



*Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute
Valuation Joint Board*

Council Offices
16 Church Street
Dumbarton
G82 1QL

16 June 2023

Dear Sir/Madam

DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD

You are requested to attend a hybrid meeting of the Valuation Joint Board to be held at **11.00 a.m. on Friday, 23 June 2023.**

In accordance with the Joint Board's Standing Orders Members will have the option to attend the meeting in person in **Annex 1, Helensburgh and Lomond Civic Centre, 35 East Clyde Street, Helensburgh G84 7PG** or remotely via MS Teams. Joining details for those attending remotely will be provided separately.

The business is as shown on the enclosed agenda.

Please note that immediately following the conclusion of the meeting a presentation and handout will be given to Members on the responsibilities of the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer.

Tea and coffee will be provided on arrival and a light buffet lunch will be provided after the meeting.

Please advise committee.admin@west-dunbarton.gov.uk if you are unable to attend the meeting.

Yours faithfully

PETER HESSETT

Clerk to the Valuation Joint Board

Distribution:-

Councillor Graham Archibald Hardie, Argyll & Bute Council
Councillor Paul Donald Kennedy, Argyll & Bute Council
Councillor Iain James MacQuire, Argyll & Bute Council
Councillor Iain Shonny Paterson, Argyll & Bute Council
Councillor Peter Wallace, Argyll & Bute Council

Councillor Jim Gibbons, East Dunbartonshire Council
Councillor Stewart MacDonald, East Dunbartonshire Council
Councillor Vaughan Moody, East Dunbartonshire Council
Councillor Willie Paterson, East Dunbartonshire Council
Councillor Andrew Polson, East Dunbartonshire Council
Councillor Calum Smith, East Dunbartonshire Council

Councillor Karen Conaghan, West Dunbartonshire Council
Councillor Gurpreet Singh Johal, West Dunbartonshire Council
Councillor Jonathan McColl, West Dunbartonshire Council
Councillor John Millar, West Dunbartonshire Council
Councillor Lawrence O'Neill, West Dunbartonshire Council

All Substitute Members for information.

DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD

FRIDAY, 23 JUNE 2023

AGENDA

1 APOLOGIES

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members are invited to declare if they have an interest in any of the items of business on this agenda and the reasons for such declarations.

3 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING 7 - 12

Submit, for approval as a correct record, the Minutes of Meeting of the Valuation Joint Board held on 3 March 2023.

4 DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2023 13 - 68

Submit report by the Treasurer providing the draft Annual Accounts for the Year Ending 31 March 2023.

5 ASSURANCE STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023 FROM THE SHARED SERVICE MANAGER – AUDIT & FRAUD 69 - 73

Submit report by the Treasurer advising of the contents of the annual Assurance Statement given in support of the Annual Governance Statement, and outlining how audit assurances are obtained.

6 MAZARS' ANNUAL AUDIT PLAN 2022/23 75 - 108

Submit report by the Treasurer presenting for information Mazars' Annual Audit Plan for the audit of financial year 2022/23.

7 BEST VALUE – SERVICE PLANNING 109 - 134

Submit report by the Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer seeking approval of the April 2023 update to the approved 2021-24 Service Plan.

8 BEST VALUE – PERFORMANCE REPORTING AND PLANNING 135 - 147

Submit report by the Depute Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer providing an update on progress in relation to Best Value and, in particular, to advise on external performance reports for the year 2022/23.

9 BEST VALUE – RISK MANAGEMENT UPDATE 149 - 166

Submit report by the Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer seeking approval of the Joint Board's Risk Register for 2023/24.

10 BEST VALUE – CUSTOMER SERVICE UPDATE 167 - 170

Submit report by the Depute Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer advising of:-

- (a) the results from the Customer Consultation process during 2022/23; and
- (b) the outcomes from the Complaints Procedure during 2022/23.

11 NON-DOMESTIC RATING AND COUNCIL TAX VALUATION UPDATE 171 - 175

Submit report by the Depute Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer advising of:-

- (a) the outcome of the 2023 general Revaluation of all non-domestic property;
- (b) ongoing activities to implement reform brought about by the Non-Domestic Rating (Scotland) Act 2020 and the recommendations of the 'Barclay' Review;
- (c) progress in relation to maintenance of the Non-Domestic Rating (NDR) valuation roll;
- (d) progress in relation to disposal of Revaluation and 'running roll' appeals;
- (e) progress in relation to the Assessor's Council Tax valuation function; and
- (f) forthcoming priorities and next steps.

12 ELECTORAL REGISTRATION UPDATE 177 - 179

Submit report by the Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer providing an update on the current position in relation to Electoral Registration.

13 INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2023 181 - 190

Submit report by the Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer:-

- (a) providing an update on the recently completed Internal Audit of the review of workforce planning arrangements;
- (b) seeking approval of the Actions contained in the above Internal Audit report; and
- (c) advising of progress in relation to the agreed Action Plan.

14 PRINT AND MAIL SERVICES CONTRACT 191 - 193

Submit report by the Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer providing an update on the conclusion of the award of the Print and Mail Services Contract.

15 REPLACEMENT ASSESSORS SYSTEM 195 - 197

Submit report by the Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer introducing a project to the Joint Board which will see the replacement of the decades old Assessors 'Progress' System.

16 PROGRAMME OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Joint Board is requested to agree the below dates, times, formats and venues of its future meetings:-

- (a) Friday, 3 November 2023 at 11.00 a.m. – Hybrid Meeting in Dumbarton, West Dunbartonshire Council;
- (b) Friday, 22 March 2024 at 11.00 a.m. – Hybrid Meeting in Kirkintilloch, East Dunbartonshire Council; and
- (c) Friday, 21 June 2024 at 11.00 a.m. – Hybrid Meeting in Helensburgh, Argyll & Bute Council.

For information on the above agenda please contact Lynn Straker, Committee Officer, Regulatory, Municipal Buildings, College Street, Dumbarton G82 1NR. Tel: (01389) 737327. Email: lynn.straker@west-dunbarton.gov.uk

DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD

At a Hybrid Meeting of the Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute Valuation Joint Board held in the Tom Johnston Chamber, East Dunbartonshire Council Offices, 12 Strathkelvin Place, Kirkintilloch, Glasgow on Friday, 3 March 2023 at 11.00 a.m.

Present: Councillors Graham Archibald Hardie and Peter Wallace (Argyll & Bute Council); Councillors Vaughan Moody, Calum Smith and Jim Gibbons (East Dunbartonshire Council); and Councillors Karen Conaghan*, Jonathan McColl* and Gurpreet Singh Johal (West Dunbartonshire Council).

*Arrived later in the meeting.

Attending: Russell Hewton, Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer (ERO); Laurence Slavin, Treasurer; Janine Corr, Accountant; Rosemary Nelson, Principal Administration Officer – VJB; Michael McDougall, Principal Solicitor and Lynn Straker, Committee Officer, West Dunbartonshire Council.

Also Attending: Tom Reid, Audit Director – Mazars.

Apologies: Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Councillor Willie Patterson (East Dunbartonshire Council), Councillor Paul Donald Kennedy (Argyll & Bute Council) and Alan Douglas, Clerk to the Valuation Joint Board.

Councillor Vaughan Moody in the Chair

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

It was noted that there were no declarations of interest in any of the items of business on the agenda.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of Meeting of the Valuation Joint Board held on 30 September 2022 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

MINUTES OF MEETINGS OF THE VALUATION JOINT BOARD RECRUITMENT PANEL

The Minutes of Meetings of the Valuation Joint Board Recruitment Panel held on 4 October 2022 and 10 November 2022 were submitted and approved as correct records.

CLERK TO THE VALUATION JOINT BOARD

A report was submitted by the Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer providing an update with respect to the position of Clerk to the Valuation Joint Board.

Having heard the Assessor & ERO in further explanation of the report, the Joint Board approved the appointment of Mr Alan Douglas, West Dunbartonshire Council's new Chief Officer – Regulatory and Regeneration, as Clerk to the Joint Board.

REVENUE & CAPITAL BUDGETARY CONTROL REPORT TO 31 JANUARY 2023 (PERIOD 10)

A report was submitted by the Treasurer advising on the progress of the revenue budget and the capital programme for 2022/23.

Having heard the Assessor & ERO in further explanation of the report, the Joint Board agreed:-

- (1) to note that it is anticipated that £0.077m of revenue reserves will be required to be used in-year to balance the projected outturn on core activities;
- (2) to note that it is anticipated that an underspend of £0.025m of Barclay Funding will be earmarked and carried forward for use within 2023/24;
- (3) to note the virement as explained in paragraph 3.10 of the report; and
- (4) to note the projected capital re-profiling of spend and earmarked resource of £0.051m, to be carried forward into 2023/24 to fund the completion of the existing capital projects.

Note: Councillors McColl and Conaghan entered the meeting during consideration of this item.

UPDATED LONG TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY AND REVENUE AND CAPITAL ESTIMATES 2023/24

A report was submitted by the Treasurer:-

- (a) seeking approval of the updated Long Term Financial Strategy, the 2023/24 revenue estimates and the level of constituent authority requisitions in 2023/24;
- (b) seeking approval of the draft 2023/24 capital estimates; and
- (c) providing the indicative budget positions for 2024/25 and 2025/26 for both capital and revenue.

Having heard the Treasurer and Accountant in further explanation of the report, the Joint Board agreed:-

- (1) the updated Long Term Financial Strategy as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report;
- (2) the draft 2023/24 revenue budget;
- (3) that free reserves will continue to be held to help manage future budgets and the level of constituent authority contributions;
- (4) to note the indicative revenue budgets for 2024/25 and 2025/26;
- (5) the 2023/24 revenue requisition is based on each Council's 2022/23 GAE figures with the apportionment as identified in paragraph 3.10 of the report;
- (6) the 2023/24 Barclay Review funding based on the Scottish Government's allocation as identified at paragraph 3.11 of the report;
- (7) the proposed 2023/24 capital spend (as detailed in Appendix 5 and Appendix 6 of the report) of £8,500 to be progressed and funded as detailed at paragraph 3.13 of the report;
- (8) to note the indicative capital bids for 2024/25 and 2025/26 (as detailed in Appendix 5 and Appendix 6 of the report);
- (9) to note the likely capital re-profiling of spend and earmarked resources to be carried forward from 2022/23 into 2023/24 to fund the completion of the existing capital projects; and
- (10) to note the indicative capital programmes for 2024/25 to 2025/26 and indicative constituent contributions, based upon current GAE allocations, and that requests for final approval will be requested year on year going forward.

REVIEW OF SUPPORT SERVICES AGREEMENT

A report was submitted by the Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer presenting a revised version of the Support Services Agreement between the Joint Board and West Dunbartonshire Council.

Having heard the Assessor & ERO in further explanation of the report, the Joint Board approved the signing of the revised Support Service Agreement.

SCHEME OF DELEGATED POWERS

A report was submitted by the Clerk to the Joint Board seeking approval of a revised Scheme of Delegated Powers.

Having heard the Assessor & ERO in further explanation of the report, the Joint Board approved the revised Scheme of Delegated Powers which formed Appendix 1 to the report.

NON-DOMESTIC RATING AND COUNCIL TAX VALUATION UPDATE

A report was submitted by the Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer advising:-

- (a) of the preparations being made for the 2023 general Revaluation of all non-domestic property;
- (b) of on-going activities to implement the Non-Domestic Rating (Scotland) Act 2020 and the recommendations of the 'Barclay' Review;
- (c) of progress in relation to maintenance of the Non-Domestic Rating (NDR) valuation roll;
- (d) of progress in relation to the disposal of Revaluation and 'running roll' appeals; and
- (e) of progress in relation to the Assessor's Council Tax valuation function.

Having heard the Assessor & ERO in further explanation of the report, the Joint Board agreed:-

- (1) to note the ongoing preparations for the 2023 Revaluation;
- (2) to note the progress and planning which is ongoing to effect the Non-Domestic Rating (Scotland) Act and the recommendations of the 'Barclay' Review including the transfer of the powers of the local Valuation Appeal Committees to the First Tier Tribunal of the Local Taxation Chamber of the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service;

- (3) to note the progress in relation to the general maintenance of the Valuation Roll and the disposal of both 'running roll' appeals and appeals that are before the Lands Tribunal; and
- (4) to note the progress in relation to the general maintenance of the Council Tax List, including the disposal of Council Tax proposals and appeals.

ELECTORAL REGISTRATION PROGRESS

A report was submitted by the Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer providing an update on the current position in relation to Electoral Registration.

Having heard the Assessor & ERO in further explanation of the report, the Joint Board agreed to note the content of the report.

CODE OF GOOD GOVERNANCE – ANNUAL SELF-ASSESSMENT

A report was submitted by the Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer:-

- (a) providing information on the completion of the Joint Board's annual Local Code of Good Governance self-assessment for 2022;
- (b) seeking approval of the Action Plan arising from the self-assessment; and
- (c) advising of the progress made in completing or progressing a number of actions contained in the Plan.

Having heard the Assessor & ERO in further explanation of the report and in answer to Members' questions, the Joint Board agreed:-

- (1) to note the completion of the 2022 self-assessment of the Joint Board's compliance with best practice in Good Governance;
- (2) to approve the 2022/23 Good Governance Action Plan; and
- (3) to note that a number of the actions contained within the Plan have now been completed.

WORKFORCE PLANNING

A report was submitted by the Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer:-

- (a) advising of progress in relation to Workforce Planning within the Joint Board; and
- (b) seeking approval of a Workforce Plan for 2023/24.

Having heard the Assessor & ERO in further explanation of the report and in answer to Members' questions, the Joint Board agreed:-

- (1) to note the progress in relation to implementing the 2022/23 Workforce Plan;
- (2) to note the high level of employee turnover experienced during the last number of years;
- (3) to approve the 2023/24 Workforce Plan; and
- (4) to note that progress will be monitored and evaluated and further actions would be taken as circumstances require.

PRINT AND MAIL SERVICES CONTRACT

A report was submitted by the Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer seeking approval to authorise the Assessor & ERO, in consultation with the Clerk and/or Treasurer of the Joint Board, to conclude the award of the contract for Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute Valuation Joint Board's Print and Mail Services.

Having heard the Assessor & ERO in further explanation of the report, the Joint Board agreed:-

- (1) to authorise the Assessor & ERO in consultation with the Clerk and/or Treasurer to conclude the award of the contract for Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute Valuation Joint Board - Print and Mail Services to the preferred bidder following completion of the tender evaluation process; and
- (2) to note that the contract shall be for a period of two years, with the option to extend a further 12 months, and that the estimated commencement date of the contract was 1 June 2023.

PERSONNEL – HM THE KING'S CORONATION

A report was submitted by the Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer seeking approval of an additional day of paid leave for employees of the Joint Board on Monday, 8 May 2023 to facilitate celebrations to mark the Coronation of HM King Charles III.

Having heard the Assessor & ERO in further explanation of the report, the Joint Board agreed to approve Monday, 8 May 2023 as a day of paid leave.

The meeting closed at 11.22 a.m.

DUNBARTONSHIRE and ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD**Report by Treasurer****Valuation Joint Board - 23 June 2023**

Subject: Draft Annual Accounts for Year Ending 31 March 2023**1. Purpose**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present to the Board the Draft Annual Accounts for the year ending 31 March 2023.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014 (the accounts regulations) came into force on 10 October 2014 and introduced best practice expectations on:
- (a) the Draft Annual Accounts being reported to the Board for formal consideration prior to submission to External Auditors for audit by 30 June each year; and
 - (b) the notice of public right to inspect and object to the Financial Statements to commence no later than 16 June with the accounts available for inspection by 1 July each year.
- 2.2 A Balance and Reserve Policy was approved by the Board at its meeting in November 2012. The Board's Prudential Reserve Policy is to retain a prudential target of 2% of net expenditure (22/23 £0.062m) or £0.100m whichever is higher.

3. Main Issues

- 3.1 The draft Annual Report and Final Accounts for year ended 31 March 2023 are appended to this report.
- 3.2 The Management Commentary (pages 2 to 18) consists of an annual report from the Assessor and Treasurer on matters of interest including financial and non-financial performance during the year, service changes and developments, impact of financial climate and risks, provisions and contingencies.
- 3.3 Members' attention is drawn to the Statement of Responsibilities on pages 23 and 24.
- 3.4 The Annual Governance Statement is included on pages 25 to 28. This Statement assures stakeholders on how the Board directs and controls its functions and how it relates to communities which will enhance transparency and scrutiny of the Board's activities.

3.5 The Management Commentary summarises the financial position of the Board. The Board's 2022/23 budget was constructed to break even using £0.293m of balances (including Earmarked Barclay Funding carried forward from 2021/22). However, the Board completed the year with an underspend against budget of £0.219m; meaning only £0.074m of reserves were utilised in year to balance the account. The main variances are shown in the table below:

Spend Area	Variance £000	Comments
Employee	(140)	The favourable variance is mainly due to an increased rate of resignations and retirements along with delays in filling some vacancies, partly due to difficulties in attracting appropriate candidates.
Transport	(22)	Staff travel and subsistence has yet to return to pre-COVID levels.
Supplies & Services	(28)	One of the main reasons is an underspend on the costs associated with the Land Val Appeal Court which are dependent upon the number VAC cases that proceed to hearing and the number of Lands Tribunal Referrals made. The other main reason is a reduction in demand led running costs i.e. printing, stationery and postages which fluctuate year on year.
Grant Income	(20)	The Board credited £0.013m of SPE grant carried forward within West Dunbartonshire Council Reserves and was in receipt of £0.007m new funding from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities.

3.6 As at 31 March 2023, the Board held usable reserves as noted below:

	£000
Restated Opening Balance at 1 April 2022	902
Revenue Gains/(Losses) on the fund	(74)
Closing Balance at 31 March 2023	828
Earmarked Balances:	
2023/24 Budget	(432)
DLUHC Funding	(7)
Barclay Review Funding	(37)
Total Earmarked Balance	(476)
Total General Reserves (incl. £0.100m prudential reserve)	352

3.7 The Board recognises the financial climate facing public services and has continued to seek efficiencies when possible. The requisition made by the Board for 2022/23 remained at 2021/22 level.

3.8 The Scottish Government continues to provide funding to cover the costs of implementing the recommendations of the Barclay Review.

For 2022/23, £0.181m was provided by the Government in year, adding to the underspend carried from 2021/22 bringing the total Barclay funding available to £0.239m. The Board was unable to utilise the full grant resulting in an underspend of £0.037m. This underspend has been identified as an earmarked reserve as shown at 3.6 above and will be carried forward into 2023/24.

- 3.9** Further to 3.8 above, the grant funding provided by Scottish Government was not exhausted by expenditure on the 2021 Scottish Parliamentary Election, with a carry forward of grant available to spend within 2022/23 of £0.039m. The Scottish Government has confirmed that this balance is to be made available for ERO expenditure. The Board made use of £0.013m of this funding in 2022/23; carrying forward the underspend within West Dunbartonshire Council's Reserves of £0.026m into 2023/24.
- 3.10** The Board also received £0.007m from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities in relation to the additional costs associated with the implementation of the Elections Act 2022, specifically the Voter Identification Regulations and the Assistance with Voting for Persons with Disabilities (Amendments) Regulation 2022. This grant will be carried forward into 2023/24 as an earmarked reserve also shown at 3.6 above.
- 3.11** Information regarding the Pension Scheme has been obtained in the same manner as customary, via the actuarial report provided by Hymans Robertson LLP. Figures show that the net pension asset, which is shown within the balance sheet on page 33, has significantly increased from £0.507m (2021/22) to £8.032m; an increase of £7.525m. The main reason for this increase, is due to the large increase in the discount factor resulting in a large reduction in the value placed on the pension obligations and in short, means that the value of the pension assets are far more than the liabilities creating a net surplus. However, under the Accounting Standard, there is a limit on the amount of surplus which can be recognised in the balance sheet. The limit depends on factors unique to each Employer and the Employer will have to choose if and how to recognise any surplus in their published accounts.
- 3.12** Ongoing discussions with External Audit, suggest not showing the asset on the Balance Sheet, with the expectation for additional calculations to be carried out by the Actuaries. The outcome of this, may mean a change to the Balance Sheet between the draft accounts appended and final audited accounts.
- 3.13** Details of the pension benefits of Senior Employees is provided within Table 4 of the appended accounts. The figures to complete this table, namely the pension and accrued pension benefits lump sum have yet to be received, however, these figures will be updated for the publication of the draft accounts by the end of June.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

- 4.1** The finances of the Board have been closely managed during 2022/23 allowing a better financial position to be achieved than had been planned. This will assist with financial planning in the future.

