

Orkney and Shetland Valuation Joint Board

Report to Members and the Controller of Audit on the 2007/08 Audit



October 2008



Orkney and Shetland Valuation Joint Board

Report to Members and the Controller of Audit on the 2007/08 Audit

October 2008



Contents

Introduction	1	Governance	5
Financial statements	2	Final Remarks	6



Introduction

1. This report summarises the findings from our 2007/08 audit of Orkney and Shetland Valuation Joint Board. The scope of the audit was set out in our audit fee letter issued on 14 January 2008.
2. The financial statements of the Joint Board are the means by which it accounts for its stewardship of the resources made available to it and its financial performance in the use of these resources. It is the responsibility of the Joint Board to prepare financial statements that present fairly its financial position and the income and expenditure for the year.
3. The members and officers of the Joint Board are responsible for the management and governance of the organisation. As external auditors, we review and report on the arrangements in place and seek to gain assurance that:
 - the financial statements have been prepared in accordance with statutory requirements and that proper accounting practices have been observed
 - the Joint Board's system of recording and processing transactions provides an adequate basis for the preparation of the financial statements and the effective management of assets and interests
 - the Joint Board has adequate governance arrangements which reflect the three fundamental principles of openness, integrity and accountability
 - the systems of internal control provide an appropriate means of preventing or detecting material misstatement, error, fraud or corruption
 - the Joint Board has proper arrangements for securing best value in its use of resources.



Financial statements

Introduction

4. In this section we summarise key outcomes from our audit of the Joint Board's financial statements for 2007/08. We also summarise key aspects of the Joint Board's reported financial position and performance to 31 March 2008.
5. We audit the financial statements and give an opinion on:
 - whether they present fairly the financial position of the Joint Board and its expenditure and income for the year
 - whether they have been prepared properly in accordance with relevant legislation, applicable accounting standards and other reporting requirements.
6. We also review the Statement on the System of Internal Financial Control by considering the adequacy of the process put in place by the Joint Board to obtain assurances on systems of governance and internal financial control and assessing whether disclosures in the statement are consistent with our knowledge of the Joint Board.

Overall conclusion

7. We have given an **unqualified** opinion on the financial statements of Orkney and Shetland Valuation Joint Board for 2007/08.
8. The unaudited financial statements were submitted to the Controller of Audit by the deadline of 30 June. The Joint Board is required to follow the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom – A Statement of Recommended Practice (the 'SORP').



Financial position

Going concern

9. The Joint Board's balance sheet at 31 March 2008 shows net liabilities of £55,000 (2006/07 £224,000). Auditing standards require auditors to consider an organisation's ability to continue as a going concern when forming an opinion on the financial statements. One of the indicators that may give rise to going concern considerations is an excess of liabilities over assets.
10. The net liability position is due to the requirements of Financial Reporting Standard 17 (retirement benefits) where there is an obligation to recognise the Joint Board's full pension obligations in the year they are earned. In accounting for pensions, FRS 17 is based on the principle that an organisation should account for retirement benefits at the point at which it commits to paying them, even if the actual payment will be made years into the future. This requirement results in large future liabilities being recognised in the annual accounts. This technical accounting requirement has had no impact on the underlying basis for meeting current and ongoing pension liabilities which will be met from employer's contributions and investment returns. In common with similar authorities, the Joint Board has considered it appropriate to adopt a going concern basis for the preparation of the financial statements.

Revenue performance 2007/08

11. The Board's total revenue expenditure for 2007/08 amounted to £561,559 (after elimination of FRS 17 pension adjustments). This was met by constituent authorities' contributions of £558,753 and other income of £2,806.
12. The Treasurer summarises performance against budget in the Introductory Statement to the accounts. Overall there was an underspend of £23,118 (4%) which has been refunded to the constituent authorities.

Financial outlook – pension liabilities

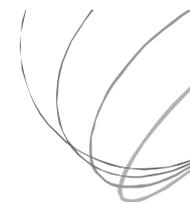
13. As recognised above, financial planning and accounting for the costs of pensions presents a difficult challenge. The amounts involved are large, the timescale is long, the estimation process is complex and involves many areas of uncertainty that are the subject of assumptions.
14. As noted above, the Joint Board's estimated pension liabilities at 31 March 2008 exceeded its share of the assets in the Shetland Islands Council Pension Fund by £55,000, reducing from £224,000 in the



previous year. The decrease in liability is largely as a result of changes to pension regulations which allow individuals to elect to receive a larger lump sum payment in return for a reduced annual pension.

Legality

15. Each year we request written confirmation from the Treasurer that the Joint Board's financial transactions accord with relevant legislation and regulations. Significant legal requirements are also included in audit programmes. The Treasurer has confirmed that, to the best of his knowledge and belief and having made appropriate enquiries of other senior officers, the financial transactions of the Joint Board were in accordance with the relevant legislation and regulations governing its activities.
16. There are no additional legality issues arising from our audit which require to be brought to members' attention.



Governance

Introduction

17. In this section we comment on key aspects of the Joint Board's governance arrangements during 2007/08.

Overview of arrangements in 2007/08

18. Corporate governance is concerned with structures and processes for decision making, accountability, control and behaviours at the upper levels of the organisation. The Joint Board has a responsibility to put in place arrangements for the conduct of its affairs, ensure the legality of activities and transactions and to monitor the adequacy and effectiveness of these arrangements in practice.
19. A Statement on the System of Internal Financial Control is included within the annual financial statements, and highlights the Treasurer's view that reasonable assurance can be placed upon the adequacy and effectiveness of the Joint Board's internal financial control system.
20. The statement complies with accounting requirements and is not inconsistent with the findings of our audit.

Systems of internal control

21. The Joint Board's financial transactions are processed through Shetland Islands Council's financial systems. It is the responsibility of the Council's management to maintain adequate financial systems and associated internal controls. The auditor evaluates significant financial systems and associated internal controls both for the purpose of giving an opinion on the financial statements and as part of a review of the adequacy of governance arrangements.
22. Our review of these systems was conducted as part of the audit of Shetland Islands Council, supplemented by specific audit work on the Joint Board's financial statements. Overall there are no material issues of concern in relation to the operation of the main financial systems.

Prevention and detection of fraud and irregularities

23. The Joint Board does not have in place its own arrangements for the prevention and detection of fraud and corruption, but complies with the relevant policies of Shetland Islands Council.



Final Remarks

24. The members of Orkney and Shetland Valuation Joint Board are invited to note this report. We would be pleased to provide any additional information that members may require.
25. The co-operation and assistance given to us by officers of the Joint Board is gratefully acknowledged.



October 2008