

**REPORT TO: TAYSIDE VALUATION JOINT BOARD – 30 AUGUST 2021**

**REPORT ON: HEALTH AND SAFETY ANNUAL REPORT**

**REPORT BY: ASSESSOR**

**REPORT NO: TVJB 15-2021**

## **1 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1 To present to the Joint Board the Assessor's annual report on Health and Safety matters, in accordance with the Joint Board's Health and Safety Policy Statement.

## **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 The Joint Board is asked to note the content of the report.

## **3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

3.1 Any implementation costs have been contained within the Assessor's Revenue Budget.

## **4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 This report has been screened for any policy implications in respect of Sustainability, Strategic Environmental Assessment, Anti-Poverty, Equality Impact Assessment and Risk Management. There are no major issues.

## **5 BACKGROUND**

5.1 The Joint Board has noted and approved the Tayside Valuation Joint Board General Health and Safety Policy Statement which includes an obligation on the Assessor to monitor and evaluate the Health and Safety performance of the Department and prepare an annual report to the Joint Board.

## **6 POLICY STATEMENT – GENERAL PRINCIPLES**

6.1 The Joint Board's general principles of health and safety are contained in the Health and Safety Policy Statement and are as follows.

6.2 In keeping with its overall objectives and in accordance with the requirements of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, Tayside Valuation Joint Board will take all reasonably practicable steps to ensure the health, safety and welfare of its employees and members of the public. A high standard of performance in this respect is one of the Joint Board's principal objectives and an integral part of its approach to service delivery.

6.3 The Joint Board aims not only to reduce accident and sickness absence rates but also to promote the wellbeing of its employees and to develop a positive attitude to health and safety throughout the Tayside Valuation Joint Board.

6.4 The involvement and co-operation of all employees on both an individual and collective basis is crucial to the achievement of these aims. Accordingly, the Joint Board will ensure by informing, instructing, training and consulting employees that they are aware of their responsibilities and capable of discharging them and that they have an opportunity to contribute to establishing and maintaining effective health and safety practices.

- 6.5 In all its activities the Joint Board acknowledges and will seek to meet its responsibilities for health and safety in respect of those who are not its employees and the environment in which it operates.
- 6.6 The Joint Board will seek to achieve its aim by:-
- a Creating and maintaining a positive health and safety culture which secures the commitment and participation of all employees.
  - b Meeting its responsibilities to employees, to other people and to the environment in a way which recognises that legal requirements are only a minimum standard.
  - c Adopting a planned and systematic approach to the implementation of the Joint Board's Health and Safety Policy, to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable:-
    - i the provision and maintenance of plant and systems of work that are safe and without risk to health;
    - ii arrangements for ensuring safety and the absence of risks to health in connection with the use, handling, storage and transport of articles and substances;
    - iii the provision of such information, instruction, training and supervision as is necessary to ensure the health and safety at work of its employees;
    - iv the maintenance of any place of work under the Joint Board's control in a condition that is safe and without risks to health and the provision and maintenance of means of access to and egress from these places of work that are safe and without such risks, and
    - v the provision and maintenance of a working environment for employees that is safe, without risks to health and adequate as regards facilities and arrangements for their welfare at work.
  - d Identifying and assessing the risks associated with all activities of the Joint Board with the aim of eliminating or controlling the risks, so far as is reasonably practicable.
  - e Allocating resources to meet the requirements of the Joint Board's Health and Safety Policy.
  - f Planning for health and safety including the setting of realistic short and long term objectives, deciding priorities and establishing adequate performance standards.
  - g Monitoring and reviewing performance on a regular basis.
  - h Ensuring appropriate workforce consultation and consultation with safety representatives.

## **7 SIGNIFICANT RISKS FACED BY JOINT BOARD EMPLOYEES**

- 7.1 Although Assessor's staff generally operate in a relatively low risk working environment, their Health and Safety remains an important consideration. The main risks to Joint Board employees continue to be the possibility of injury whilst carrying out property inspections and the possibility of a staff member being injured or taking ill whilst they are working alone and remaining undiscovered for a significant time period. In order to mitigate these risks guidance is provided in the form of "Guidance for Working Out of the Office and Lone Working" and a range of Safe Working Arrangements which includes "Property and Site Inspections" and "Work Related Road Safety".

- 7.2 Arrangements have now been made for staff to carry personal safety devices when out on survey. These devices connect to a 24 hour alarm monitoring service and provide an alarm function, voice connectivity and, in the case of an emergency, will transmit the employees GIS co-ordinates to the monitoring station if required.
- 7.3 Significant new health and safety risks were introduced by the Covid-19 pandemic, which has affected all public sector, business and voluntary organisations alike. In response to the pandemic the Joint Board's two offices were closed with staff providing services through remote working from home. However, at critical times such as during an election each office has been staffed as required. Before allowing staff to attend either office detailed risk assessments were undertaken and mitigation steps were put in place in line with government guidance. This includes strict social distancing measures, enhanced cleaning provisions, the provision of health and safety equipment such as face coverings, thermometers for measuring body temperature, protective screens, advice notices etc. It is anticipated that these risk assessments and provisions will be reviewed in line with government advice once the Scottish Government advises that non-essential offices may return to office based working.
- 7.4 With regard to electoral registration, due to the pandemic a door to door canvass was not undertaken during 2020 for health and safety reasons. It is anticipated that door to door canvassing will recommence in 2021.
- 7.5 With regard to the Valuation Roll and Council Tax List, due to the pandemic, the physical inspection of premises has been restricted to essential surveys only. In each case where an inspection is required an individual risk assessment has been carried out and approved by senior managers before such surveys have been undertaken. These arrangements will be kept under review and updated as appropriate as circumstances change.