4.2 Members are requested to note:

- (i) the contents of the report and the financial position of the Board as at 31 March 2023;
- (ii) the Draft Management Commentary and Financial Statements for the year to 31 March 2023; and
- (iii) that the audited accounts will be reported to a future meeting for approval.

Laurence Slavin

Treasurer

Date: 23 June 2023

Person(s) to Contact: Janine Corr, Accountant
West Dunbartonshire Council
Email:janine.corr@west-dunbarton.gov.uk

Appendices: Appendix 1 - Draft Annual Accounts for year ended 31 March 2023



*Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute
Valuation Joint Board*

DRAFT

ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

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**DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023**

JOINT BOARD MEMBERS AND OFFICIALS AS AT 31 MARCH 2023

ARGYLL & BUTE COUNCIL

Councillor Graham Archibald Hardie
Councillor Paul Donald Kennedy
Councillor Iain James MacQuire
Councillor Iain Shonny Paterson
Councillor Peter Wallace

EAST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Councillor Vaughan Moody (Convenor)
Councillor Stewart MacDonald
Councillor Jim Gibbons
Councillor Willie Paterson
Councillor Andrew Polson
Councillor Calum Smith

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Councillor John Millar
Councillor Jonathan McColl
Councillor Lawrence O'Neill
Councillor Karen Conaghan
Councillor Gurpreet Singh Johal

OFFICIALS

Russell Hewton (Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer)
Darryl Rae (Depute Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer)
Alan Douglas (Clerk)
Laurence Slavin (Treasurer)

**DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023**

MANAGEMENT COMMENTARY

GENERAL SERVICE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute Valuation Joint Board (the Board) is an independent local government body which was established by The Valuation Joint Boards (Scotland) Order 1995. We professionally compile and maintain the Valuation Rolls, Council Tax Valuation Lists and Registers of Electors for the Argyll & Bute, East Dunbartonshire and West Dunbartonshire Council areas.

OUR AIMS

Building on our established professionalism, we aim to provide high quality, transparent, effective and responsive services to all of our stakeholders.

COMMITMENTS

Within the constraints of the continuing tight public finance regime, we are committed to:

- Consulting our stakeholders, and listening and responding to their views.
- Valuing staff and providing them with opportunities to develop and contribute.
- Reacting innovatively to change.
- Encouraging innovation and recognising achievement within the organisation.
- Treating all stakeholders, including staff, in a fair, consistent manner.
- Striving for continuous improvement in all aspects of service delivery.
- Ensuring that we are accessible and accountable to stakeholders.
- Pro-actively planning workloads and deploying resources efficiently.
- Using language which is easy to understand.
- Using and caring for the data we hold in an appropriate way.
- Working with our partners in the Scottish Assessors' Association (SAA) to ensure transparency and Scotland-wide consistency of approach to service delivery.

**DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023**

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report comprises the Board's Management Commentary to the Annual Accounts in relation to the 2022/23 financial year.

The main purpose of this Management Commentary is to inform all users of the accounts and to help them assess how the Board perform their duty to promote the success of the Board. This Management Commentary also summarises the functions and activities of the office of the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) over the past year and provides information on the performance levels achieved in carrying out the statutory duties of the organisation.

The requirements governing the format and content of local authorities' annual accounts (under s106 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 joint boards and committees are to be treated as local authorities) are contained in The Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom (the "Code").

Throughout the year the operation, management and services of the Board continued to be affected, to varying extents by the COVID pandemic and the Government guidelines and restrictions introduced to control the outbreak. Notwithstanding, the main statutory duties of the Assessor and ERO were complied with. For most of the year, our employees operated with a mix of home and office working. From the start of February, our teams returned to office working, with the exception of those who have agreed agile working patterns through the recently agreed DABVJB Agile Working Policy.

The Non-Domestic Rates (Scotland) Act (2020), provided for substantial change in the Non-Domestic Rating (NDR) system. During the year, a raft of new secondary legislation was brought in to law. This has now provided clarity as to how many of the new processes will work. With each change, time is required to digest new legislation, formulate or review processes and procedures, implement system changes, and train our teams. Very often new legislation leaves little time for this process, before the new law comes in to force.

The Council Tax (Dwellings and Part Residential Subjects) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2021 implemented a requirement that, from April 2022, to be classed as self-catering holiday accommodation, premises must actually be let for at least 70 days in the financial year as well as the existing requirement of an intention to let for 140 days or more. Towards the end of March, requests for information were sent out to almost 2,500 ratepayers, seeking details which will allow us to test whether the new requirements were satisfied. This new requirement must be undertaken annually and is proving to be resource intensive. Where information is received, this must be checked against the requirement of legislation. Where no response is received, our teams will need to remove properties from the Non-Domestic Valuation Rolls, and add them to the Council Tax Valuation Lists with an appropriate band.

Maintenance activity in relation to the Council Tax List remained higher than in recent years, arising from an increase in new housing availability. A backlog of Council Tax Proposals and Appeals which built up during the pandemic are now being progressed.

The annual Electoral Register was published on 1 December 2022 following the annual canvass. Following the enactment of the Elections Act 2022, new processes and procedures are being rolled out. The first of these to effect the Electoral Registration function, was the roll out of Voter ID requirements for certain polls. Electors without recognised forms of official ID can now apply to the ERO for a Voter Authority Certificate (VAC). Our teams now have processes and procedures in place to receive and action applications for these.

**DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023**

The Management Team continues to be the main forum for decision making within the organisation. It met regularly throughout 2022/23 to manage statutory functions and operations, and develop, implement and monitor policies and strategies. Personnel changes within the Senior Management Team were reflective of a year in which recruitment was a virtual constant. 2022/23 welcomed the appointment of a new Depute Assessor & ERO in March 2023, with the previous Depute gaining promotion into the Assessor & ERO post, following the retirement of the long standing previous Assessor & ERO in January 2023.

2.0 GENERAL PROGRESS IN RELATION TO STATUTORY FUNCTIONS

2.1 NON-DOMESTIC RATING

Aims

- To carry out a general revaluation as required by law, currently every 3 years.
- To timeously compile and maintain the Valuation Roll in accordance with the relevant legislation, to take account of new properties, properties which should no longer be entered in the roll, properties which have been altered, changes to the parties shown in the Roll and other changes arising from statute or other decisions of the Courts.
- To consolidate or improve upon the time taken between the date on which amendments to the Valuation Roll are effective and the date on which the Valuation Notice is issued.
- To publish the annual Valuation Roll and make it available to interested parties.
- To deal with proposals made by ratepayers following amendments made to Valuation Rolls by providing responses to grounds and evidence submitted. Where required, to prepare and present cases where decisions are appealed through the Courts and Tribunals Service.

2017 Revaluation

Subsequent to the 2017 revaluation, 3,569 appeals were submitted against the values of 3,460 subjects, reflecting an appealed Rateable Value (RV) of £252,557,705. The statutory date for disposal of these appeals by Valuation Appeal Committees was, after amendment, 31 December 2021.

By the statutory disposal date of 31 December 2021, 3,458 Revaluation appeals, representing 97% of those submitted, had been disposed of. Of the appeals disposed of, 67.7% were withdrawn and 32.3% were adjusted. The remaining 111 Revaluation appeals were referred to the Lands Tribunal for Scotland and therefore fall out of the general disposal schedule. Work continues on the disposal of these more complex appeals, with 59 now outstanding.

Maintenance of the Valuation Roll

The Valuation Roll was updated to take account of additions, alterations and deletions. 847 amendments were made during the year. The change year-on-year is summarised as follows:

Total No of entries @ 1st April 2022	15,207
Total Rateable Value @ 1st April 2022	£365.5 million
Total Number of entries @ 31st March 2023	15,134
Total Rateable Value @ 31st March 2023	£367.1 million

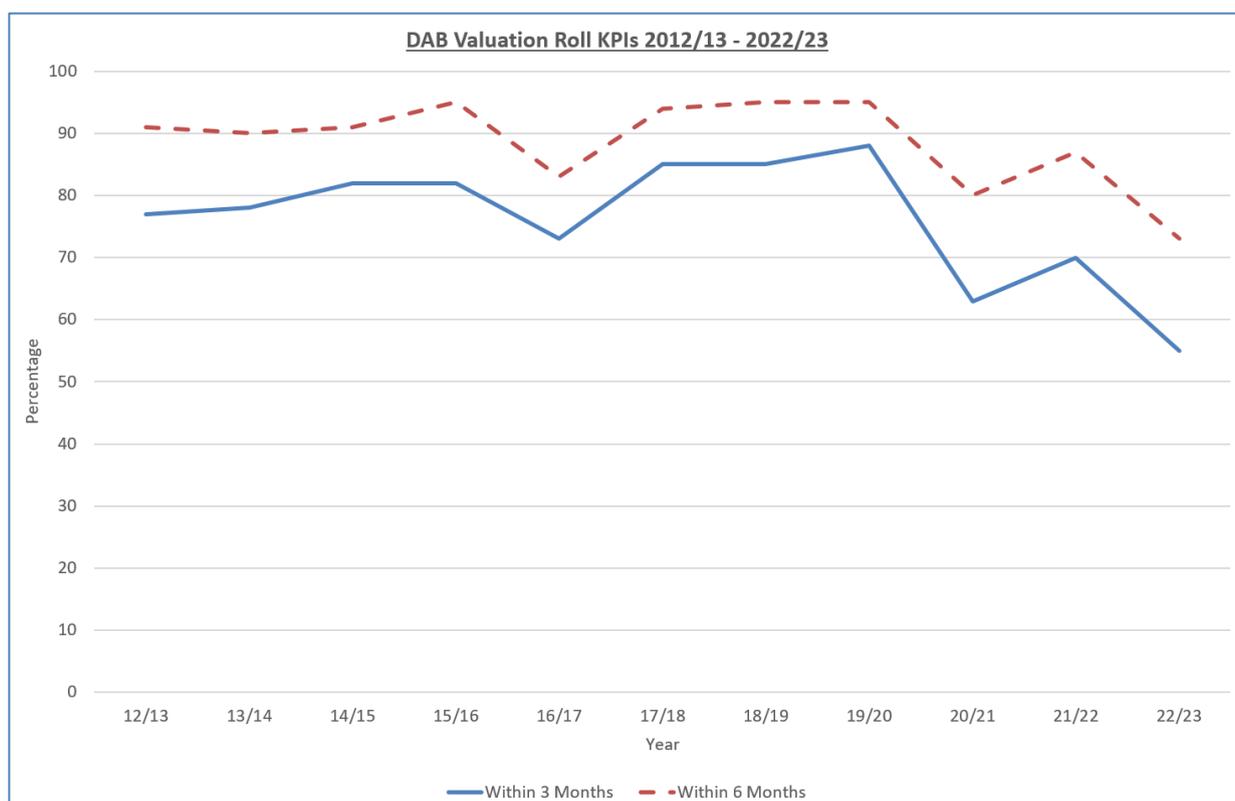
The national Key Performance Indicator in relation to non-domestic valuation is the time taken from the effective date of amendments to the date a Valuation Notice in respect of each change is issued. The following table sets out the targets and actual performance information for 2022/23:

**DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
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Period	DABVJB Actual 2022/23	Target 2022/23	All Scotland 2022/23
0-3 months	55%	70%	52%
3-6 months	18%	20%	19%
>6 months	27%	10%	29%

Performance in the last year slipped from the previous year. Ongoing restrictions on survey, home working and, most significantly, loss of staff and recruitment issues contributed to this drop, although the main workstream which was hugely resource intensive was the delivery of the 2023 Revaluation. Thus, our targets were not achieved.

The pattern of performance over a longer period is shown below. The dip in performance in 2016/17 is in line with the timing of the delivery of the 2017 Revaluation, albeit there was a 2 year run in (from the tone valuation date of 1 April 2015) in that instance. The 2023 Revaluation was delivered in a single year from the tone valuation date of 1 April 2022.



Lands Tribunal – 2005 and 2010 Appeals

Appeals which have been referred to the Lands Tribunal are of a complex nature or are likely to have national implications. At 31 March 2023, 4 appeals remain outstanding from the 2005 cycle and 19 appeals from the 2010 cycle.

2017 Running Roll Appeals

The number of roll appeals outstanding as at the 31 March 2023 was 1,520; the vast majority of which relate to the COVID outbreak.

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Number of appeals brought forward	4,891
Disposals	(3,462)
New appeals received	91
Number of appeals carried forward	1,520

In September 2021, the Scottish Government laid The Valuation and Rating (Coronavirus) (Scotland) Order 2021 which requires that, in calculating the rateable value of any lands and heritages, no account is to be taken of any matter arising directly or indirectly attributable to COVID. This Order took effect from 1 April 2021, effectively nullifying COVID related appeals made since that date.

The Scottish Government enacted the Non-Domestic Rates (Coronavirus) (Scotland) Act 2022. This has a similar effect to the 2021 Order but with effect from 2 April 2020.

The deadline for disposal of NDR appeals lodged after 1 January 2020 (until 31 March 2023) has again been extended, the most recent extension being until 31 December 2024.

Revaluation 2023

The next Revaluation took effect on 1 April 2023 with a valuation date of 1 April 2022.

The past year was subsumed with preparations for the Revaluation. The ingathering of rental information and subsequent analysis of these was undertaken, with our teams gaining an understanding of the property market at the valuation date. Other property specific information, including throughput/turnovers, building cost information, and details on usage levels were also collated and analysed, and used to inform valuations.

Much of this information was shared with other Assessors offices to allow the production of SAA Practice Notes, which provide for consistent approaches to the valuation of over 100 categories of property. Eight of these nationally used Practice Notes were authored by the Board's staff.

Certain public parks, parts of parks and buildings within parks which were previously exempt from entry in Valuation Rolls, are now contained within Valuation Rolls from 1 April 2023. Our teams were able to identify, using various different sources, 78 such subjects which then required survey and valuation for entry in the new Roll.

A further new obligation from the Barclay Reforms saw the creation of a Draft Valuation Roll for the first time. Our teams delivered this by the 30 November 2022 deadline, within only 8 months of the valuation date. Draft Valuation Notices were subsequently issued, and draft values published on the Assessors' portal. Another new feature followed; a period whereby ratepayers could make representations to Assessors on their draft valuations. This new additional workload proved time consuming for our teams, however all representations received prior to the cut-off for preparation of the publication of the Final Revaluation Roll on 15 March 2023 were considered. Final Valuation Notices were issued on 31 March 2023.

Revaluation 2026

Following review meetings with our teams, steps are in place to detail the actions we will take to deliver the next Revaluation on 1 April 2026, with a valuation date of 1 April 2025.

Other Non-Domestic Rating Reform

The introduction of a new 2-stage 'proposals' and 'appeals' process, which was scheduled to come into force on 1 April 2022 was delayed until 1 January 2023, to coincide with the transfer date of the functions of the local Valuation Appeal Panels to the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service. Extensive work has been carried out to ready our systems and processes for dealing with these new procedures.

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Significant progress has been made towards making valuation details available at the Scottish Assessors web portal for a wider range of subjects than was previously the case. Currently around 11,240 (73%) subjects have their valuations available to view. This number is likely to increase as work on this project continues toward the 2026 Revaluation.

The SAA Portal now enables ratepayers to view rented property lists – these allow them to see what comparable subjects have been used to value their property. The list of property types that require such a list are prescribed in law. Our teams delivered this new obligation for the 2023 Revaluation.

The 2022/23 Scottish Government grant funding which was made available to fund new burdens brought in by NDR Reform, including the amount carried forward from 2021/22, was not fully exhausted and the underspend will be carried forward into 2023/24. Future funding to cover these continuing new burdens has been cut by £80,323 for the year 2023/24. How these new burdens will be funded thereafter remains unclear.

2.2 COUNCIL TAX

Aims

- To maintain the Valuation List in accordance with the relevant legislation, to take account of new properties, properties which should no longer be entered in the List, properties which have been altered and sold, and other changes arising from statute or other decisions of the Courts;
- To maintain or improve upon the time taken between the date that amendments to the Valuation List are effective and the date the Banding Notices are issued;
- To publish the Valuation List, make it available to interested parties;
- To deal with proposals/appeals by discussion with ratepayers or their agents, or by hearing of appeals before the appropriate court or tribunal; and
- To keep property records up to date to take account of alterations.

Maintenance of Valuation List

The year to 31 March 2023 saw 1,231 additions to the Council Tax List and a net increase in the number of dwellings shown in the Council Tax List as follows:

Total Number of entries @ 1st April 2022	147,021
Additions	1,231
Deletions	(279)
Total Number of entries @ 31st March 2023	147,973

The number of additions in the year remains at a high level.

Year	Additions to Council Tax List	Deletions from Council Tax List
2022/23	1,231	279
2021/22	1,395	505
2020/21	917	378
2019/20	1,061	787
2018/19	992	546
2017/18	832	450

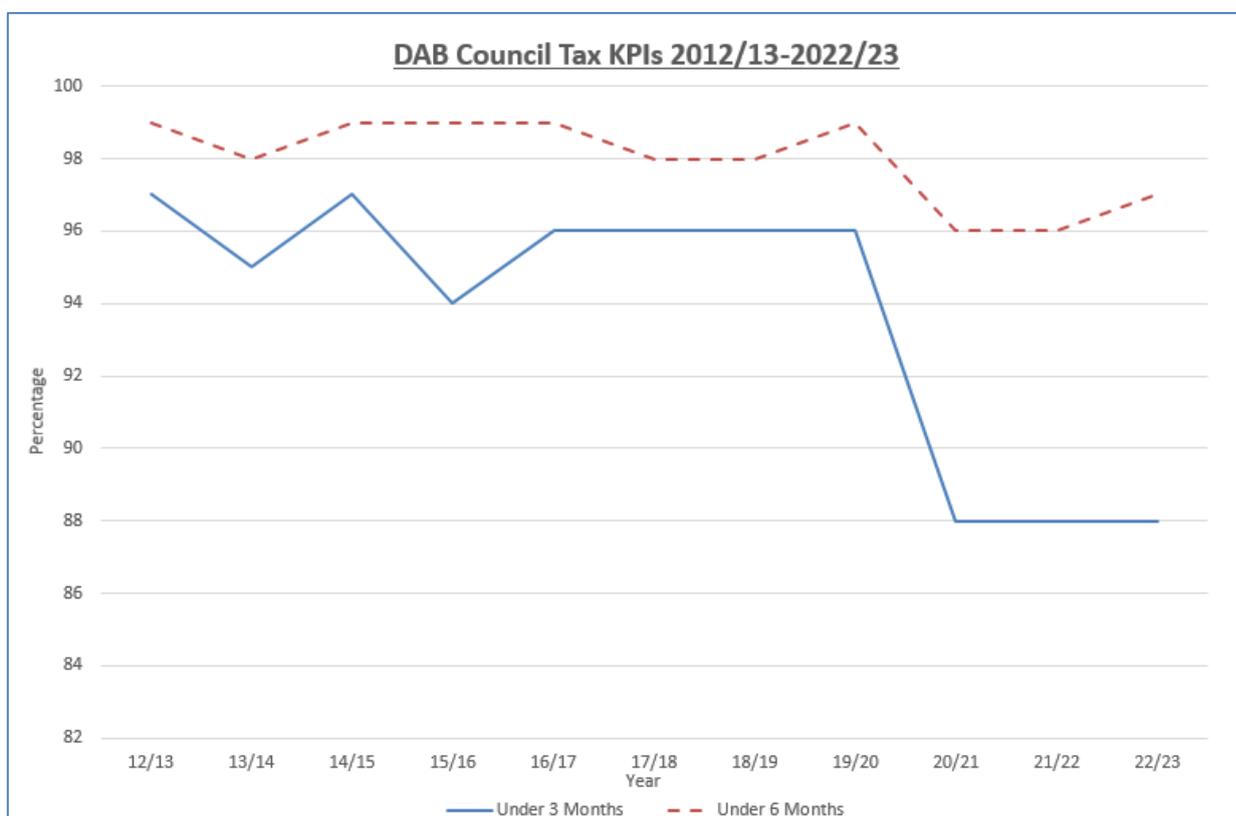
The national Key Performance Indicator in relation to Council Tax valuation is the time taken from the effective date of additions to the Valuation List to the date a Banding Notice in respect of each new entry is issued.

