the spreadsheet. The PAO will investigate if this is possible.

**PAO**

The Assessor stated that she is trying to reduce manual input by valuers into spreadsheets.

It was reported that the Core System is likely to go live in October for NDR and January 2021 for Council Tax.

### Update on Council Tax Surveys

As previously reported the teams are to undertake, as many desktop surveys as possible.

### Performance

Under the present circumstances, it is noted the teams are working as best they can.

The DA (RT) raised the issue of staff using their own printers and the issues connected to this. The Assessor reported that screens will be installed week beginning 3 August 2020 and this will allow staff to return to work on a rotational basis creating a blended working environment.

It was felt that a rota would work well. The DA's and the HOVS will co-ordinate regarding the staff returning on a rotational basis and the best way to achieve this.

**HOVS/  
DA'S**

Reception screens have also been obtained Staff will be required in the office to cover any enquiries arising from canvass etc. It was also noted we do not have sufficient laptop numbers currently.

The DA (ST) raised an issue with the IQ Post Me System. It appears that the standard letters and attachments are separate and do not go out in post as one.

Other documentation will be similar e.g. Grounds and Comparisons. It was agreed that the PA would ensure any enclosures were part of the letter allowing them to be issued as one document. This will mean a standard letter will have to be created for each enclosure.

Discussion took place on signatures for electronic correspondence. It was agreed that a typed signature, possibly in italics could be used in the electronic letters as an interim measure.

### **3.0 VAC MEETINGS**

The HOVS and the DA (RT) reported that they have been in contact with the Secretary to the Panel and have proposed appeal court dates. The proposed dates have also been sent to Counsel who has been provisionally booked for the proposed dates.

The format of the meetings and where they should be held will be discussed with the Secretary to the Appeal Panel. The Assessor would be happy for written submissions to be made for Council Tax Courts. This will be discussed with the Secretary to the Panel.

**HOVS/  
DA(RT)**

It was noted that over the three dates provisionally arranged for the MCC appeals approximately 953 appeals would be heard at each date. A total of 2800 appeals. The deadline for the appeals is 31 March 2021.

It was agreed that the Technical Officers would be given a court allocation in order that the Assessor meets statutory deadlines.

The Assessor reported that the Divisional Valuers job description is awaiting final approval for Job Evaluation. Once approved the posts will be advertised.

The citations, for the courts in January, February and March 2021, will be issued at the end of August. Due to the workload involved the Assessor, HOVS and PAO will help where they can to allow the DAs to take an appeal allocation.

The Assessor reiterated that her statutory duties are her priority.

The DA (ST) will authorise as soon as possible and co-ordinate with the HOVS.

**DA (ST)**

### **4.0 INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL WORKING GROUP AND COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP**

The Management Team have updated the membership document with suggestions. The DA's will coordinate with the HOVS. Further updates to the groups will be carried out after the recruitment campaign.

**HOVS/  
DA's**

### **5.0 ICT**

#### **5.1 Core System Update**

The RIDO will take over responsibility of the Elector8 system.

The Assessor gave the following update on the core system:

Spec 1 – Basic Functionality – this has been signed off by the Assessors and the CEO of Democracy Counts.

Spec 2 – This has been discussed and comments have been passed to the Project Board and will then be signed off. Fife Assessor will then procure Spec 1 and 2.

Spec 3 – Documents and Reports – The Working Group is progressing with on this at present and will be signed off soon.

The number of reports required was questioned. Renfrewshire have submitted their reports and the other Assessors can add to the reports if required.

Spec 4 – Non-Domestic Proposals and Appeals – the workloads for these are currently being looked at. Extensive user testing will be required.

The Assessor highlighted that we will require to be flexible and pragmatic on what we expect to achieve by March 2020 with all the outstanding work and the work created as a result of Covid-19.

The PAO reported that the new system will have a ghost roll or shadow roll created at Revaluation. This will update as each running roll change is processed.

We are currently working with Planning and Building Control to enable their data to be imported electronically into the new system.

The Register of Sasines will hopefully also be 'fed' into the system. This will save TSU administrative time and the valuation staff will not be required to fill out cards.

If, once the system is up and running and this alleviates the workload for the technical support unit, a review of where staff are best placed will take place.

#### 5.2 AVJB website

The OM will review the Website Content document with the recent staff changes. Once this has been updated, the OM will send the document link to the Management Team.

**OM**

The Management Team will also then look at their areas of responsibility and update as required.

The information on the website will require to be updated with information regarding the opening of the telephone lines together with the information regarding the commencement of the annual canvass.