## **8 ANNUAL REPORT TO AUGUST 2021**

- 8.1 The Joint Board's Health and Safety Group, under the chairmanship of an Assistant Assessor, continues to meet biannually to monitor Health and Safety matters. Proceedings are recorded by minutes which are in turn presented to the Management Team for consideration. Health and Safety is a standing Agenda item for meetings of the Management Team.
- 8.2 The Health and Safety Executive recommend that Fire Risk Assessments are regularly carried out in the workplace in order to determine the risk to life from fire and should be regularly reviewed. Where appropriate the assessment will contain recommendations to ensure the premises comply with fire safety legislation.
- 8.4 Portable Appliance Testing is carried out every three years by approved Electrical Contractors in each of the offices. In the intervening years formal visual inspections are carried out by trained Assessor's staff. This testing was last carried out in 2016 and arrangements are now being made to appoint an Approved Electrical Contractor to undertake this testing during the current financial year.
- 8.5 Regular fire drills are carried out in both Divisional offices in order to ensure that staff are familiar with escape routes and that the building can be evacuated within reasonable time limits.
- 8.6 Firefighting equipment, alarms and emergency lighting are tested on a regular basis.
- 8.7 Various members of staff in each of the Divisional offices have received British Red Cross first aid. Refresher course training is undertaken as required in order to ensure that each office has a full complement of trained first aiders.

- 8.8 Defibrillators have been installed in each Divisional office. Training in the use of these appliances has been provided to staff based in the Forfar office. Unfortunately, training scheduled to take place for staff based in the Perth office has been delayed due to the covid-19 pandemic and this will be rescheduled once staff return to office based working.
- 8.9 The Assistant Assessor responsible for Health and Safety matters continues to consult with Dundee City Council Health and Safety Section and ensures that any matters affecting the Joint Board are advised.
- 8.10 Routine Health and Safety matters continue to be dealt with locally as they arise.
- 8.11 The total number of working days lost by Tayside Valuation Joint Board staff for 2020-2021 through sickness absence was 132 days at a cost of £16,428.81 in comparison to 2019-2020 when 582.5 days were lost at a cost of £66,241.52. Sickness absence levels have decreased significantly in comparison with last year. The full absence statistics are contained in the attached Appendix. Management will continue to monitor absence levels.

## **9 CONCLUSIONS**

- 9.1 Health and Safety matters continue to be monitored effectively, through systems and procedures set up within the department. The Health and Safety Group comprises members from each Divisional office and accordingly Joint Board wide issues are addressed and reported appropriately. Action is taken to ensure compliance with statutory and general health and safety requirements, and relevant training provided to staff as required. Additionally, consideration is given annually to ensuring funds are contained in the Assessor's Revenue Budget to cover the cost of complying with all Health and Safety requirements. It is considered that overall arrangements for dealing with Health and Safety matters are satisfactory.

## **10 CONSULTATIONS**

- 10.1 The Clerk and Treasurer to the Joint Board have been consulted on this report.

## **11 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 11.1 None.

**ALASTAIR KIRKWOOD**  
Assessor

**August 2021**

## Tayside Valuation Joint Board

## Sickness Absence Statistics 2020-2021

DIVISION	Number of Instances	Working Days Lost	Calendar Days Lost	Working Hours Lost	Work Related Absence	Statutory Sick Pay £	Occupational Sick Pay £	Total Sick Pay £
HEADQUARTERS AND I.T.	15	45	53	333.0	0	249.21	3765.13	4014.34
DUNDEE DIVISION	1	3	3	22.2	0	0	232.87	232.87
PERTH & KINROSS DIVISION	14	43	53	318.2	0	402.25	7362.39	7764.64
ANGUS DIVISION	6	41	51	303.4	0	479.25	3937.71	4416.96
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>976.8</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1130.71</b>	<b>15298.10</b>	<b>16428.81</b>

## Sickness Absence Statistics 2019-2020

DIVISION	Number of Instances	Working Days Lost	Calendar Days Lost	Working Hours Lost	Work Related Absence	Statutory Sick Pay £	Occupational Sick Pay £	Total Sick Pay £
HEADQUARTERS AND I.T.	26	94	114	695.60	0	959.15	8756.75	9715.90
DUNDEE DIVISION	19	74.5	93	551.3	0	640.90	6759.14	7400.04
PERTH & KINROSS DIVISION	37	239.5	320	1772.3	0	3152.66	25360.01	28512.67
ANGUS DIVISION	25	174.5	227	1291.3	0	2242.71	18370.20	20612.91
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>582.5</b>	<b>754</b>	<b>4310.50</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6995.42</b>	<b>59246.10</b>	<b>66241.52</b>