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The table sets out the target and actual performance information for 2022/23 compared with the actual figures for 2021/22. The table shows that performance was very much in line with 2021/22, narrowly missing our first target.

Period	DABVJB Actual 2021/22	DABVJB Target 2022/23	2022/23	
			DABVJB Actual	All Scotland Actual
Under 3 months	88%	90%	88%	84%
Under 6 months	96%	95%	97%	95%

The pattern of performance over a longer period is shown below. As with maintenance of the Valuation Roll, performance in this area of operation continued to be affected by the COVID restrictions and the extensive work on Revaluation and Barclay Reforms, as illustrated in the following chart:



Proposals and Appeals

During the year, 177 new proposals to alter entries in the Council Tax List were received and 136 proposals and appeals were disposed of, leaving 383 outstanding at the end of the year.

	2022/23	2021/22
Number of Proposals and Appeals brought forward	342	310
Disposals	(136)	(154)
New Proposals	177	186
Number of Proposals and Appeals carried forward	383	342

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2.3 ELECTORAL REGISTRATION

Aims

- To timeously compile and maintain the Electoral Register in accordance with the relevant legislation;
- To deal promptly with all new applications to register;
- To deal with applications for absent votes, collect and securely store Personal Identifiers and maintain relevant Absent Voters lists;
- To produce, distribute and make available for sale, copies of the Electoral Register in accordance with statutory arrangements and Electoral Commission performance standards;
- To encourage Electoral Registration in the three constituent Council areas; and
- To support the efficient running of electoral events within the Board area.

Electoral Registration and Publication of the Register

The Representation of the People (Annual Canvass) (Amendment) Regulations 2019 and The Representation of the People (Annual Canvass) (Miscellaneous Amendments) (Scotland) Regulations 2020 made provision for reform of the annual electoral canvass process to be amended in 2020. Since then, households where the electors have been data matched to either national or local data sources, received 'route 1' correspondence which do not require a response unless the elector details needed to be updated or changed. Households where the register did not match to other data sources, received 'route 2' correspondence which do require a response. A further, 'route 3' option to contact 'responsible persons' in establishments such as care homes was also effected.

EROs remain duty bound to make a 'personal contact' to households that do not make a response to a 'route 2' or 'route 3' form. As a result, a full door knock, amounting to visits to 20,913 households (15,144 in 2021), was carried out.

The return rates for Route 2 and Route 3 properties are shown below compared to the figures for 2021:

Local Authority	2021 canvass		2022 canvass	
	'Route 2/3' Forms issued	Return Rate	'Route 2/3' Forms issued	Return Rate
Argyll and Bute Council	8,300	50.83%	16,179	55.51%
East Dunbartonshire Council	7,079	55.22%	10,962	50.88%
West Dunbartonshire Council	9,706	30.54%	11,901	35.62%
Total	25,085	44.22%	39,042	47.89%

Several methods of making returns were offered to electors and a summary of the returns is shown below:

Method of Response	2021 Canvass		2022 Canvass	
	No of Returns	% age return	No of Returns	% age return
Post	3,684	14.7%	6204	6.48%
Electronic (web/phone/SMS)	5,656	22.5%	36,054	37.66%
Phone/Email contact	366	1.5%	662	0.68%
Door-to-door canvass	684	2.7%	1,079	1.13%
Verified as second home/long term empty	697	2.8%	1,847	1.93%
Returned/Empty/ Other	5	0.02%	6	0.01%
Total	11,092	44.22%	45,852	47.89%

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At publication on 1 December 2022, the electorate was 225,626 broken down as follows:-

Local Authority	Electorate
Argyll & Bute	69,693
East Dunbartonshire	87,091
West Dunbartonshire	68,842

The total electorate figure has fallen back since the peak level in November 2021.

Year	No of Electors
2022	225,626
2021	229,336
2020	224,800
2019	219,861
2018	219,637
2017	222,507
2016	221,078
2015	218,668

Absent Voters

The general downward trend in Absent Voter numbers since Individual Electoral Registration (IER) was introduced was reversed significantly in the run up to the Scottish Parliament Election (SPE) in May 2021, when a surge in applications related to the COVID outbreak increased the number of Absent Voters on the register. With significant numbers of these Absent Voters having opted to vote that way in that single event, Absent Voter numbers continue to fall from the peak year.

Year	No of Absent Voters
2022	46,058
2021	47,313
April 2021	49,846
2020	33,595
2019	33,916
2018	34,110
2017	35,918
2016	37,764
2015	38,376

Rolling Registration

Rolling Registration is the process of making changes to the register by way of monthly update. Previously, these updates were effected out with the canvass period but, since 2020, rolling registration procedures have run right through the canvass period. It is therefore no longer possible to split the annual changes arising from canvass and those arising specifically from rolling registration activities. During the financial year to March 2023, there were 12,285 additions, 12,854 deletions and 337 other amendments made to the registers for the Board area.

Electoral Performance

The Electoral Commission has now launched its revised Performance Standards regime and the SAA has agreed a set of KPIs to help benchmark services with a view to improving performance. Our first set of performance statistics were collated following publication of registers in December.

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Elections Act

The Act received Royal Assent in May 2022. Secondary legislation, which will provide many of the details of the administrative processes, is at various different stages.

This is a very significant piece of legislation that includes:-

- The requirement to provide Voter Identification (ID) to vote at reserved elections. This will require the production and distribution of Voter ID cards by the ERO where electors do not hold relevant approved documents. This service launched in January, although there are currently no polls in Scotland where Voter ID is required yet. That will follow later this year, and will be fully in place by October.
- Absent Voters on the UK Parliamentary Register will be required to reapply for their absent votes every three years. Alongside this, the ability to apply for an absent vote using an online service will be launched, although this will only apply to UK Parliamentary Registers.
- The extension of the overseas voting franchise by removal of the existing 15 year limit on overseas electors' right to vote in UK Parliamentary elections.

A small amount of funding (£0.007m) has been made available from the UK Government to support the ERO in implementing these changes.

Elections

Support was provided to Returning Officers who ran Local Government elections in May 2022.

In a similar fashion to the Scottish Parliamentary Elections in 2021, a Household Notification Letter was issued to each household in January 2022. Although there was a resultant rise in registration and absent vote application numbers, the impact was less significant than it had been the previous year.

All deadlines for supply of data for issue of poll cards and postal ballot packs to Returning Officers were achieved. On polling day, our staff covered the registration office throughout polling hours. 36 emergency proxy applications were approved in the lead up to the poll, with half of these being for Covid related reasons.

The follow up process for postal ballot papers which contained invalid signature or date of birth (or both), commenced on 26 May 2022 with a rejection notice being issued. A total of 402 notices were issued, with a reminder (97) being issued in June. No response was received to 22 notices, and in these cases, the elector was sent a removal of absent vote notice.

The team also supported National Park elections in July, and other by-elections and Community Council elections throughout the year.

3.0 GENERAL PROGRESS IN RELATION TO OTHER MATTERS

3.1 INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

IT and Computer Provision

Computers and IT systems continue to be maintained and upgraded in accordance with the Board's IT Strategy and the recommendations from West Dunbartonshire Council's ICT Service.

To facilitate the 2023 Revaluation, new systems for the analysis of rentals across the retail, office and industrial sectors were developed during the year.

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Additionally processes allowing the more efficient authorisation and the subsequent automatic population of the draft Revaluation Roll were implemented for almost all subjects.

The redevelopment of NDR systems to accommodate NDR reforms remains an ongoing focus for our ICT staff. Whilst the expansion of the portal valuations and the provision of rented property lists at the SAA portal occupied a great deal of time up until the publication of the Roll, focus thereafter shifted to a redevelopment of our proposal (appeal) handling system, to allow us to process proposals in line with new legislation.

Our Electoral Management System was upgraded several times throughout the year to provide functionality improvements and ensure continued compliance with requirements. The latest change introduced functionality in relation to Voter Authority Certificates. Our team continue to liaise with the supplier regularly.

We have continued to participate in the Scottish Assessors' web portal's Project Management Committee, Project Team and Working Groups to enhance the site (www.saa.gov.uk). In addition to a wider range of portal valuations, and rented property lists, a great deal of work was done to allow users the ability to submit proposals online, along with the necessary supporting evidence. A bulk submission system has also been launched for users with larger portfolios.

3.2 BEST VALUE

Key Performance Indicators and Public Performance Reporting

Performance in respect of Valuation Roll and Council Tax Key Performance Indicators is reported above. Our 2021/22 Public Performance Report was published during the year on our web site (www.saa.gov.uk/dab-vjb/).

Performance Management and Planning

The Management Team continues to be the main forum for planning and management of performance. In accordance with our Performance and Management Planning process, a number of actions were taken, or were ongoing, during 2022/23 which are detailed in the Annual Governance Statement on pages 25 to 28.

Audit

An internal audit took place during the year which focused on new digital processes introduced as a result of the pandemic. The final report made recommendations in three areas. Two of these have been fully addressed, and the third (due to the volume of work needed) is ongoing. The audit highlighted many inadequacies of the Assessors core system. The management team have begun investigating options to address these issues.

Customer Satisfaction

The process of seeking customer feedback was altered during the year. Instead of posting paper forms to random samples of users of the Board's services to seek their perception of the service provided to them, a link to our online form is now attached to most outgoing items of mail.

A summary of the results for the year is provided below:

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Was the person with whom you communicated professional, courteous and helpful?	94%	98%	92%	97%	94%
Was the matter brought to a satisfactory conclusion immediately?	60%	61%	56%	64%	64%
Was the matter brought to a satisfactory conclusion?	93%	97%	89%	94%	94%

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Are you satisfied with the quality of the information or advice given to you?	93%	96%	90%	96%	93%
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No Customer Satisfaction forms were requested in alternative languages, Braille or other formats. Sample sizes within the various equalities groups were generally too small to draw firm conclusions. The results are monitored by management with any apparent variations within any of the groups with protected characteristics being followed up to ensure that we are carrying out our functions in a fair and equitable manner.

Complaints Procedure

The Board has, for some time, operated a Complaints Procedure which is in line with the Public Sector Ombudsman’s Model Complaints Handling Procedure (MCHP) and new procedures were introduced on 1 April 2021 in line with the SPSO’s Revised MCHP.

There were four complaints received during 2022/23, compared to eight in 2021/22. All of the complaints were made in respect of Electoral Registration services, and were resolved at the frontline resolution stage. The content and outcome of complaints are discussed at the regular management team meetings and any opportunities for organisational learning are implemented. Quarterly and annual reports on complaints are posted on our website.

Financial Performance

Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement

This account covers the day-to-day operational expenditure of the Board and is shown on page 30 of the Annual Accounts. On an accounting basis the deficit on the provision of service for the financial year reported in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement is £0.456m. However this takes account of Statutory Adjustments between the accounting and funding basis of (£0.382m) as shown in the Expenditure and Funding Analysis table shown on page 42. Thus, resulting in an in-year deficit of £0.074m as summarised below:

	Comprehensive Income & Expenditure Statement £000	Statutory Adjustments £000	Actual £000	Budget £000	Variance £000
Employee Costs	2,705	(388)	2,317	2,457	(140)
Property Costs	126	0	126	128	(2)
Transport Costs	23	0	23	45	(22)
Supplies & Services	275	0	275	303	(28)
Payments to Other Bodies	41	0	41	40	1
Support Services	123	0	123	123	0
Depreciation	14	(14)	0	0	0
Other Costs: (Pensions/Interest)	(8)	8	0	0	0
Total Expenditure	3,299	(394)	2,905	3,096	(191)
Requisition Income	(2,792)	0	(2,792)	(2,792)	0
Capital Income	(12)	12	0	0	0
Grant Income	(20)	0	(20)	0	(20)
Rental Income	(2)	0	(2)	(2)	0
Interest	(7)	0	(7)	0	(7)
Sales, Fees & Charges	(10)	0	(10)	(9)	(1)
Total Income	(2,843)	12	(2,831)	(2,803)	(28)
(Surplus)/Deficit for the year	456	(382)	74	293	(219)

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The main budget variances are shown below:

Spend Area	Variance £000	Comments
Employee	(140)	The favourable variance is mainly due to an increased rate of resignations and retirements along with delays in filling some vacancies, partly due to difficulties in attracting appropriate candidates.
Transport	(22)	Staff travel and subsistence has yet to return to pre-COVID levels.
Supplies & Services	(28)	One of the main reasons is an underspend on the costs associated with the Land Val Appeal Court which are dependent upon the number of VAC cases that proceed to hearing and the number of Lands Tribunal Referrals made. The other main reason is a reduction in demand led running costs ie printing, stationery and postages which fluctuate year on year.
Grant Income	(20)	The Board credited £0.013m of SPE grant carried forward within West Dunbartonshire Council Reserves and was in receipt of £0.007m new funding from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities.

Balance Sheet

The balance sheet shown on page 33 features an assessed pension fund asset based on the valuation of the fund at 31 March 2023 of £8.032m; an increase of £7.525m from the net asset reported last year of £0.507m. The main reason being a large increase in the discount rate (based on financial market conditions at 31 March 2023) which has driven a large reduction in the value placed on the obligations. The appointed actuaries remain of the view that the asset holdings of Strathclyde Pension Scheme and the contributions from employees and employers provide sufficient security and income to meet future pension liabilities.

Further information on the pension fund is provided in note 4 on pages 43 to 47 and the valuation states that assets held at the valuation date were sufficient to cover all of the accrued liabilities. It is considered appropriate that the Annual Accounts should follow a 'going concern' basis of accounting. Statutory arrangements with the constituent local authorities mean that the financial position of the Board remains assured.

General Reserves

At their Board meeting on the 16 November 2012, the Board approved a Balance and Reserves Policy. The Board's Prudential Reserves Policy is to retain a prudential target of 2% of net expenditure (2022/23 £0.062m) or £0.100m, whichever is higher.

Funds held in excess of the prudential target can be spent or earmarked at the discretion of Board Members on behalf of the constituent authorities.

As at 31 March 2023 the Board held total usable reserves of £0.887m (of which £0.059m relates to unapplied capital reserves) with the remaining balance comprising revenue reserves of £0.828m. A proportion of this is identified as an earmarked balance (£0.432m) to balance the 2023/24 budget.

The Board received £0.181m from the Scottish Government passed onto to the board from constituent authorities for the implementation of the Barclay Review. This sum was added to the amount carried forward from 2021/22 of £0.058m, increasing the total budget available to £0.239m. The Board was unable to utilise the full budget, resulting in an underspend of £0.037m. This underspend has also been identified as an earmarked reserve as detailed in note 9 Balances and Reserves.

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The Board also received £0.007m from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities in relation to the additional costs associated with the implementation of the Elections Act 2022, specifically the Voter Identification Regulations and the Assistance with Voting for Persons with Disabilities (Amendments) Regulation 2022. Due to the late notification of this additional money, the Board was unable to utilise this funding, therefore, this grant will be carried forward into 2023/24 as an earmarked reserve, also detailed in note 9 Balances and Reserves.

Once the earmarked balances are accounted for, this leaves £0.352m of general reserves available for future use (including £0.100m prudential reserve as noted above).

The Board recognises the difficult financial climate facing public services and has continued to seek efficiencies where possible. The level of requisition made by the Board for 2022/23 remained the same as 2021/22.

Provisions and Contingencies

The Board is not aware of any eventualities which may have a material effect on the financial position of the Board, and has made no provisions for such eventualities.

Group Annual Accounts

The Board has been determined to have an “associate” relationship with each of its constituent authorities and, as such, the Board’s results have been consolidated into each authority’s group income and expenditure Annual Accounts.

Risk Management

Risk Registers and the resultant Action Plan are revised annually. Inclusions in the Board (Strategic) Risk Register at the 2022 review were:

- The potential for the Board or its statutory officials to fail to meet their respective statutory duties, particularly with so much ongoing legislative change expected in the NDR function.
- The COVID-19 viral pandemic and the government guidance to combat its effects represent significant ongoing risks to the delivery of the Assessor and ERO’s statutory and other functions, and Joint Board employees’ health.
- Current and expected future local government settlements, with static or reduced funding, bring a number of related financial risks and/or risk of failure to meet statutory duties, particularly in light of the changes to NDR and the likely long term effects on public sector funding caused by the COVID outbreak.
- The potential failure to deliver a successful and accurate Revaluation in 2023 and/or implement the changes introduced by the Non-Domestic Rating (NDR) Reform Act.
- The dependency of the Board on ICT for delivery of its statutory functions and service delivery, including the risk of loss of data from these systems.
- The combined effect of the pandemic and tranches of material change of circumstance appeals submitted in March 2020 and March 2021, which must be disposed of by 31 December 2022, have resulted in a build-up of both NDR and Council Tax appeal workload.
- The potential for the Joint Board to fail to meet its duties or to maintain service levels in light of the loss and absence of staff, and associated recruitment difficulties in attracting experienced chartered surveyors.
- There is a risk that the ‘additional burdens’ of the Elections Bill and its secondary legislation cause failure to deliver on ERO’s statutory duties or have negative effects on other areas of service delivery.

As well as the Board Risk Register, which focusses on strategic risks, the Management Team annually review an Operational Risk Register and a number of other risk registers.

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All risks have planned actions to mitigate or minimise each risk and progress against these actions is monitored regularly at Management Team meetings.

3.3 EQUALITIES

The Board's stated Equality 'Outcomes' are:

- We are seen as an inclusive equal opportunities employer where all staff feel valued and respected.
- Our Services meet the needs of, and are accessible, to all members of our community and our staff treat all service users, clients and colleagues with dignity and respect.
- The VJB has a reduced level of gender based occupational segregation.

Analysis of our staff survey, and customer satisfaction surveys throughout the year have indicated no equality issues.

At its meeting in August 2022, the Management Team noted that the recent staff survey informed that no respondents have experienced or reported harassment, discrimination or been disadvantaged because of protected characteristics. All of the respondents think the Board shows a good level of commitment to promoting equality and diversity.

The Board is due to report on progress with equality outcomes in 2023.

3.4 STAFFING MATTERS

Development and Training

During the year, the Board supported 10 of our staff who are undertaking various courses in education which will see them gain a relevant technical or professional qualification relevant to their role. With this figure being around 20% of our workforce, this remains a significant commitment from the organisation to ensuring the continued availability of qualified and experienced staff for the future.

Our recruiting managers carried out training in Recruitment and Selection, and all staff received training and guidance in matters of cyber security and records management.

Our Depute Assessor, who is also our Senior Responsible Officer for Data Protection, gained a practitioners certificate in Data Protection.

Refresher training was provided to all employees on Manual Handling, Equality and Diversity, and Health & Safety.