#### 5.3 Telephone Answering

The Assessor requested that the BSDO monitor the telephones lines to ascertain how many calls are being unanswered.

**BSDO**

#### 5.4 Laptops

The SAA Electoral Registration Committee are concerned about the election in May 2021 if there is a spike in Covid-19. A contingency plan is required to be put in place. Within this in mind, the Assessor has requested laptops via SAC.

Elector8 does not allow Citrix remote working and we will need to consider the requirement for electoral registration staff in the office every day. Once Elector 8 is up and running on more devices then more members of staff will be able to work from home.

The Assessor stated that her preferred option for the working of the office would be the blended model and if more staff would like to work from home then it may be suitable.

## **6.0 ER/TSU UPDATE**

### **6.1 Team Members**

The AO (L6) was successful in gaining the position of AO (Supervisor) and has now moved to the TSU.

The RIDO has also commenced within her appointment.

The vacant AO (L6) post has now been advertised internally with a closing date of 3 August 2020.

To aid with Elector8 training and the forthcoming May 2021 election two members of the TSU have been placed within the ER section and one member of the ER section has now moved to TSU.

### **6.2 Election - May 2021**

There is a concern that there may be an increase in postal votes. The Assessor requested that staff encourage electors to take postal votes now.

It was noted that there have been changes to this year's canvass. The information that was sent to the DWP and then matched with local data sets has shown an 80% match. The remaining 20% will follow route 2 in order to be processed. Approximately 40,000 – 50,000 electors or empty properties have not matched.

Emails will be sent to those electors who matched and whom we also hold email addresses for and they must respond to the email. If there has been no response a form is then issued. It is hoped the response rate will be high to save on canvass costs.

The next planned election will be the Scottish Parliamentary Election in 2021.

### **6.3 Mayoral Elections – PV's**

The Assessor raised her concerns regarding the Mayor of London encouraging postal vote applications and if this has a knock-on effect on the May 2021 election.

## **7.0 OFFICES**

### **7.1 Staff Room Allocations**

The DA's will decide on room allocations for technical staff.

**DA's**

7.2 Removal of all personal items  
Personal items require to be removed from workstation areas. Administrative staff have undertaken this task and Technical staff will now clear their areas. **DA's**

7.3 Rubbish in rooms  
All rubbish should be removed from rooms due to Covid-19. **IT IS CRUCIAL THAT ROOMS ARE KEPT CLEAN AND TIDY.**

7.4 & Desk Screens

7.5 Desk screens are expected to be received week commencing 3 August 2020 for the back building first floor and reception. Workmen will install the screens and will have PPE equipment if required and will follow their own and AVJB guidance. Given the small number of staff, on this floor, presently social distancing will not be an issue.

Staff will be responsible for cleaning their screens.

7.6 Inductions – Property Assistants

It was agreed that once the rooms have been allocated to staff and the screens are in place the new start Property Assistants will come into the office for training. The Property Assistants will be in the office full time in order to receive appropriate training. **DA (ST)**

## **8.0 ASSESSORS' COMMITTEE UPDATE**

The bullet and action points from the recent Assessors' Committee meeting have been placed on SharePoint.

It was reported that the LTS guidance, within the Assessors bullet points, is not the same as the guidance within the folders that contain the LTS referral requests. The DA (ST) will make sure appropriate guidance is followed.

## **9.0 AOCB**

9.1 Policy and Procedure Review

The OM will review the Policies and Procedures and will add all the Covid-19 Guidance to the index etc. **OM**

9.2 Customer Questionnaire

The RIDO will now have the responsibility for the Customer Questionnaire Group. **PAO to inform RIDO**

9.3 Flexi – Etarmis

The PAO reported that it was agreed that a list of names of Flexi Users who will be using the system during the canvass period will be sent to SAC in order that they can record their times with effect from 3 August 2020.

The Assessor reported that the DA's will have a degree of flexibility regarding staff working times but staff require to be available during office hours to take calls.



9.4 Appointment system

An appointment system will be set up for visitors to the office with effect from 10 August 2020.

PAO

Freestanding sanitising units will be delivered to the office on 30 July 2020 for use at reception and the back door for members of the public/visitors.

If a member of the public enters the building without an appointment, a degree of flexibility should be given. If an appointment slot is available then they will be allowed to remain within the office, if not then an appointment can be made for another day/time etc. Visitors will require signing in and out of the office, for Covid tracing.

9.5 Revaluation Appeals

Discussion took place on revaluation appeals. Once a decision is received, the DA(RT) will update the spreadsheet and send to the PAO.

**10.0 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting will take place on 29 August 2020.