Workforce Planning/Staffing

Turnover of staff during 2022/23 remained high, with 11 resignations/retirements taking place throughout the year. This represents circa 20% of the total staffing number as at April 2023. During the year, three out of five Senior Management Team posts were filled after becoming vacant.

Various rounds of ongoing recruitment have resulted in replacement appointments to most vacancies but not all to the same posts or with the same qualifications and experience. Particular difficulties have arisen in relation to recruitment of Chartered Surveyors to Valuer posts.

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3.5 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

A 'business as usual' approach has been taken to the majority of requests for information received, but within the year, five requests which specifically referred to the Freedom of Information Act were received.

Two requests related to Electoral Registration and three to NDR. Three requests were responded to in full, one request was refused on the basis of cost, and the final one related to information not held. No responses were subject to a request for Review. There were no recurring requests that could be satisfied by proactive publication of any particular information.

3.6 RECORDS MANAGEMENT

An invitation to make a submission to the Keeper of the Records under the Progress Update Review process by May 2022 was taken up, with an update being provided to the keeper.

The follow up report from the Assessment Team who evaluated the submission reported that they consider that Dunbartonshire and Argyll and Bute Valuation Joint Board continue to take their statutory obligations seriously and are working hard to bring all elements of their Records Management Plan into full compliance with the Act.

3.7 PARTNERSHIPS

The Board is actively involved in several partnerships with one of the most significant of these being the senior staff's membership of the Scottish Assessors' Association. More on the association can be found at <https://www.saa.gov.uk/about-the-saa/>.

Board staff are represented in the Association in all of its Category Committees, in working groups and as authors of Practice Notes. The co-operation and co-ordination of the Association is of critical importance in the completion, and defence of Revaluations.

During 2022/23, the Association was active as a consultative body in relation to secondary legislation arising from the 2020 Non-Domestic Rating (Scotland) Act and in relation to the transfer of powers from Valuation Appeal Committees to the Scottish Courts & Tribunals Service. The SAA has established a project plan for delivering the 2023 Revaluation, NDR reforms and other Barclay requirements.

The planning for, and provision of, Electoral Registration services is assisted by guidance received from the Electoral Commission and the Electoral Management Board for Scotland and by representation within the Association of Electoral Administrators. The Department of Levelling Up, Housing & Communities is an important stakeholder in respect of the modernisation of Electoral Registration services.

The Board obtains all of its 'back-office' functions including human resources, legal support, ICT support and financial services from West Dunbartonshire Council under a Service Level Agreement. Thanks are due to all of the West Dunbartonshire Council officials who support the Board.

**DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
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3.8 CONCLUSION

2022/23 was a year in which the effects of the pandemic, government restrictions and public health continued to affect aspects of our operations, albeit to varying extents, throughout the year. It also saw a time when normal operations resumed, albeit it with new, more modern practices, and more permanent agile working opportunities available for our staff.

The delivery of Local Government Elections was carried out in the context of the continuing effect of the global pandemic, with much having been learned from the Scottish Parliament elections a year prior.

The Elections Act (2022) continued to deliver significant change during 2022 and 2023 including the introduction of Voter ID cards.

Moving goalposts in relation to NDR reforms, the transfer of powers from Valuation Appeals Committees to the Tribunals Service, and the Government's various efforts to contain the effects of COVID-related NDR appeals have resulted in an almost constant sea of change, both during 2022/23 and forthcoming, in relation to NDR.

This amount of change has had to be planned for, implemented and managed in the context of a 20% turnaround in staff and a rebuild of the Management Team. Staff turnover is a fact of life but it is clear that loss of surveying staff, when taken with recent difficulties in recruiting qualified valuers, poses a risk to future service delivery.

The Board also recognised the retiral of David Thomson as Assessor and ERO, and chief official. David held the post for almost 19 years, making him the longest serving Assessor in the Board's history. David steered the organisation through many changes, including publishing 19 Annual Electoral Registers, delivering four Revaluations, introduction of Individual Registration, Non Domestic Rates Reform, Electoral Reform, and supporting our partner Returning Officers in countless Polls and Elections.

Thanks are due to all staff and management for their endeavour, effort and co-operation throughout the year. Similarly, thanks are due to the Board for their continued support.

Councillor Vaughan Moody
Convenor of the Board

Date: 23 June 2023

Russell Hewton
Assessor & Electoral Registration
Officer

Date: 23 June 2023

Laurence Slavin
Treasurer

Date: 23 June 2023

**DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023**

REMUNERATION REPORT

Introduction

The remuneration report has been prepared in accordance with the Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014. These Regulations require various disclosures about the remuneration and pension benefits of the Board and senior employees. All information disclosed in the tables 1-5 of the Remuneration Report will be audited by Mazars. The other sections have also been reviewed by Mazars to ensure that they are consistent with the Financial Statements.

Arrangements for Remuneration

No Councillors serving on the Board (including the Convenor and Vice-Convenor) receive any form of remuneration in respect of these roles.

The Board sets the remuneration levels for senior officers. Its role is to ensure the application and implementation of fair and equitable systems for pay and for performance management within the guidelines of and as determined by the Scottish Ministers and the Scottish Government. In reaching its decisions, the Board has regarded the need to recruit, retain and motivate suitably able and qualified people to exercise their different responsibilities.

The remuneration of senior employees is set by reference to national arrangements. The Board does not pay bonuses or performance related pay. Chief Officers receive business mileage and subsistence allowances in accordance with amounts either agreed nationally by the Scottish Joint National Council (SJNC) or as approved locally by the Board. Chief Officers are eligible to join the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS). The scheme is described in the Pension Benefits section.

Remuneration

The term *remuneration* means (as defined by the Regulations noted above): gross salary, fees and bonuses, allowances and expenses, and costs in relation to Early Retiral and Voluntary Severance. It excludes pension contributions paid by the Board. Pension contributions made to a person's pension are disclosed as part of the pension benefits disclosure.

Table 1: Remuneration of Senior Employees

Name	Position at 31/03/23	Year ended 31 March 2022/23		2021/22
		Salary, Fees & Allowances £000	Total Remuneration £000	Total Remuneration £000
Russell Hewton	Assessor & ERO (From 04/01/2023)	25 (FYE 110)	25 (FYE 110)	0
	Depute Assessor & ERO (01/04/23 to 03/01/2023)	70 (FYE 91)	70 (FYE 91)	14
David Thomson	Assessor & ERO (01/04/23 to 03/01/2023)	85 (FYE 110)	85 (FYE 110)	105
Darryl Rae	Depute Assessor & ERO (From 20/03/2023)	3 (FYE 91)	3 (FYE 91)	0

1. The term *senior employee* means any Board employee:

- Who has responsibility for the management of the Board to the extent that the person has the power to direct or control the major activities of the Board (including activities involving the expenditure of money), during the year to which the Report relates, whether solely or collectively with other persons; or
- Who holds a post that is politically restricted by reason of section 2(1) (a), (b) or (c) of Local Government and Housing Act 1989 (4); or
- Whose annual remuneration, including any remuneration from a local authority subsidiary body, is £150,000 or more.

**DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023**

Remuneration of Employees receiving more than £50,000

The Board's employees receiving more than £50,000 remuneration for the year were paid the amounts set in Table 2. In accordance with the disclosure requirement of the Regulations, the information in the table shows the number of employees in bands of £5,000. This information includes the senior employees who are subject to the fuller disclosure requirements set out in Table 1.

Table 2: Remuneration

Bands £	Number of Employees	
	2021/2022	2022/2023
50,000 to 54,999	1	3
55,000 to 59,999	0	2
60,000 to 64,999	2	0
65,000 to 69,999	0	1
85,000 to 89,999	0	1
95,000 to 99,999	0	1
100,000 to 105,000	1	0
Total	4	8

Pension Benefits

For local government employees, the LGPS 2015 is a career average pension scheme. This means that pension benefits from 01/04/2015 are based on pensionable pay with inflation added.

Pension is accrued at a rate of 1/49 of pensionable pay for each scheme year. Pension benefits can be accessed from age 55 but are reduced for retirements prior to 60th birthday. Pension benefits accrued before 1 April 2015 are protected and are based on final pay on retiring.

From 1 April 2009, a five tier contribution system was introduced with contributions from scheme members being based on how much pay falls into each tier. This is designed to give more equality between the cost and benefits of scheme membership. Table 3 below provides information on these tiered contribution rates.

Table 3: Contribution Rate

The tiers and members contributions rates for 2022/23 whole time pay	Contribution rate 2022/23
On earnings up to and including £23,000	5.5%
On earnings above £23,001 and up to £28,100	7.25%
On earnings above £28,101 and up to £38,600	8.5%
On earnings above £38,601 and up to £51,400	9.5%
On earnings of £51,401 and above	12%

If a person works part-time their contribution rate is worked out on the whole-time pay rate for the job, with actual contributions paid on actual pay earned. There is no automatic entitlement to a lump sum. Members may opt to give up (commute) pension for lump sum up to the limit set by the Finance Act 2004. The accrual rate guarantees a pension based on 1/49th of pay from 1 April 2015. Prior to this the accrual rate guarantees a pension based on 1/60th of final pensionable salary and years of pensionable service.

Prior to 2009 the accrual rate guaranteed a pension based on 1/80th and a lump sum based on 3/80th of final pensionable salary and years of pensionable service.

**DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
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The value of the accrued benefits has been calculated on the basis of the age at which the person will first become entitled to receive a pension on retirement without reduction on account of its payment at that age; without exercising any option to commute pension entitlement into a lump sum; and without any adjustment for the effects of future inflation. Retirement can be taken with receipt of benefits in full from the normal pension age. The normal pension age is 65 for any benefits built up before 1 April 2015. For pension built up from 1 April 2015, the Normal Pension Age is not fixed at age 65 but, instead, is the same as the State Pension Age (but with a minimum of age 65).

Pension Benefits of Senior Employees

Table 4: In-year contributions and accrued benefits

Name	For year to 31 March 2023			For year to 31 March 2022		
	In-year Contribution	Pension	Accrued Pension benefits Lump Sum	In-year Contribution	Pension	Accrued pension benefits Lump Sum
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Russell Hewton	20	tbc	tbc	3	0	4
David Thomson	17	tbc	tbc	22	56	92
Darryl Rae	1	tbc	tbc	0	0	0

The pension figures shown relate to the benefits that the person has accrued as consequence of their total local government' service, and not just their current appointment.

The Local Government (Discretionary Payments and Injury Benefits) (Scotland) Regulations 1998 make provision for authorities to make discretionary payments to local government employees to pay compensation for premature retirement. There were no discretionary payments made to senior employees during the year.

Exit Packages

There were no exit packages during financial years 2022/23 and 2021/22.

Trade Union Facility Time

Facility Time generates benefits for employees, managers and the wider community from effective joint working between union representatives and employers.

Details of the Facility Time within the Board during the year to 31 March 2023 are shown in Table 5.

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Table 5: Trade Union

Trade Union Officials	Trade Union Representative
0	1
Percentage of Time Spent on Facility Time Percentage	Employees
Less than <1%	1
Total cost of facility time	
£0	
Total pay bill	
£2,263,308	
Percentage of Pay Bill Spent on Facility Time	
0.00%	
Paid TU Activities	
100%	

Councillor Vaughan Moody
Convenor of the Board
Date: 23 June 2023

Russell Hewton
Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer
Date: 23 June 2023

**DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023**

STATEMENT OF RESPONSIBILITIES

The Boards Responsibilities:

The Board is required to:

- make arrangements for the proper administration of its financial affairs and to secure that the proper officer of the Board has responsibility for the administration of those affairs. In this Board, that officer is the Treasurer;
- manage its affairs to secure economic, efficient and effective use of resources and safeguard its assets;
- ensure the Annual Accounts are prepared in accordance with legislation (The Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014), and is compatible with that legislation, in accordance with proper accounting practices (section 12 of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003); and
- approve the Draft Annual Accounts for signature.

Signed on behalf of Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute Valuation Joint Board.

Councillor Vaughan Moody
Convenor of the Board
Date: 23 June 2023

**DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
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The Treasurer's Responsibilities:

The Treasurer is responsible for the preparation of the Board's Annual Accounts in accordance with proper practices as required by legislation and as set out in the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom (the Accounting Code).

In preparing the Annual Accounts, the Treasurer has:

- selected suitable accounting policies and then applied them consistently;
- made judgements and estimates that were reasonable and prudent;
- complied with legislation; and
- complied with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom.

The Treasurer's Responsibilities:

The Treasurer has also:

- kept adequate accounting records which were up to date; and
- taken reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

I certify that the Draft Financial Statements give a true and fair view of the financial position of the Board at the reporting date and the transactions of the Board for the year ended 31 March 2023.

Laurence Slavin
Treasurer
Date: 23 June 2023

**DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023**

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

The Annual Governance Statement is included within the Annual Accounts to assure stakeholders on how the Board directs and controls its functions and how it relates to communities which will enhance transparency and scrutiny of the Board's activities.

Scope of Responsibility

The Board is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively. The Board also has a duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way its functions are carried out.

In discharging this overall responsibility, elected members and senior officers are responsible for implementing effective arrangements for governing the Board's affairs and facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, which includes arrangements for the management of risk.

Governance Framework

The Board has approved and adopted a Code of Corporate Governance (the Code), a Code of Good Governance and also relies on the governance arrangements of West Dunbartonshire Council which are consistent with the principles of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) Framework.

The above code explains how the Board aims to deliver good governance and reviews the effectiveness of these arrangements on an annual basis.

Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework, published by CIPFA in association with Solace in 2007 and updated in 2016, sets the standard for local authority governance in the UK and applies to annual governance statements prepared for the financial year 2016/17 onwards.

While the Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework is written in a local authority context, most of the principles are applicable to the Board, and on the recommendation of our external auditors, the Board has adopted this process as part of its overall approach to governance.

In accordance with a Code of Good Governance which was approved by the Board in March 2018, a self-assessment against the above CIPFA framework is completed annually and an Action Plan agreed. The Management Team regularly monitor progress against the actions in the Action Plan. The Local Code of Good Governance and the Action Plan can be found on the Board's website at: <https://www.saa.gov.uk/dab-vjb/best-value/>

The Board has also put in place a system of internal financial control designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. Internal controls cannot eliminate risk of failure to achieve statutory duties, policies, aims and objectives and can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal financial control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of the Board's policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

The governance framework comprises the systems and processes, and culture and values, by which the Board is directed and controlled. It also describes the way it engages with, and accounts to, its stakeholders.

**DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
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Within the overall control arrangements the system of internal control is intended to ensure that assets are safeguarded, transactions are authorised and properly recorded, and material errors or irregularities are either prevented or would be detected within a timely period. It is based on a framework of regular management information, financial regulations, administrative procedures and management supervision.

The overall control arrangements include:

- comprehensive budgeting systems;
- regular reviews of periodic and annual financial reports which indicate financial performance against the forecasts;
- setting targets to measure financial and other performance;
- clearly defined capital expenditure guidelines; and
- an effective Internal Audit service.

Review of Effectiveness

The Board has a responsibility for ensuring the continuing effectiveness of its governance framework and its system of internal financial control. The Shared Services Manager Audit & Fraud produces an annual audit plan based on a risk assessment of the Council's and the Board's systems and processes. The audit plan is approved by the Audit Committee of the Council. This Committee meets regularly and receives reports from the Shared Services Manager Audit & Fraud. The Board's external auditors also attend. The Shared Services Manager Audit & Fraud produces an annual report on the work carried out by Internal Audit during the year. This report contains a view on the effectiveness of the system of internal financial control.

The Internal Audit service operates in accordance with Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS). The Shared Services Manager Audit & Fraud meets regularly with chief internal auditors of other authorities and staff within the Internal Audit Service are appropriately trained.

Our review of the effectiveness of the system of internal financial control is informed by:

- the work of managers within both the Board and West Dunbartonshire Council who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the financial control framework;
- the work undertaken by West Dunbartonshire Council's Internal Auditors during the year to 31 March 2023;
- the assessment of risk completed during reviews of the strategic audit plan;
- reports issued by the Board's External Auditors and other review bodies; and
- knowledge of the Board's governance, risk management and performance monitoring arrangements.

Through West Dunbartonshire Council, the Board's financial management arrangements conform with the governance requirements of the CIPFA Statement on The Role of Chief Financial Officer in Local Government 2010.

We are satisfied that the Board has in place a sound system of internal financial control and that appropriate mechanisms are in place to identify any areas of weakness and to take appropriate action. This is corroborated by an Annual Assurance Statement prepared by the Shared Services Manager Audit & Fraud, stating that reasonable assurance can be placed upon the adequacy and effectiveness of the Board's internal control system in the year to 31 March 2023.

**DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
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Annual Performance

Examples of developments which have led to significant improvement in arrangements for control, governance or risk management within the Board during 2022/23 include:

- A review of the Code of Conduct, to reflect the Board's new Public Interest Disclosure Policy and make explicit the Board's zero tolerance to fraud and corruption, was finalised and presented to the Board for approval.
- Our Vision and Mission was reviewed, with an addition providing clarity that we will use and care for the data we hold in an appropriate way.
- Testing of our Business Continuity processes for Electoral Registration took place, with systems and processes performing as expected.
- To ensure its relevance and to reflect changing technologies, the Board's ICT Strategy was reviewed and updated, and approved by the Board.
- The Health and Safety Committees merged to form a single Health and Safety Working Group, enabling consistent approach and guidance to be applied throughout the whole organisation.
- Following an internal audit report, new procedures were put in place to define procedures for overtime working.
- Various NDR developments related to 'Barclay' recommendations, or arising from legislative change continued to be progressed. In particular, the back-office/ICT changes required to facilitate further expansion of valuations available at the SAA portal and making Portal Property Rental Lists available at Revaluation have been completed. ICT changes also facilitated automation of Revaluation processes, requiring over 15,000 less manual operations to be carried out.
- Redesign and redevelopment of the Boards systems to receive, log and manage NDR Proposals (formerly appeals) has commenced, to tie in with the launch of the new Proposal system on 1 April 2023, and the transfer of Valuation Appeal Committees functions to the Scottish Courts and Tribunal Service.
- A review of the 2021 annual electoral canvass resulted in minor improvements to the procedures adopted for 2022.
- Contingency arrangements were implemented in advance of the Local Government Elections in May 2022, to ensure delivery of service could continue in the case of further local or national outbreaks of COVID.
- The Boards scheme of Delegated powers was reviewed, and received a minor update.
- The Boards support services agreement with West Dunbartonshire Council received an extensive review, and was agreed by the parties.

The following areas were identified by the Assessor & ERO for further improvements in 2022/23:

- In line with best practice, officers will provide induction training to the Board members following the May 2022 election and the formation of a new Board. Although scheduled to happen during 2022/23, this did not take place and will be carried out during 2023.
- Continued consideration will be given to the secondary legislation which implements the Non-Domestic Rates (Scotland) Act 2020 Act. The Management Team, Valuation Working Group and our ICT Support Team will devise and amend procedures and systems, with a strong focus on the new Proposal (appeals) system that will come into effect on 1 April 2023.
- We will continue to review the annual canvass process in light of the outcomes of the 2022 canvass and in the context of the Electoral Commission's Performance Standards and the agreed SAA KPIs. The agreed KPI statistics will be collected and benchmarked against other Scottish EROs to further inform improvement action.
- Following an internal audit recommendation, work will continue in creating single instructions for the organisation.
- Following an internal audit recommendation, work will be carried out in formulating a long term work force plan.
- A renewed focus will be given to implementing our Records Management plan, with particular focus on compliance with retention policies.

**DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
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Assurance

On the basis of the assurance provided, we consider the governance and internal control environment operating during 2022/23 to provide reasonable and objective assurance that any significant risks impacting on the achievement of our principal objectives will be identified and actions taken to avoid or mitigate their impact. Systems are in place to continually review and improve the governance and internal control environment and action plans are in place to address identified areas for improvement.

Councillor Vaughan Moody
Convenor of the Board

Russell Hewton
Assessor & Electoral Registration
Officer

Laurence Slavin
Treasurer

Date: 23 June 2023

Date: 23 June 2023

Date: 23 June 2023

INTRODUCTION TO ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

The Annual Accounts comprise the following primary statements:

- Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement;
- Movement in Reserves Statement;
- Balance Sheet;
- Cashflow Statement; and
- Summary of significant accounting policies and other explanatory notes.

Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement

This statement shows the accounting cost in the year of providing services in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices, rather than the amount to be funded from constituent authority contributions.

Movement in Reserves Statement

This statement shows the movement in the year on the different reserves held by the Board, analysed into 'usable reserves' (i.e. those that can be applied to fund expenditure) and other reserves. The surplus or (deficit) on the provision of services line shows the true economic cost of providing the Board's services, more details of which are shown in the comprehensive income and expenditure statement. The net increase/decrease before transfer to earmarked reserves line shows the statutory general fund balance before any discretionary transfers to or from earmarked reserves undertaken by the Board.

Balance Sheet

The balance sheet shows the value as at the balance sheet date of the assets and liabilities recognised by the Board. The net assets of the Board (assets less liabilities) are matched by the reserves held by the Board. Reserves are reported in two categories. The first of the category of reserves are usable reserves, i.e. those reserves that the Board may use to provide services, subject to any statutory limitations on their use (for example the capital receipts reserve that may only be used to fund capital expenditure). The second category of reserves is those that the Board is not able to use to provide services. This category of reserves includes reserves that hold unrealised gains and losses (for example the revaluation reserve), where accounts would only become available to provide services if the assets are sold; and reserves that hold timing differences shown in the movement in reserves statement line 'adjustments between accounting basis and funding basis under regulations'.

Cash Flow Statement

The cash flow statement shows the changes in cash and cash equivalents of the Board during the reporting period. The statement shows how the Board generates and uses cash and cash equivalents by classifying cash flows as operating, investing and financing activities. The amount of net cash flows arising from operating activities is a key indicator of the extent to which the operations of the authority are funded by way of taxation and grant income or from the recipients of services provided by the authority. Investing activities represent the extent to which cash outflows have been made for resources which are intended to contribute to the Board's future service delivery. Cash flows arising from financing activities are useful in predicting claims on future cash flows by providers of capital (i.e. borrowing) to the Board.

**DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
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COMPREHENSIVE INCOME AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT

2021/22 Net Expenditure £000		Notes	2022/23 Net Expenditure £000
	Income		
(11)	Customer Receipts		(12)
	Expenditure		
2,579	Employee Costs	2	2,705
108	Property Costs		126
11	Transport Costs		23
280	Supplies & Services		275
35	Payment to Other Bodies		41
123	Support Services		123
14	Depreciation, Amortisation & Impairment	2/6	14
3,139	Net Cost of Service		3,295
(2,837)	Revenue Contributions	13	(2,792)
(87)	Government Grants	14	(20)
(23)	Capital Contributions	10	(12)
(2,947)	Other Operating Income		(2,824)
192	Net Operating Expenditure		471
0	Interest Receivable		(7)
53	Net Interest on the net defined benefit liability/(assets)	4	(8)
75	Finance and Investment Income and Expenditure		(15)
245	(Surplus)/Deficit on provision of services		456
(3,428)	Remeasurement of the net defined benefit liability/(assets)	4	(7,914)
(39)	(Surplus)/Deficit arising from revaluation of property, plant and equipment		0
(3,467)	Other Comprehensive (Income) & Expenditure		(7,914)
(3,222)	Total Comprehensive (Income) & Expenditure		(7,458)

**DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
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MOVEMENT IN RESERVES STATEMENT

2022/23

	Usable Reserves		Unusable Reserves				Total Reserves £000
	Fund Balance £000	Capital Requisition Unapplied Account £000	Capital Adjustment Account £000	Revaluation Reserve £000	Pension Reserve £000	Employee Statutory Mitigation Account £000	
Opening Balance as at 1 April 2022	902	55	600	74	507	(28)	2,110
Movements in Reserves							
Surplus or (Deficit) on provision of Services	(456)	0	0	0	0	0	(456)
Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure	0	0	0	0	7,914	0	7,914
Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure	(456)	0	0	0	7,914	0	7,458
Adjustments between accounting basis & Funding Basis							
Depreciation	14	0	(14)	0	0	0	0
Pension Scheme Adjustment	389	0	0	0	(389)	0	0
Net Transfer to or from earmarked reserves required by legislation	(9)	0	0	0	0	9	0
Capital requisitions applied to fund capital expenditure	(12)	12	0	0	0	0	0
Capital requisitions unapplied adjustments between accounting basis and funding basis under regulations	(0)	(8)	8	0	0	0	0
Total Statutory Adjustments	382	4	(6)	0	(389)	9	0
Increase/Decrease in Year	(74)	4	(6)	0	7,525	9	7,458
Balance at 31 March 2023	828	59	594	74	8,032	(19)	9,568
Total Usable		887		Total Unusable		8,681	

**DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023**

MOVEMENT IN RESERVES STATEMENT

2021/22

	Usable Reserves		Unusable Reserves				Total Reserves £000
	Fund Balance	Capital Requisition Unapplied Account	Capital Adjustment Account	Revaluation Reserve	Pension Reserve	Employee Statutory Mitigation Account	
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	
Opening Balance as at 1 April 2021	694	41	605	35	(2,426)	(61)	(1,112)
Movements in Reserves							
Surplus or (Deficit) on provision of Services	(245)	0	0	0	0	0	(245)
Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure	0	0	0	39	3,428	0	3,467
Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure	(245)	0	0	39	3,428	0	3,222
Adjustments between accounting basis & Funding Basis							
Depreciation	14	0	(14)	0	0	0	0
Pension Scheme Adjustment	495	0	0	0	(495)	0	0
Net Transfer to or from earmarked reserves required by legislation	(33)	0	0	0	0	33	0
Capital requisitions applied to fund capital expenditure	(23)	23	0	0	0	0	0
Capital requisitions unapplied adjustments between accounting basis and funding basis under regulations	(0)	(9)	9	0	0	0	0
Total Statutory Adjustments	453	14	(5)	0	(495)	33	0
Increase/Decrease in Year	208	14	(5)	39	2,933	33	3,222
Balance at 31 March 2022	902	55	600	74	507	(28)	2,110
Total Usable		957	Total Unusable			1,153	

**DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023**

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 MARCH 2023

31 March 2022			31 March 2023	
£000	Notes		£000	
674	6	Property, plant and equipment	668	
674		Total Long Term Assets	668	
994	7	Short Term Debtors	972	
994		Current Assets	972	
(65)	8	Short Term Creditors	(104)	
(65)		Current Liabilities	(104)	
507	4	Net Pensions Asset/(Liability)	8,032	
507		Long Term Assets/(Liabilities)	8,032	
2,110		Net Assets/(Liabilities)	9,568	
		Represented by:		
957	9/10	Usable Reserves	887	
1,153	11	Unusable Reserves	8,681	
2,110		Total Reserves	9,568	

The unaudited Financial Statements were issued on 23 June 2023.

Laurence Slavin
Treasurer
23 June 2023

**DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023**

CASH FLOW STATEMENT

2021/22		2022/23
£000		£000
	Operating Activities	
(2,924)	Grants	(2,812)
(11)	Sale of goods and rendering of services	(12)
<u>(2,935)</u>	Cash Inflows from Operating Activities	<u>(2,824)</u>
2,238	Cash paid to and on behalf of employees	2,309
716	Other payments for operating activities	527
<u>2,954</u>	Cash Outflows from Operating Activities	<u>2,836</u>
<u>19</u>	Net Cash Flows from Operating Activities	<u>12</u>
	Investing Activities	
4	Purchase of Assets	8
(23)	Other receipts from investing activities	(13)
<u>(19)</u>	Net Cash Flows from Investing Activities	<u>(5)</u>
0	Financing Activities	
<u>0</u>	Interest Received	(7)
	Net Cash Flows from Financing Activities	<u>(7)</u>
<u>0</u>	Net (Increase)/Decrease in Cash and Cash Equivalents	<u>0</u>
0	Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the reporting period	0
0	Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the reporting period	0
<u>0</u>		<u>0</u>

**DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023**

NOTES TO THE ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

Note 1 - Accounting Policies

1. General Principles

The Annual Accounts summarise the Board's transactions for the 2022/23 financial year and its position at the year end of 31 March 2023. The Board is required to prepare Annual Accounts by the Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 1985. Section 12 of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 requires they be prepared in accordance with proper accounting practices. These practices primarily comprise the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2022/23 ("the Code") and the Service Reporting Code of Practice, supported by International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS).

The accounting convention adopted in the Annual Accounts is principally historic cost, modified by the revaluation of certain categories of Property, Plant and Equipment and financial instruments.

2. Accruals of Income and Expenditure

Activity is accounted for in the year that it takes place, not simply when payment is made or received. In particular:

- Revenue from the provision of services is recognised when the Board can measure reliably the percentage of completion of the transaction and when it is probable that the economic benefits associated with the transaction will flow to the Board;
- Expenses in relation to services received are recorded as expenditure when the services are received, rather than when payment is made;
- Supplies are recorded as expenditure when they are consumed – where there is a gap between the date supplies are received and their consumption, they are carried as inventories on the Balance Sheet based upon materiality;
- Interest payable on borrowings and receivable on investments is accounted for on the basis of the effective interest rate for the relevant financial instrument, rather than on cash flows fixed or determined by the contract; and
- Where income and expenditure have been recognised but cash has not been received or paid, a debtor or creditor for the relevant amount is recorded in the Balance Sheet. Where there is evidence that debts are unlikely to be settled, the balance of debtors is written down and charged to revenue for the income that might not be collected.

3. Cash and Cash Equivalents

Cash is represented by cash in hand and deposits with financial institutions repayable without penalty on notice of not more than 24 hours.

Cash equivalents are investments that mature in three months or less from date of acquisition and that are readily convertible to known cash amounts, with insignificant risk of change of value.

Investments held by the Board comprise solely of short term surplus funds held within the bank balances. All deposits are held in sterling. The carrying amount is the outstanding principal receivable.

Bank balances are included in the Balance Sheet at the closing balance in the Board's financial ledger and include cheques payable not yet cashed.

**DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023**

4. Changes in Accounting policies, Estimates and Errors

IAS 8 Accounting Policies, Changes in Accounting Estimates and Errors requires disclosure of information on the expected impact of new accounting standards that have been issued but are not yet effective. These have been reviewed and are not deemed to be significant for the financial statements.

Changes in accounting policies are only made when required by proper accounting practices or the change provides more reliable or relevant information about the effect of transactions, events or conditions on the Board's financial position or performance. Where a change is made, it is applied retrospectively by adjusting opening balances and comparative figures, as if the new policy has always been applied.

Changes in accounting estimates are accounted for prospectively, i.e. in the current and future years only.

Material errors discovered in prior period figures are corrected retrospectively by amending opening balances and comparative figures.

5. Charges to Revenue for non-current assets

Services are debited with the following amounts to record the cost of using or holding fixed assets during the year:

- Depreciation, attributable to the assets used by the Board;
- Revaluation and impairment losses, where there is no accumulated gain in the Revaluation Reserve; and
- Amortisation of intangible fixed assets.

The Board is not required to raise funds to cover depreciation, revaluation or impairment losses. Depreciation, revaluation and impairment losses and amortisations are replaced by the revenue provision by an adjustment within the Capital Adjustment Account in the Movement in Reserves Statement for the difference between the two.

6. Intangible assets

Expenditure on non-monetary assets that do not have physical substance but are controlled by the Board as a result of past events (e.g. computer software and/or software licences) is capitalised when it is expected that future economic or service benefits will flow from the asset to the Board.

Assets are measured originally at cost and only revalued where the fair value of the asset can be determined by reference to an active market.

Where an intangible asset has a finite useful life, the depreciable amount of an intangible asset is depreciated over its useful life in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. An asset is tested for impairment whenever there is an indication that the asset might be impaired any losses recognised are posted in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. Any gain or loss arising on the disposal or abandonment of an intangible asset is recognised in the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services when the asset is derecognised.

Where expenditure qualifies as capital for statutory purposes, amortisation, impairment losses and disposal gains and losses are not permitted to have an impact on the Board's balance and are therefore reversed out in the Movement in Reserves Statement and posted to the Capital Adjustment Account and the Capital Receipts Reserve.

7. Property, Plant and Equipment

Assets that have physical substance and are held for the supply of goods and services, either directly or indirectly, and that are expected to be used during more than one financial year are classified as Property, Plant and Equipment.

Recognition

Expenditure on the acquisition, creation or enhancement of property, plant and equipment is capitalised on an accruals basis, provided that it is probable that the future economic benefits or service potential associated with the item will flow to the Board and the cost of the asset can be measured reliably. Expenditure that maintains, but does not add to the asset's potential to deliver future economic benefits or service potential, is charged as an expense when it is incurred.

Measurement

Initially measured at cost, comprising of:

- Purchase price;
- Any costs associated with bringing the asset to the location or condition necessary for it to be capable of operating in the manner intended by management; and
- The initial estimate of costs for dismantling and removing the item and restoring the site on which it is located to its original state.

Where property, plant or equipment are acquired in exchange for a non-monetary asset or assets, or a combination of monetary and non-monetary assets, the cost of the acquired item shall be measured at fair value unless there is no economic substance to the exchange transaction, or the fair value of neither the asset received nor the asset given up can be reliably measured. The acquired item is measured at fair value even if the Board cannot immediately derecognise the asset given up. The acquired item is measured at the carrying amount of the asset given up if it is not measured at fair value.

Assets are then carried in the Balance Sheet using the following measurement bases:

- Other buildings – fair value. Where there is no market based evidence of fair value because of the specialised nature of the asset and the asset is rarely sold, depreciated replacement cost is used as an estimate of fair value; and
- Plant and equipment and other non -property assets – fair value. Where assets in this class have either short useful lives or low values (or both), depreciated historical cost is considered to be a proxy for fair value where the useful life is a realistic reflection of the life of the asset and the depreciation method provides a realistic reflection of the consumption of the asset class.

Assets included in the Balance Sheet at fair value are re-valued regularly to ensure their carrying amount is not materially different from the fair value at the year end, as a minimum every 5 years.

Increases in valuations are matched by credits to the Revaluation Reserve to recognise unrealised gains.

Where decreases in value are identified, the revaluation loss is accounted by:

- Balance of revaluation gains for the asset in Revaluation Reserve – the carrying amount of the asset is written down against that balance (up to the total gain); or
- No balance of revaluation gains for the asset in the Revaluation Reserve – the carrying amount is written down in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

**DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023**

The Revaluation Reserve contains revaluation gains recognised since 1 April 2007, the date of its formal implementation. Gains arising before that date have been consolidated into the Capital Adjustment Account.

Impairment

Assets are assessed at the end of each financial year for evidence in impairment or a reduction in value. Where indications exist and any possible differences are estimated to be material, the recoverable amount on the asset is estimated and where this is less than the carrying amount of the asset, an impairment loss is recognised for the shortfall.

Where impairment losses are identified, they are accounted for by:

- Balance of revaluation gains for the asset in Revaluation Reserve – the carrying amount of the asset is written down against that balance (up to the total accumulated gains); or
- No balance of revaluation gains for the asset in the Revaluation Reserve – the carrying amount is written down in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

Where an impairment loss is reversed subsequently, the reversal is credited in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, up to the amount of the original loss, adjusted for depreciation that would be charged if the loss had not been recognised.

Depreciation

Depreciation is provided on all property, plant and equipment over their useful economic lives, with an exception made for assets without a determinable finite useful life (i.e. non depreciating land).

The useful lives of assets, as estimated and advised by a suitably qualified officer, are as follows:

- | | | |
|--------------------------|-------------|---------------|
| • Other buildings* | 20-60 years | straight line |
| • Vehicles, plant, equip | 5-10 years | straight line |
| • Intangibles | 5-10 years | straight line |

* Including components such as structure, mechanical and electrical, etc.

Where an item of property, plant and equipment assets has major components whose cost is significant in relation to the total cost of the item, the components are depreciated separately.

Revaluation gains are also depreciated, with an amount equal to the difference between current depreciation charged on assets and the depreciation that would be chargeable based upon historic cost being transferred each year from the Revaluation Reserve to the Capital Adjustment Account.

8. Employee Benefits

Benefits payable during employment

Short term employee benefits (i.e. fall due within 12 months of the year-end), such as wages and salaries, paid leave, paid sick leave, bonuses and non-monetary benefits for current employees are recognised as an expense in the year in which the employees render service to the Board.

An accrual is made against the services in the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Service for the costs of holiday entitlement and other forms of leave earned by the employee but not taken before the year end and which employees can carry forward into the next financial year.

**DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023**

Any accrual made in relation to holiday pay only, is required under statute to be reversed out of the General Fund balance by a credit to the Employee Statutory Mitigation Account in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

Termination Benefits

Termination benefits are amounts payable as a result of a decision made by the Board to terminate an officer's employment before the normal retirement date or an officer's decision to accept a voluntary termination package in exchange for those benefits. Termination benefits do not provide the Board with future economic benefits and consequently they are recognised on an accruals basis immediately in the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement when the authority is demonstrably committed to provision of the termination benefits.

Where termination benefits involve the enhancement of pensions, they are treated as pension costs for the purpose of the statutory transfer between the Pension Reserve and the General Fund of the amount by which the pension costs calculated in accordance with the Code are different from the contributions due under the pension scheme regulations. In the Movement in Reserves Statement appropriations are required to and from the Pension Reserve to remove notional debits and credits for termination benefits related to pension's enhancements and replace them with the cost of the cash paid, including any amounts due and not paid at the year end.

Post-Employment Benefits

Employees of the Board are members of The Local Government Pensions Scheme, administered by Glasgow City Council.

The scheme provides defined benefits to members earned as employees of the Board. The Local Government scheme is accounted for as a defined benefits scheme:

- The liabilities of the pension fund attributable to the Board are included within the Balance Sheet on an actuarial basis using the projected unit method (i.e. an assessment of the future payments that will be made in relation to retirement benefits earned to date by employees, based upon assumptions about mortality rates, employee turnover rates and projection of earnings for current employees),
- Liabilities are discounted to their value at current prices using a discount rate of 4.75% (based upon the indicative return rate on long dated high quality corporate bonds);
- All assets are at bid value and are split into Quoted Prices in Active Markets and Prices not quoted in Active Markets, they are now shown in the notes in more detail; and
- Split by Equity Securities, Debt Securities, Private Equity, Real Estate, Investment Funds, Derivatives, Cash.
- The change in the net pensions asset / liability is analysed into six components:
 - Current service cost – the increase in liabilities as result of years of service earned this year – allocated in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement to the services for which the employee worked;
 - Past service cost – the increase in liabilities arising from current year decisions whose effect relates to years of service earned in earlier years – debited to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement;

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- Net Interest expenses – the expected increase in the present value of liabilities during the year as they move one year closer, less the fair value of plan assets debited to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement;
- Gains/losses on settlements and curtailments – the result of actions to relieve the Board of liabilities or events that reduce the expected future service or accrual of benefits of employees – debited/credited to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement;
- Actuarial gains and losses – changes in the net pensions liability that arise because events have not coincided with assumptions made at the last actuarial valuation or because the actuaries have updated their assumptions – debited to the Pensions Reserve; and
- Contributions paid to the local government pension fund – cash paid as employer's contributions to the pension fund in settlement of liabilities; not accounted for as an expense.

In relation to retirement benefits, statutory provisions require the Fund to be charged with the amount payable by the Board to the pension fund or directly to pensioners in the year, not the amount calculated in accordance to the relevant accounting standards. In the Movement in Reserves Statement this means that there are appropriations to and from the Pension Reserve to remove any notional debits and credits for retirement benefits and replace them with the cash paid or payable at the year end, to the pension fund and pensioners.

Discretionary Benefits

The Board also has restricted powers to make discretionary awards of retirement benefits in the event of early retirements. Any liabilities estimated to arise as a result of an award to any member of staff are accrued in the year of the decision to make the award and accounted for using the same policies as are applied to the local government pension scheme.

9. Events after the reporting period

Events after the reporting period are those events (both favourable and unfavourable) that occur between the end of the reporting period and the date when the Annual Accounts are authorised for issue. Two types have been identified:

- Those that provide evidence of conditions that existed at the end of the reporting period – the Annual Accounts are adjusted to reflect this; and
- Those that are indicative of conditions that arose after the reporting period – the Annual Accounts are not adjusted to reflect this. However, if the event is material, a disclosure is made within the notes of the nature and financial effect.

10. Operating Leases

Board as Lessee

Rentals paid under operating leases are charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as an expense. Charges are made on a straight line basis over the life of the lease, even if it does not match the pattern of payment.

Board as Lessor

Where the Board grants an operating lease over an asset, the asset is retained in the Balance Sheet. Rental income is credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. Credits are made on a straight line basis over the life of the lease, even if it doesn't match the pattern of payment.

**DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023**

11. Provisions

Provisions are made where an event has taken place that gives the Board an obligation, either legal or constructive, as a result of a past event that results in a probable outflow of resources and a reliable estimate can be made of the amount of that obligation.

Provisions are charged as an expense to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement in the year the Board becomes aware of the obligation and measured at the best estimate at the Balance Sheet date, taking account of relevant risks and uncertainties.

When payments are eventually made they are charged to the provision carried in the Balance Sheet. Estimated settlements are reviewed at the end of each financial year. Where it becomes less than probable that a transfer of economic benefits is now required; the provision is reversed and credited back to the relevant service.

12. Contingent Liabilities

A contingent liability arises where an event has taken place that gives the Board a possible obligation whose existence will only be confirmed by the occurrence or otherwise of uncertain future events, not wholly within the control of the Board. Contingent liabilities also arise in circumstances where a provision would otherwise be made but either it is not probable that an outflow of resources will be required or the amount of the obligation cannot be measured reliably.

Contingent liabilities are not recognised in the Balance Sheet but are disclosed as a note to the accounts, unless the possibility of an outflow of resources embodying economic benefits or service potential is remote.

13. Contingent assets

A contingent asset arises where an event has taken place that gives the Board a possible asset whose existence will only be confirmed by the occurrence or otherwise of uncertain future events not wholly within the control of the Board.

Contingent assets are not recognised in the Balance Sheet but disclosed in a note to the accounts where it is probable that there will be an inflow of economic benefits.

14. VAT

VAT payable is included as an expense only to the extent that it is not recoverable from HM Revenue and Customs. VAT receivable is excluded from income.

15. Reserves

Reserves are created by appropriating amounts out of the General Reserve Balance in the Movement in Reserves Statement. When expenditure to be financed from a reserve is incurred, it is charged to the Surplus/Deficit on the Provision of Services in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. The reserve is then appropriated back into the General Reserve Balance in the Movement in Reserves Statement so that there is no net charge against requisition income for the expenditure.

Certain reserves are kept to manage the accounting processes for non-current assets and retirement benefits and these reserves do not represent usable resources for the Board.

Note 2 – Expenditure and Funding Analysis

The analysis of income and expenditure on the face of the comprehensive income and expenditure statement is that specified by the Service Reporting Code of Practice. However decisions about resource allocation are taken by the Board on the basis of reports that are prepared on a different basis from the accounting policies used in the financial statements.

**DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
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In particular:

- no charges are made in relation to capital expenditure (whereas depreciation, revaluation and impairment losses in excess of the balance on the revaluation reserve and amortisations are charged to the Board in the comprehensive income and expenditure statement); and
- the cost of retirement benefits is based on cash flows (payments of employer's pension's contributions) rather than current service cost of benefits accrued in the year.

The difference between the employee costs figure and the figure reported in the Comprehensive Income & Expenditure Statement is due to accounting adjustments for pensions and holiday pay accrual as detailed in the table below. These costs are year-end adjustments that are offset by corresponding transfers to the Balance Sheet and the Movement in Reserves Statement. None of the other rows within the Comprehensive Income & Expenditure Statement would be altered in the Expenditure and Funding Analysis and therefore have not been included in the table below.

2022/23

	Net Chargeable to the General Fund £000	Adjustments between Funding and Accounting Basis £000	Net Expenditure in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement £000
Employee Costs	2,317	388	2,705
Depreciation	0	14	14
Capital Income	0	(12)	(12)
Net Interest on the net defined benefit liability/(assets)	0	(8)	(8)
Total	2,317	382	2,699

2021/22

	Net Chargeable to the General Fund £000	Adjustments between Funding and Accounting Basis £000	Net Expenditure in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement £000
Employee Costs	2,170	409	2,579
Depreciation	0	14	14
Capital Income	0	(23)	(23)
Net Interest on the net defined benefit liability/(assets)	0	53	53
Total	2,170	453	2,623

**DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
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Note 3 – Operating Leases

Board as Lessor

The Board leases out property under operating leases to provide suitable accommodation to Alpha Pets.

The minimum lease payments in future years are:

31 March 2022		31 March 2023
£000		£000
1	Not later than one year	2
0	Later than one year and not later than five years	5
0	Later than five years	0
<u>1</u>		<u>7</u>

Board as Lessee

The Board has acquired a number of photocopiers, scanners and letter openers by entering into operating leases.

The minimum lease payments due under non-cancellable leases in future years are:

31 March 2022		31 March 2023
£000		£000
3	Not later than one year	4
8	Later than one year and not later than five years	2
0	Later than five years	0
<u>11</u>		<u>6</u>

Note 4 – Defined Benefit Pension Schemes

As part of the terms and conditions of employment of its officers, the Board makes contributions towards the cost of post-employment benefits. Although these benefits will not actually be payable until employees retire, the Board has a commitment to make the payments that needs to be disclosed at the time that employees earn their future entitlement.

The Board participates in the Strathclyde Local Government Pension Scheme, which is a defined benefit statutory scheme, operated as Strathclyde Pension Fund, and administered by Glasgow City Council in accordance with the Strathclyde Local Government Pension Scheme (Scotland) Regulations 1998. This is a funded scheme, meaning that the Board and employees pay contributions into a fund, calculated at a level intended to balance the pensions' liabilities with investment assets.

The employers' contribution rate is set by the Fund actuaries following valuation. The employer contribution rate for 2022/23 is set at 23.3% and 2021/22 was 23.3%. In 2022/23, the Board paid an employer's contribution of £0.332m (2021/22 £0.320m).

In addition, the Board is responsible for all pension payments relating to added years' benefits which it has awarded together with the related increases. Strain on the Fund costs are charged in year for any early retirals. There was no Severance or Strain on the Fund Payments during financial year 2022/23 (2021/22 £0).

The Board fully complies with the international accounting standard (IAS 19) concerning the disclosure of information on pension.

DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
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IAS 19 states that although the pension benefits will not be payable until the employee retires; the Board has a commitment to make these payments and must disclose the cost of this in its accounts at the time employees earn their future entitlements.

The Board recognised the cost of retirement benefits in the reported cost of services when they are earned by employees, rather than when the benefits are eventually paid as pensions. However the charge that the Board is required to make against its budget is based on the cash payable in the year, so the real cost of post-employment/retirement benefits is reversed out of the general fund via the movement in reserve statement. The following transactions have been made in the comprehensive income and expenditure statement and the general fund balance via the movement in reserves statement during the year.

2021/22 £000		2022/23 £000
	Net cost of services	
771	Current service cost	739
0	Past service cost (including curtailments)	0
771		739
	Financing and investment Income and Expenditure	
53	Net Interest	(8)
53		(8)
824	Total post-employment benefit charged to the Surplus or Deficit on the provision of Services	731
(1,464)	Return on assets excluding amounts included in net interest	1,166
(1,831)	Changes in financial assumptions	(9,960)
(171)	Changes in demographic assumptions	(196)
38	Other experience	1,076
(3,428)	Total remeasurements recognised in Other Comprehensive Income (OCI)	(7,914)
	Movement in Reserves Statement	
(824)	Reversal of net charges made to surplus of deficit for post-employment benefits	(731)
320	Actual amount charged against the General Fund balance in the year	332
	Employer contributions payable to Scheme	332

The underlying assets and liabilities for retirement benefits attributable to the Board as at 31 March 2023 are as follows:

	2021/22 £000	2022/23 £000
Fair value of plan assets	27,399	26,809
Present Value of defined benefit obligations	(26,673)	(18,558)
Net (liabilities)/assets in the Strathclyde Pension Fund	726	8,251
<u>Present Value of Unfunded Liabilities</u>	(219)	(219)
Pre Local Government Reorganisation		
Net pension asset/(liability)	507	8,032

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For the Strathclyde Local Government Pension Scheme at 31 March 2023 the Board has a net asset £8.251m and for the unfunded liabilities a net liability of £0.219m, resulting in an overall net pension asset of £8.032m at 31 March 2023. This compares to a net asset of £0.507m as at 31 March 2022, representing an improvement in the position of £7.525m.

The actual return on assets is based on long term future investment return for each asset class as at the beginning of the period. The actual rate of returns is (1.6%) as at 31/03/23, this is a decrease from 7.7% as at 31/03/22.

Liabilities are valued on an actuarial basis using the projected unit method which assesses the future liabilities of the fund discounted to their present value. The rate used to value liabilities is the basis of long dated high quality corporate bonds.

The movement during the year on the defined obligation is noted as:

2021/22		2022/23
£000		£000
27,971	Opening balance	26,892
771	Current service cost	739
0	Past service cost (including curtailments)	0
562	Interest cost	729
102	Contributions by Members	105
(1,831)	Actuarial gains/losses in financial assumptions	(9,960)
38	Other Experience	1,076
(9)	Estimated unfunded benefits paid	(10)
(541)	Estimated benefits paid	(598)
(171)	Changes in demographic assumptions	(196)
<u>26,892</u>		<u>18,777</u>

The movement during the year regarding the fair value of the employer's assets is noted as:

2021/22		2022/23
£000		£000
25,545	Opening balance	27,399
1,464	Expected return on assets	(1,166)
509	Interest Income	737
102	Contributions by Members	105
320	Contributions by employer	332
9	Contributions in respect of unfunded benefits	10
(9)	Estimated unfunded benefits paid	(10)
(0)	Other experience	0
(541)	Estimated benefit paid	(598)
<u>27,399</u>		<u>26,809</u>

**DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023**

The Board's share of the pension funds asset at 31 March 2023 comprised:

Asset Category	31 March 2022			31 March 2023		
	Quoted Prices in Active Markets £000	Prices not Quoted in Active Markets £000	Total £000	Quoted Prices in Active Markets £000	Prices not Quoted in Active Markets £000	Total £000
Equity Securities	6,024	13	6,037	5,235	48	5,283
Debt Securities	0	0	0	0	0	0
Private Equity	0	5,364	5,364	0	6,589	6,589
Real Estate	0	2,311	2,311	0	2,210	2,210
Investment funds and unit trusts	152	12,838	12,990	116	12,103	12,218
Derivatives	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cash & Cash Equivalent	688	9	697	371	137	508
Totals	6,864	20,535	27,399	5,721	21,088	26,809

Asset and Liability Matching Strategy (ALM)

The main fund (Fund 1) of Strathclyde Pension Fund does not have an ALM as this is used mainly by mature funds. The Fund does match, to the extent possible, the types of assets invested to the liabilities in the defined benefit obligation. As is required by the pensions and investment regulations, the suitability of various types of investment has been considered, as has the need to diversify investments to reduce the risk of being invested into narrow a range. The Fund invests in equities, bonds, properties and in cash.

The principal actuarial assumptions used at the balance sheet date are as follows:

	31 March 2023
Actual rate of return	(1.60%)
Inflation/pension increase rate	2.95%
Salary increase rate	3.65%
Discount rate	4.75%

Mortality

Life expectancy is based on the Fund's VitaCurves with improvements in line with the CMI 2021 model, with a 0% weighting of 2021 (and 2020) data, standard smoothing (Sk7), initial adjustment of 0.25% and a long term rate of improvement of 1.5% p.a. Based on these assumptions, the average future life expectancies at age 65 are summarised below:

	Males	Females
Current Pensioners	19.3 years	22.2 years
Future Pensioners	20.5 years	24.2 years

Sensitivity Analysis

The estimation of defined benefit obligation is sensitive to the actuarial assumptions. The sensitivities regarding the principal assumptions used to measure the schemes liabilities are set out below:

**DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023**

	Approximate % increase to Employer Liability	Approximate monetary Amount (£000)
Rate for discounting fund liabilities (0.1% decrease)	2%	334
1 year increase in member life expectancy	4%	751
Rate of salary increase (0.1% increase)	0%	55
Rate of pension increase (0.1% increase)	2%	283

The total employer contributions expected to be made to the Local Government Pension Scheme for 2023/24 is £0.383m.

Note 5 – External Audit Costs

In 2022/23 the Board incurred the following fees relating to external audit in respect of external audit services undertaken in accordance with the Code of Audit Practice:

2021/22 £000		2022/23 £000
8	Fees payable for external audit services	11
<u>8</u>		<u>11</u>

Note 6 – Property, Plant and Equipment

Movements in costs or values	Land & Buildings £000	Plant & Equipment £000	Total £000
31 March 2021	621	181	802
Additions	0	9	9
Revaluations	22	0	22
31 March 2022	643	190	833
Additions	0	8	8
31 March 2023	643	198	841
Movements in depreciation and impairment			
31 March 2021	(18)	(144)	(162)
Depreciation charge	(4)	(10)	(14)
Reversal of depreciation on revaluation	17	0	17
31 March 2022	(5)	(154)	(159)
Depreciation charge	(4)	(10)	(14)
31 March 2023	(9)	(164)	(173)
Net Book Value			
At 31 March 2022	638	36	674
At 31 March 2023	634	34	668

Revaluations

The Board carries out a rolling programme that ensures that all property, plant and equipment required to be measured at fair value is re-valued at least every five years. Valuations of land and buildings are carried out in accordance with the methodologies and bases for estimation set out in the professional standards of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors.

**DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023**

Note 7 – Debtors

2021/22		2022/23
£000		£000
14	Other Entities and Individuals	39
979	Other Local Authorities	932
<u>1</u>	Central Government Bodies	<u>1</u>
<u>994</u>		<u>972</u>

Note 8 – Creditors

2021/22		2022/23
£000		£000
3	Central Government Bodies	17
52	Other Entities and Individuals	78
<u>10</u>	Other Local Authorities	<u>9</u>
<u>65</u>		<u>104</u>

Note 9 – Balances & Reserves

At their Board meeting on the 16 November 2012, the Board approved a Balance and Reserves Policy. The table below details the movement on revenue reserves this year.

	£000
Opening Balance at 1 April 2022	902
Revenue Gains/(Losses) on the fund	<u>(74)</u>
Closing Balance at 31 March 2023	828
Earmarked Balances:-	
2023/24 Budget	(432)
DLUHC Funding	(7)
Barclay Review Funding	<u>(37)</u>
Total Earmarked Balance	(476)
Total General Reserves (incl. £0.100m prudential reserve)	<u>352</u>

Note 10 – Capital Expenditure and Capital Financing

The total amount of capital expenditure incurred in the year is shown in the table below, together with the resources that have been used to finance it.

2021/22		2022/23
£000		£000
21	Contributions from Authorities	12
2	Capital Funding from Current Revenue (CFCR)	0
<u>41</u>	Unapplied Capital contributions b/forward	<u>55</u>
<u>64</u>	Total Capital Resources	<u>67</u>
0	Servers	(1)
(7)	Scanners, Laptops and Monitors	(7)
<u>(2)</u>	NDR reform costs	<u>0</u>
<u>(9)</u>	Total Capital expenditure incurred during the year	<u>(8)</u>
<u>55</u>	Unapplied Capital contributions c/forward	<u>59</u>

**DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023**

Note 11 – Unusable Reserves

2021/22		2022/23
£000		£000
600	Capital Adjustment Account	594
74	Revaluation Reserve	74
507	Pension Reserve	8,032
(28)	Employee Statutory Mitigation Account	(19)
1,153	Total Unusable Reserves	8,681

Capital Adjustment Account

The capital adjustment account absorbs the timing difference arising from the different arrangements for accounting for the consumption of non-current assets and for financing the acquisition, construction or enhancement of those assets under statutory provisions. The account is debited with the cost of acquisition, construction or enhancement as depreciation/impairment losses and amortisations are charged to the comprehensive income and expenditure statement (with reconciling postings to the revaluation reserve to convert fair value figures to a historical cost basis). The account is credited with the amounts set aside by the Board as finance for the costs of acquisition, construction and enhancement.

The account contains revaluation gains accumulated on property, plant and equipment before 1 April 2007, the date that the revaluation reserve was created to hold such gains. The movement in reserve statement provides detail of the source of all the transactions posted to the account.

Revaluation Reserve

The revaluation reserve contains the gains made by the Board arising from increases in the value of its property, plant and equipment (and intangible assets). The balance is reduced when assets with accumulated gains are:

- re-valued downwards or impaired and the gains are lost;
- used in the provision of services and the gains are consumed through depreciation;
- or
- disposed of and the gains are realised.

The reserve contains only revaluation gains accumulated since 1 April 2007, the date that the reserve was created. Accumulated gains arising before that date are consolidated into the balance on the capital adjustment account.

Pension Reserve

The pension reserve absorbs the timing differences arising from the different arrangements for accounting for post-employment benefits and for funding benefits in accordance with statutory provisions. The Board accounts for post-employment benefits in the comprehensive income and expenditure as the benefits are earned by employees accruing years of service, updating the liabilities recognised to reflect inflation, changing assumptions and investment returns on any resources set aside to meet the costs. However statutory arrangements require benefits earned to be financed as the Board makes employer's contributions to pension funds or eventually pays any pension for which it is directly responsible.

Employee Statutory Mitigation Account

The employee statutory mitigation account absorbs the differences that would otherwise arise on the general fund balance from accruing for compensated absences earned but not taken in the year, e.g. annual leave entitlement carried forward at 31 March. Statutory arrangements require that the impact on the general fund balance is neutralised by transfers to or from this account.

**DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023**

Capital Requisition Unapplied Account

The capital requisition unapplied account represents capital contributions from the constituent authorities which have not yet been spent.

Note 12 – Contingent Assets & Liabilities

The Board has not identified any Contingent Assets and Liabilities.

Note 13 – Contributions from Authorities

Revenue 2021/22		Revenue 2022/23	
£000		£000	
1,297	Argyll & Bute Council	1,158	
637	East Dunbartonshire Council	721	
678	West Dunbartonshire Council	732	
2,612	Constituent Contributions	2,611	
<u>225</u>	Barclay Review Contributions	<u>181</u>	
2,837	Total Contributions	2,792	

Note 14 – Government Grants

Government Grant income of £0.039m was carried forward into financial year 2022/23, as an earmarked reserve held by West Dunbartonshire Council on behalf of the Board, to fund Scottish Parliament Election costs.

The Board credited £0.013m to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure as shown in the table below.

2021/22		2022/23	
£000		£000	
87	Scottish Government	13	
<u>87</u>		<u>13</u>	

The remaining balance of £0.026m will be carried forward by West Dunbartonshire Council on behalf of the Board for use within 2023/24.

The Board also received £0.007m from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities in relation to the additional costs associated with the implementation of the Elections Act 2022, specifically the Voter Identification Regulations and the Assistance with Voting for Persons with Disabilities (Amendments) Regulation 2022. This grant will be carried forward into 2023/24 as an earmarked reserve.

Note 15 – Related Parties

It is a requirement of the Code that material transactions with related parties (i.e organisations which the Board can influence or be influenced by) should be disclosed. The Board forms Group Accounts with three local authorities, namely West Dunbartonshire Council, East Dunbartonshire Council and Argyll & Bute Council. Sums paid by the local authorities to the Board are detailed in Note 13.

DUNBARTONSHIRE and ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD**Report by Treasurer****Valuation Joint Board - 23 June 2023**

Subject: Assurance Statement for the year ended 31 March 2023 from the Shared Service Manager – Audit & Fraud

1. Purpose

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to advise Members of the Board of the contents of the annual Assurance Statement given to Members of the Board in support of the Annual Governance Statement. This report outlines how audit assurances are obtained.

2. Background

- 2.1** The Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) became effective on 1st April 2013 (revised in 2017) and require that:

“The chief audit executive [WDC: Shared Service Manager – Audit & Fraud] must deliver an annual internal audit opinion and report that can be used by the organisation to inform its governance statement.

The annual internal audit opinion must conclude on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the organisation’s framework of governance, risk management and control.

The annual report must incorporate:

- *The opinion;*
- *A summary of the work that supports the opinion; and*
- *A statement on conformance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards and the results of the quality assurance and improvement programme”.*

- 2.2** The Assurance Statement is included at Appendix 1.

3. Main Issues

- 3.1** The Shared Service Manager – Audit & Fraud is pleased to report continued good progress across the Council and the VJB on implementation of audit action plans. The Internal Audit Annual Report and Assurance Statement states that reasonable assurance can be placed upon the adequacy and effectiveness of West Dunbartonshire Council’s internal control system operated by the Council on behalf of Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute Valuation Joint Board in the year to 31 March 2023.

3.2 The annual Assurance Statement for the year ended 31 March 2023 at Appendix 1 includes the Shared Service Manager's independent and objective opinion as to the adequacy and effectiveness of West Dunbartonshire Council's internal control system, operated by the Council on behalf of Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute Valuation Joint Board.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

- 4.1** Members are requested to:
- (i) note the contents of the annual Assurance Statement for the year ended 31 March 2023 provided at Appendix 1.

.....
Laurence Slavin
Treasurer
Date: 7 June 2023

Person(s) to Contact: Andi Priestman, Shared Service Manager - Audit & Fraud
West Dunbartonshire Council
E-mail: andi.priestman@west-dunbarton.gov.uk

Appendix: 1 - Assurance Statement for the year ended 31 March 2023 from the Shared Service Manager – Audit & Fraud

Assurance Statement for the year ended 31 March 2023
from the Shared Service Manager – Audit & Fraud

**To the Members of the Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute
Valuation Joint Board**

As Shared Service Manager – Audit & Fraud of West Dunbartonshire Council, I am pleased to present my annual statement on the adequacy and effectiveness of the internal control system operated by the Council on behalf of Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute Valuation Joint Board for the year ended 31 March 2023.

**Respective responsibilities of management and internal auditors in
relation to internal control**

It is the responsibility of the Council's senior management to establish an appropriate and sound system of internal control and to monitor the continuing effectiveness of that system on behalf of the Dunbartonshire & Argyll & Bute Valuation Joint Board. It is the responsibility of the Shared Service Manager – Audit & Fraud to provide an annual overall assessment of the robustness of the internal control system.

Sound internal controls

The main objectives of the Council's internal control systems are:

- To ensure adherence to management policies and directives in order to achieve the organisation's objectives;
- To ensure economic, efficient, effective and safe use of resources and assets;
- To ensure the relevance, reliability and integrity of information, so ensuring as far as possible the completeness and accuracy of records; and
- To ensure compliance with statutory requirements.

Any system of control can only ever provide reasonable and not absolute assurance that control weaknesses or irregularities do not exist or that there is no risk of material errors, losses, fraud, or breaches of laws or regulations. Accordingly, the Council is continually seeking to improve the effectiveness of its systems of internal control.

The work of internal audit

Internal auditing is an independent, objective assurance and consulting activity designed to add value and improve an organisation's operations. It helps an organisation accomplish its objectives by bringing a systematic, disciplined approach to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of risk management, control and governance processes.

The Council's Internal Audit Section operates in accordance with the *Public Sector Internal Audit Standards* (The Standards) which have been agreed to be adopted from the 1st April 2013 by the relevant public sector Internal Audit Standard setters. The Standards apply the Institute of Internal Auditors International Standards to the UK Public Sector.

PSIAS requires that a Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme (QAIP) is developed in order to provide assurance that internal audit activity

- Is conducted in accordance with an Internal Audit Charter;
- Operates in an efficient and effective manner; and
- Is perceived to be adding value and improving operations.

An internal self-assessment of internal audit practices has been carried out by Internal Audit every year since PSIAS became effective on 1st April 2013, with improvements identified and implemented as appropriate. PSIAS also requires, as outlined in Standard 1300 "QAIP", that:

"External assessments must be conducted at least once every five years by a qualified, independent assessor or assessment team from outside the organisation. External assessments can be in the form of a full external assessment or a self-assessment with independent external validation".

To meet this requirement, a reciprocal arrangement to complete a programme of inspections has been developed by the Scottish Local Authorities Chief Internal Auditors Group (SLACIAG). The next external review is due to be carried out in 2023.

The Internal Audit Section undertakes an annual programme of work based on a risk assessment process which is revised on an ongoing basis to reflect evolving risks and changes within the Council. All Internal Audit reports identifying system weaknesses and/or non-compliance with expected controls are brought to the attention of management and the Audit Committee together with appropriate recommendations and agreed action plans.

Specific reports relating to Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute Valuation Joint Board are submitted to meetings of the Valuation Joint Board.

For 2022/23 Internal Audit completed a review of workforce planning arrangements. The overall audit opinion was **Satisfactory**. However, the audit identified 2 Amber issues as follows:

Adequacy of Workforce Planning Process

The DAB VJB workforce planning process is carried out on an annual basis, however the process is not aligned to the VJB's overall longer term strategic and financial planning to take account of the strategic priorities for the VJB and identify future workforce requirements on a longer term basis.

Adequacy of Monitoring and Reporting of Workforce Plan Actions

The DAB VJB workforce plan sets out progress made on the prior year agreed actions and also details forthcoming actions. However the actions do not have specific timescales for completion and some are noted as ongoing. In addition, there is no formal reporting of progress on current workforce plan actions to the Board during the year.

An action plan is in place to address both issues by 28 February 2024.

Basis of Opinion

My evaluation of the control environment is informed by a number of sources:

- The audit work undertaken by internal audit during the year to 31 March 2023;
- The assessment of risk completed during reviews of the annual audit plan;
- The assurance statement signed by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer on the operation of the internal financial controls within the Valuation Joint Board during the year to 31 March 2023;
- Reports issued by the Valuation Joint Board's External Auditors, Audit Scotland and other review agencies; and
- My knowledge of the Council's and the Valuation Joint Board's governance, risk management and performance monitoring arrangements.

Opinion

It is my opinion, based on the above, that reasonable assurance can be placed upon the adequacy and effectiveness of West Dunbartonshire Council's internal control system, operated by the Council on behalf of Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute Valuation Joint Board for the year to 31 March 2023.

Signature: Andi Priestman

Title: Shared Service Manager – Audit & Fraud

Date: 7 June 2023

DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD**Report by Treasurer****Valuation Joint Board - 23 June 2023**

Subject: Mazars' Annual Audit Plan 2022/23**1. Purpose**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present Mazars' Annual Audit Plan for the audit of financial year 2022/23 to the Board for information.

2. Background

- 2.1 Mazars has produced their Annual Audit Plan which provides an overview of the audit approach to be adopted and describes the outputs the Board can expect to receive. The plan is appended to this report for noting.

3. Main Issues

- 3.1 The Annual Audit plan provides details of the audit scope, approach and proposed timeline within Section 3 of the appended plan.
- 3.2 Details of the significant risks and other key judgement areas are detailed on pages 13 to 16 of the attachment.
- 3.3 The fee for the local audit for 2022/23 is £8,790 which is inline with the expected fees set by Audit Scotland. However, this is an increase from the charge in 2021/22 (£7,810); representing an inflationary increase of £980 (12.5%).
- 3.4 A representative from the Mazars' Team will be in attendance at the Board meeting to answer any questions on the plan.

4. Recommendations

- 4.1 The Board is asked to note Mazars' audit plan for the audit of financial year 2022/23.

Laurence Slavin**Treasurer****Date: 23 June 2023**

Person to Contact: Janine Corr, Accountant
West Dunbartonshire Council
E-mail: janine.corr@west-dunbarton.gov.uk

Appendix:

Mazars' Annual Audit Plan 2022/23.

Audit Strategy Memorandum

Dunbartonshire and Argyll and Bute
Valuation Joint Board

Year ending 31 March 2023



Contents

- 01** Engagement and responsibilities summary
- 02** Your audit engagement team
- 03** Audit scope, approach and timeline
- 04** Significant risks and other key judgement areas
- 05** Wider scope and Best Value
- 06** Fees for audit and other services
- 07** Our commitment to independence
- 08** Materiality and misstatements

- A** Appendix A – Key communication points
- Appendix B – Revised auditing standard on Identifying and assessing the risks of material misstatement: ISA (UK) 315 (Revised 2019)

This document is to be regarded as confidential to Dunbartonshire and Argyll and Bute Valuation Joint Board. It has been prepared for the sole use of the Board as those charged with governance. No responsibility is accepted to any other person in respect of the whole or part of its contents. Our written consent must first be obtained before this document, or any part of it, is disclosed to a third party.

Dunbartonshire and Argyll and Bute Valuation Joint Board
235 Dumbarton Road
Clydebank
G81 4XJ

24 April 2023

Dear Board Members

Audit Strategy Memorandum – Year ending 31 March 2023

We are pleased to present our Audit Strategy Memorandum for Dunbartonshire and Argyll and Bute Valuation Joint Board for the year ending 31 March 2023. The purpose of this document is to summarise our audit approach, highlight significant audit risks and areas of key judgements and provide you with the details of our audit team. As it is a fundamental requirement that an auditor is, and is seen to be, independent of its clients, section 7 of this document also summarises our considerations and conclusions on our independence as auditors. We consider two-way communication with you to be key to a successful audit and important in:

- reaching a mutual understanding of the scope of the audit and the responsibilities of each of us;
- sharing information to assist each of us to fulfil our respective responsibilities;
- providing you with constructive observations arising from the audit process; and
- ensuring that we, as external auditors, gain an understanding of your attitude and views in respect of the internal and external operational, financial, compliance and other risks facing Dunbartonshire and Argyll and Bute Valuation Joint Board which may affect the audit, including the likelihood of those risks materialising and how they are monitored and managed.

With that in mind, we see this document, which has been prepared following our initial planning discussions with management, as being the basis for a discussion around our audit approach, any questions, concerns or input you may have on our approach or role as auditor. This document also contains an appendix that outlines our key communications with you during the course of the audit, and explains the implications of the introduction of the new auditing standard for Identifying and assessing the risks of material misstatement: ISA (UK) 315 (Revised 2019).

Client service is extremely important to us and we strive to provide technical excellence with the highest level of service quality, together with continuous improvement to exceed your expectations so, if you have any concerns or comments about this document or audit approach, please contact me on 07816 354 994 or via tom.reid@mazars.co.uk.

Yours faithfully



Tom Reid (Audit Director)

Mazars LLP

01

Section 01:

Engagement and responsibilities summary

1. Engagement and responsibilities summary

Overview of engagement

We are appointed to perform the external audit of Dunbartonshire and Argyll and Bute Valuation Joint Board (the VJB) for the year to 31 March 2023. The scope of our engagement is set out in the Code of Audit Practice, issued by the Auditor General and the Accounts Commission available from the Audit Scotland website: [Code of audit practice | Audit Scotland \(audit-scotland.gov.uk\)](https://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk). Our responsibilities are principally derived from the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (the 1973 Act) and the Code of Audit Practice, as outlined below.

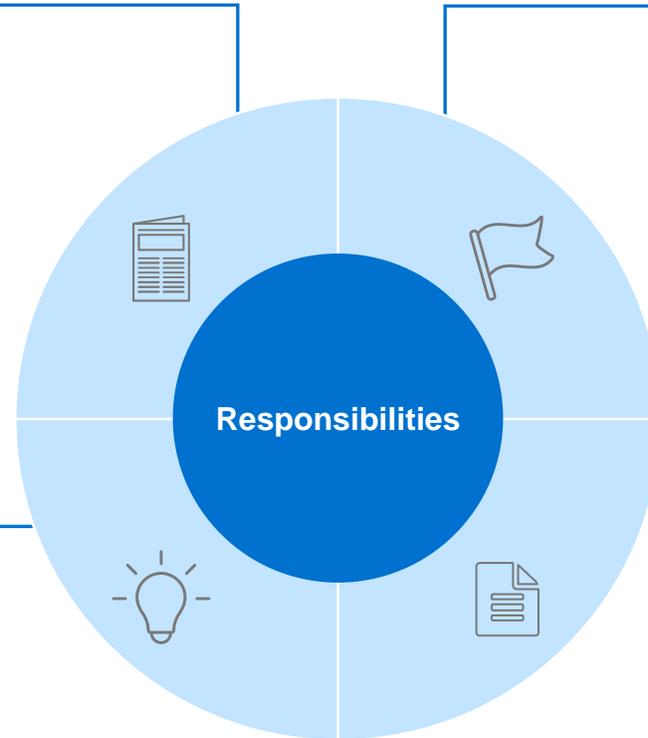
Audit opinion

We are responsible for forming and expressing an independent opinion on whether the financial statements are prepared, in all material respects, in accordance with all applicable statutory requirements. Our audit does not relieve management or the Board, as Those Charged With Governance, of their responsibilities.

The Treasurer is responsible for the assessment of whether it is appropriate for the VJB to prepare its accounts on a going concern basis. As auditors, we are required to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence regarding, and conclude on: a) whether a material uncertainty related to going concern exists; and b) consider the appropriateness of the Treasurer's use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements.

Wider scope and Best Value

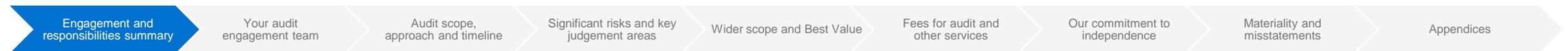
We are also responsible for reviewing and reporting on the wider scope arrangements that the VJB has in place and its arrangements to secure Best Value. We discuss our approach to wider scope and Best Value work further in [section 5] of this report.



Fraud

The responsibility for safeguarding assets and for the prevention and detection of fraud, error and non-compliance with law or regulations rests with both Those Charged With Governance and management. This includes establishing and maintaining internal controls over reliability of financial reporting.

As part of our audit procedures in relation to fraud we are required to enquire of Those Charged With Governance, including key management and Internal audit as to their knowledge of instances of fraud, the risk of fraud and their views on internal controls that mitigate the fraud risks. In accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK), we plan and perform our audit so as to obtain reasonable assurance that the financial statements taken as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether caused by fraud or error. Our audit, however, should not be relied upon to identify all such misstatements.



02

Section 02:

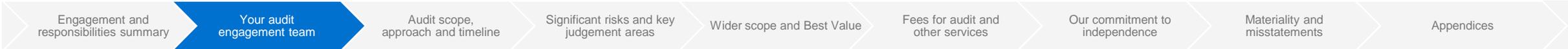
Your audit engagement team

2. Your audit engagement team

Below is your audit engagement team and their contact details.



Tom Reid
Engagement Director
tom.reid@mazars.co.uk
07816 354 994



03

Section 03:

Audit scope, approach and timeline

3. Audit scope, approach and timeline

Audit scope

Our audit approach is designed to provide an audit that complies with all professional requirements.

Our audit of the financial statements will be conducted in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK), relevant ethical and professional standards, our own audit approach and in accordance with the terms of our engagement. Our work is focused on those aspects of your activities which we consider to have a higher risk of material misstatement, such as those impacted by management judgement and estimation, application of new accounting standards, changes of accounting policy, changes to operations or areas which have been found to contain material errors in the past.

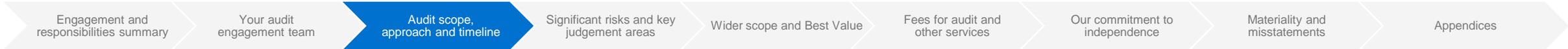
Audit approach

Our audit approach is risk-based and primarily driven by the issues that we consider lead to a higher risk of material misstatement of the accounts. Once we have completed our risk assessment, we develop our audit strategy and design audit procedures in response to the risks identified.

If we conclude that appropriately-designed controls are in place then we may plan to test and rely upon these controls. If we decide controls are not appropriately designed, or we decide it would be more efficient to do so, we may take a wholly substantive approach to our audit testing. Substantive procedures are audit procedures designed to detect material misstatements at the assertion level and comprise: tests of details (of classes of transactions, account balances, and disclosures); and substantive analytical procedures. Irrespective of the assessed risks of material misstatement, which take into account our evaluation of the operating effectiveness of controls, we are required to design and perform substantive procedures for each material class of transactions, account balance, and disclosure.

Our audit will be planned and performed so as to provide reasonable assurance that the financial statements are free from material misstatement and give a true and fair view. The concept of materiality and how we define a misstatement is explained in more detail in section 8.

The diagram on the next page outlines the procedures we perform at the different stages of the audit.



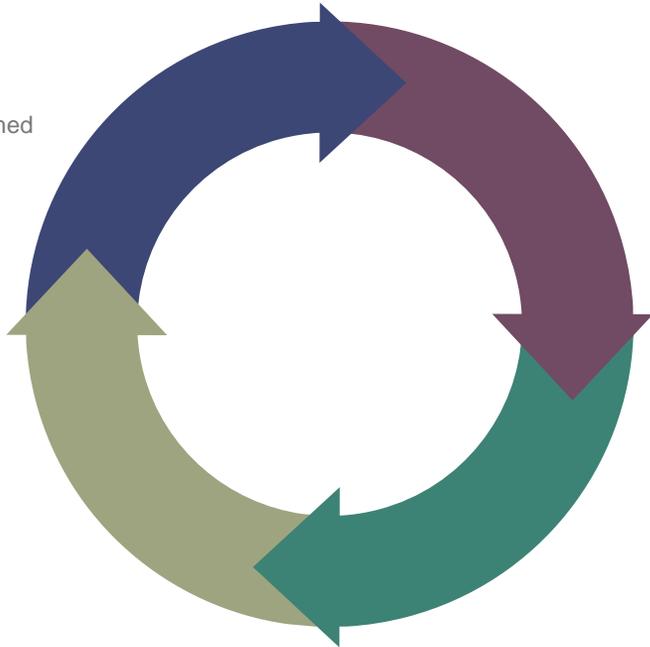
3. Audit scope, approach and timeline

Planning and Risk Assessment (January to April 2023)

- Planning visit and developing our understanding of the VJB
- Initial opinion and wider scope risk assessments
- Considering proposed accounting treatments and accounting policies
- Developing the audit strategy and planning the audit work to be performed
- Agreeing timetable and deadlines
- Risk assessment analytical procedures
- Determination of materiality

Completion (October 2023)

- Final review and disclosure checklist of financial statements
- Final director review
- Agreeing content of letter of representation
- Reporting to the Board
- Reviewing subsequent events
- Signing the independent auditor's report

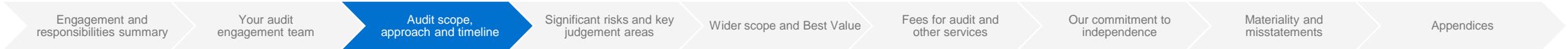


Interim (March to June 2023)

- Documenting systems and controls
- Performing walkthroughs
- Reassessment of audit plan and revision if necessary

Fieldwork (July to October 2023)

- Receiving and reviewing draft financial statements
- Delivering our audit strategy starting with significant risks and high risk areas including detailed testing of transactions, account balances and disclosures
- Communicating progress and issues
- Clearance meeting



3. Audit scope, approach and timeline

Reliance on internal audit

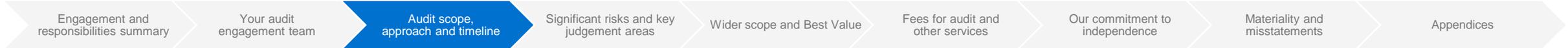
Where possible we will seek to utilise the work performed by internal audit to modify the nature, extent and timing of our audit procedures. We will meet with internal audit to discuss the progress and findings of their work prior to the commencement of our controls evaluation procedures.

Where we intend to rely on the work of internal audit, we will evaluate the work performed by your internal audit team and perform our own audit procedures to determine its adequacy for our audit.

Management’s and our experts

Management makes use of experts in specific areas when preparing the VJB’s financial statements. We also use experts to assist us to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence on specific items of account.

Item of account	Management’s expert	Our expert
Defined benefit liability	Hymans Robertson (Strathclyde Pension Fund)	We make use of PwC actuarial services who are commissioned by the National Audit Office to review the national analysis of pension trends and assumptions of the various Local Government Pension Scheme actuaries.
Property, plant and equipment valuation	VJB’s external valuer (Gerald Eve)	We will review the analysis of property valuation movements available from third parties and consider the outcome of the VJB’s valuations in comparison with these, challenging conclusions as appropriate.



04

Section 04:

Significant risks and other key judgement areas

4. Significant risks and other key judgement areas

Following the risk assessment approach discussed in section 3 of this document, we have identified risks relevant to the audit of financial statements. The risks that we identify are categorised as significant, enhanced or standard. The definitions of the level of risk rating are given below:

Significant risk

Significant risks are those risks assessed as being close to the upper end of the spectrum of inherent risk, based on the combination of the likelihood of a misstatement occurring and the magnitude of any potential misstatement. Fraud risks are always assessed as significant risks as required by auditing standards, including management override of controls and revenue recognition.

Enhanced risk

An enhanced risk is an area of higher assessed risk of material misstatement at audit assertion level other than a significant risk. Enhanced risks require additional consideration but does not rise to the level of a significant risk, these include but may not be limited to:

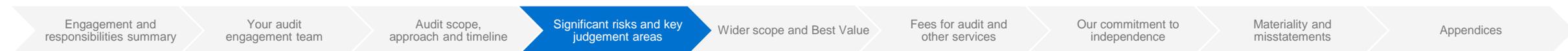
- key areas of management judgement, including accounting estimates which are material but are not considered to give rise to a significant risk of material misstatement; and
- other audit assertion risks arising from significant events or transactions that occurred during the period.

Standard risk

This is related to relatively routine, non-complex transactions that tend to be subject to systematic processing and require little management judgement. Although it is considered that there is a risk of material misstatement (RMM), there are no elevated or special factors related to the nature, the likely magnitude of the potential misstatements or the likelihood of the risk occurring.

Summary risk assessment

The summary risk assessment, illustrated in the table below, highlights those risks which we deem to be significant and other enhanced risks in respect of the VJB. We have summarised our audit response to these risks on the next page.



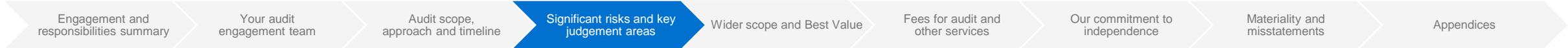
4. Significant risks and other key judgement areas

Specific identified audit risks and planned testing strategy

We have presented below in more detail the reasons for the risk assessment highlighted above, and also our testing approach with respect to significant risks. An audit is a dynamic process, should we change our view of risk or approach to address the identified risks during the course of our audit, we will report this to the Board.

Significant risks

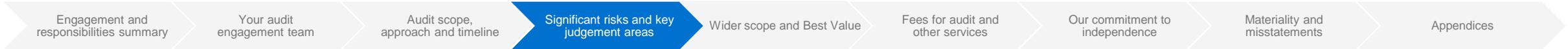
	Description	Fraud	Error	Judgement	Planned response
1	<p>Management override of controls This is a mandatory significant risk on all audits due to the unpredictable way in which such override could occur.</p> <p>Management at various levels within an organisation are in a unique position to perpetrate fraud because of their ability to manipulate accounting records and prepare fraudulent financial statements by overriding controls that otherwise appear to be operating effectively. Due to the unpredictable way in which such override could occur there is a risk of material misstatement due to fraud on all audits.</p>	●	○	○	<p>We plan to address the management override of controls by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reviewing the key areas within the financial statements where management has used judgement and estimation techniques and consider whether there is evidence of unfair bias; • testing the appropriateness of journal entries recorded in the general ledger and other adjustments made in preparing the financial statements; and • considering and testing any significant transactions outside the normal course of business or otherwise unusual.



4. Significant risks and other key judgement areas

Significant risks

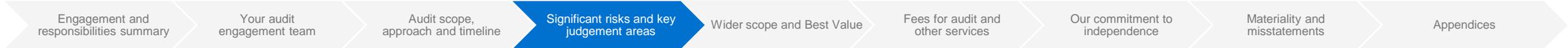
	Description	Fraud	Error	Judgement	Planned response
2	<p>Valuation of property, plant and equipment The VJB held land and buildings, with a net book value of £0.638 million as at 31 March 2022. The VJB has adopted a rolling revaluation model with an external valuer carrying out valuations of land and buildings on a five-year cycle. This may result in individual assets not being revalued for several years. This creates a risk that the carrying value of those assets that have not been revalued in year is materially different from the year end fair value.</p> <p>Valuations are based on specialist and management assumptions and changes in these can result in material changes to valuations. Due to the high degree of estimation uncertainty associated with valuations, we have determined there is a significant risk in this area.</p>	○	●	●	<p>We will evaluate the design and implementation of any controls which mitigate the risk. This includes liaising with management to update our understanding on the approach taken by the VJB in its valuation of land and buildings. We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assess the scope and terms of engagement with the Valuer; • assess the competence, skills and objectivity of the Valuer; • assess how management use the Valuer’s report to value land and buildings included in the financial statements; • test the accuracy of the data used in valuations; • challenge the VJB and Valuer’s assumptions and judgements applied in the valuations; • review valuation methodology used, including the appropriateness of the valuation basis; and • consider the reasonableness of the valuation by comparing the valuation output with market intelligence. <p>We have also engaged the Mazars Real Estates Valuation team to assist us with the above.</p>



4. Significant risks and other key judgement areas

Significant risks

	Description	Fraud	Error	Judgement	Planned response
3	<p>Valuation of the net defined benefit liability/surplus</p> <p>The VJB had a net pension asset of £0.507 million at 31 March 2022. Estimation of the net pension asset or liability depends on several complex judgements which are sensitive to changes. These include the discount rate used, the rate at which salaries are predicted to increase, inflation rates and life expectancy. Due to the high degree of estimation uncertainty associated with the valuations, we have determined there is a significant risk in this area.</p>	○	●	●	<p>We will address this risk by reviewing the controls that the VJB has in place over the information sent to the Scheme Actuary by the fund administrators (Strathclyde Pension Fund).</p> <p>We will also:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assess the skill, competence and experience of the Fund's actuary; • challenge the reasonableness of the assumptions used by the actuary as part of the annual IAS 19 valuation; • carry out a range of substantive procedures on relevant information and cash flows used by the actuary as part of the annual IAS 19 valuation.



05

Section 05:

Wider scope and Best Value

5. Wider scope and Best Value

The framework for wider scope work

The Code of Audit Practice sets out the four areas that frame the wider scope of public sector audit. We are required to form a view on the adequacy of the VJB's arrangements in four areas:

1. **Financial management**
2. **Financial sustainability**
3. **Vision, leadership, and governance**
4. **Use of resources to improve outcomes.**

Our approach

Our planned audit work against the four wider scope areas is risk based and proportionate. We need to gather sufficient evidence to support our commentary on the VJB's arrangements and to identify and report on any significant weaknesses. We will carry out more detailed work where we identify significant risks. Where significant weaknesses are identified we will report these to the Board and make recommendations for improvement. In addition to local risks, we consider challenges that are impacting the public sector as a whole.

The Code of Audit Practice permits an alternative audit approach where an audited body is considered less complex due its size and limited financial activity. The Code of Audit Practice supplementary guidance sets out the criteria for auditors to use to determine if a body is less complex and the audit approach to be adopted in such circumstances. We have concluded, based on our understanding of the VJB through our planning work, that it is a less complex body. This was also the judgement of the VJB's previous auditors, Audit Scotland.

We will therefore restrict our wider scope work to:

- a review of the Annual Governance Statement
- concluding on the financial sustainability of the VJB and the services that it delivers in the medium to longer term
- reporting on the arrangements for securing Best Value.

Financial management	<p>Financial management means having sound budgetary processes. Audited bodies require the ability to understand the financial environment and whether internal controls are operating effectively.</p> <p>Auditors consider whether the body has effective arrangements to secure sound financial management.</p>
Financial sustainability	<p>Financial sustainability means being able to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.</p> <p>Auditors consider the extent to which audited bodies have shown regard to financial sustainability. They look ahead to the medium term (two to five years) and longer term (over five years) to consider whether the body is planning effectively so that it can continue to deliver services.</p>
Vision, leadership and governance	<p>Audited bodies must have a clear vision and strategy, and set priorities for improvement within this vision and strategy. They work together with partners and communities to improve outcomes and foster a culture of innovation.</p> <p>Auditors consider the clarity of plans to implement the vision, strategy and priorities adopted by the leaders of the audited body. They also consider the effectiveness of governance arrangements for delivery.</p>
Use of resources to improve outcomes	<p>Audited bodies need to make best use of their resources to meet stated outcomes and improvement objectives, through effective planning and working with strategic partners and communities.</p> <p>Auditors consider the clarity of the arrangements in place to ensure that resources are deployed to improve strategic outcomes, meet the needs of service users taking account of equalities, and deliver continuous improvements in priority services.</p>



06

Section 06:

Fees for audit and other services

6. Fees for audit and other services

Fees for work as the VJB's appointed auditor

At this stage of the audit we are not planning any divergence from the expected fees set by Audit Scotland. The breakdown of the fee is set out in the table below.

	2022/23 Proposed Fee	2021/22 Actual Fee
Auditor remuneration	£19,760	£6,750
Pooled costs	0	£700
Contribution to PABV costs	0	0
Audit support costs	£750	£360
Sectoral cap adjustment	(£11,720)	0
Total fee	£8,790	£7,810

We have taken account of the risk exposure of the VJB and the management assurances in place. We have assumed that the VJB has effective governance arrangements and will prepare comprehensive and accurate accounts and working papers for audit in line with the agreed timetable for the audit. We reserve the right to charge a supplementary fee where our audit cannot proceed as planned. An additional fee will be required for any other significant exercises not within our planned audit activity.

07

Section 07:

Our commitment to independence

7. Our commitment to independence

We are committed to independence and are required by the Financial Reporting Council to confirm to you at least annually in writing that we comply with the FRC's Ethical Standard. In addition, we communicate any matters or relationship which we believe may have a bearing on our independence or the objectivity of the audit team.

Based on the information provided by you and our own internal procedures to safeguard our independence as auditors, we confirm that in our professional judgement there are no relationships between us and any of our related or subsidiary entities, and you and your related entities creating any unacceptable threats to our independence within the regulatory or professional requirements governing us as your auditors.

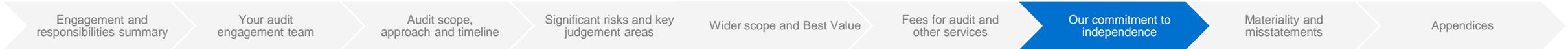
We have policies and procedures in place which are designed to ensure that we carry out our work with integrity, objectivity and independence. These policies include:

- all partners and staff are required to complete an annual independence declaration;
- all new partners and staff are required to complete an independence confirmation and also complete computer based ethical training;
- rotation policies covering audit engagement partners and other key members of the audit team; and
- use by managers and partners of our client and engagement acceptance system which requires all non-audit services to be approved in advance by the audit engagement partner.

We confirm, as at the date of this document, that the engagement team and others in the firm as appropriate, Mazars LLP are independent and comply with relevant ethical requirements. However, if at any time you have concerns or questions about our integrity, objectivity or independence please discuss these with Tom Reid in the first instance.

Prior to the provision of any non-audit services Tom Reid will undertake appropriate procedures to consider and fully assess the impact that providing the service may have on our auditor independence.

Any emerging independence threats and associated identified safeguards will be communicated in our Annual Audit Report.



08

Section 08:

Materiality and misstatements

8. Materiality and misstatements

Summary of initial materiality thresholds

Threshold	Initial threshold £'000s
Overall materiality	64
Performance materiality	45
We assess the Remuneration Report as sensitive given users' interest in this specific area. We are proposing to set materiality in this area at £1,000.	1
Trivial threshold for errors to be reported to the Board	2

Materiality

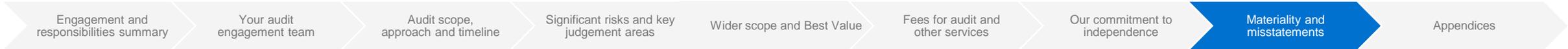
Materiality is an expression of the relative significance or importance of a particular matter in the context of financial statements as a whole.

Information is considered to be material if omitting, misstating or obscuring it could reasonably be expected to influence the decisions that the primary users of general purpose financial statements make on the basis of those financial statements, which provide financial information about a specific reporting entity.

Judgements on materiality are made in light of surrounding circumstances and are affected by the size and nature of a misstatement, or a combination of both. Judgements about materiality are based on consideration of the common financial information needs of users as a group and not on specific individual users.

The assessment of what is material is a matter of professional judgement and is affected by our perception of the financial information needs of the users of the financial statements. In making our assessment we assume that users:

- have a reasonable knowledge of business, economic activities and accounts;
- have a willingness to study the information in the financial statements with reasonable diligence;
- understand that financial statements are prepared, presented and audited to levels of materiality;
- recognise the uncertainties inherent in the measurement of amounts based on the use of estimates, judgement and the consideration of future events; and
- will make reasonable economic decisions on the basis of the information in the financial statements.



8. Materiality and misstatements

Materiality (continued)

We consider materiality whilst planning and performing our audit based on quantitative and qualitative factors.

Whilst planning, we make judgements about the size of misstatements which we consider to be material and which provides a basis for determining the nature, timing and extent of risk assessment procedures, identifying and assessing the risk of material misstatement and determining the nature, timing and extent of further audit procedures.

The materiality determined at the planning stage does not necessarily establish an amount below which uncorrected misstatements, either individually or in aggregate, will be considered as immaterial.

We revise materiality for the financial statements as our audit progresses should we become aware of information that would have caused us to determine a different amount had we been aware of that information at the planning stage.

Our provisional materiality is set based on a benchmark of gross revenue expenditure at surplus/deficit level. We will identify a figure for materiality but identify separate levels for procedures designed to detect individual errors, and also a level above which all identified errors will be reported to the Board.

We consider that gross revenue expenditure at surplus/deficit level remains the key focus of users of the financial statements and, as such, we base our materiality levels around this benchmark.

We expect to set a materiality threshold at 2% of gross revenue expenditure at surplus/deficit level. Based on the audited 2021/22 financial statements we anticipate the overall materiality for the year ending 31 March 2023 to be in the region of £64,000.

After setting initial materiality, we continue to monitor materiality throughout the audit to ensure that it is set at an appropriate level.

Performance Materiality

Performance materiality is the amount or amounts set by the auditor at less than materiality for the financial statements as a whole to reduce, to an appropriately low level, the probability that the aggregate of uncorrected and undetected misstatements exceeds materiality for the financial statements as a whole. For a first-year audit, our initial assessment of performance materiality, based on low inherent risk, means that we have applied 70% of overall materiality as performance materiality.

Misstatements

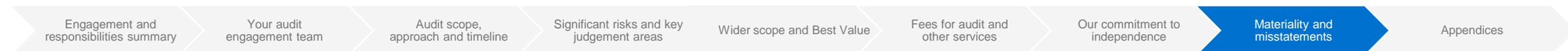
We accumulate misstatements identified during the audit that are other than clearly trivial. We set a level of triviality for individual errors identified (a reporting threshold) for reporting to the Board that is consistent with the level of triviality that we consider would not need to be accumulated because we expect that the accumulation of such amounts would not have a material effect on the financial statements. Based on our preliminary assessment of overall materiality, our proposed triviality threshold is £2,000 based on 3% of overall materiality.

If you have any queries about this, please do not hesitate to raise these with Tom Reid.

Reporting to the Board

The following three types of audit differences above the trivial threshold will be presented to the Board:

- summary of adjusted audit differences;
- summary of unadjusted audit differences; and
- summary of disclosure differences (adjusted and unadjusted).





Appendices

A: Key communication points

B: Revised auditing standard on Identifying and assessing the risks of material misstatement: ISA (UK) 315 (Revised 2019)

Appendix A: Key communication points

We value communication with Those Charged With Governance as a two way feedback process at the heart of our client service commitment. ISA 260 (UK) 'Communication with Those Charged with Governance' and ISA 265 (UK) 'Communicating Deficiencies In Internal Control To Those Charged With Governance And Management' specifically require us to communicate a number of points with you.

Relevant points that need to be communicated with you at each stage of the audit are outlined below.

Form, timing and content of our communications

We will present the following reports:

- Audit Strategy Memorandum;
- Annual Annual Report

These documents will be discussed with management prior to being presented to yourselves and their comments will be incorporated as appropriate.

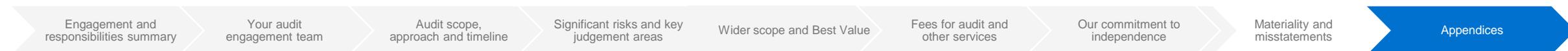
Key communication points at the planning stage as included in this Audit Strategy Memorandum

- Our responsibilities in relation to the audit of the financial statements.
- The planned scope and timing of the audit.
- Significant audit risks and areas of management judgement.
- Our commitment to independence.
- Responsibilities for preventing and detecting errors;

- Materiality and misstatements; and
- Fees for audit and other services.

Key communication points at the completion stage to be included in our Annual Audit Report

- Significant deficiencies in internal control.
- Significant findings from the audit.
- Significant matters discussed with management.
- Significant difficulties, if any, encountered during the audit.
- Qualitative aspects of the entity's accounting practices, including accounting policies, accounting estimates and financial statement disclosures.
- Our conclusions on the significant audit risks and areas of management judgement.
- Summary of misstatements.
- Management representation letter.
- Our proposed draft audit report.
- Independence.



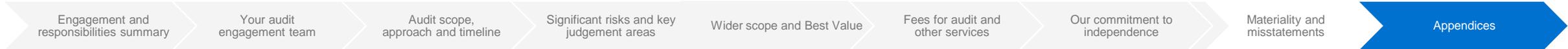
Appendix A: Key communication points

ISA (UK) 260 'Communication with Those Charged with Governance', ISA (UK) 265 'Communicating Deficiencies In Internal Control To Those Charged With Governance And Management' and other ISAs (UK) specifically require us to communicate the following:

Required communication	Where addressed
Our responsibilities in relation to the financial statement audit and those of management and those charged with governance.	Audit Strategy Memorandum
The planned scope and timing of the audit including any limitations, specifically including with respect to significant risks.	Audit Strategy Memorandum
With respect to misstatements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uncorrected misstatements and their effect on our audit opinion; • the effect of uncorrected misstatements related to prior periods; • a request that any uncorrected misstatement is corrected; and • in writing, corrected misstatements that are significant. 	Annual Audit Report
With respect to fraud communications: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • enquiries of the Board to determine whether they have a knowledge of any actual, suspected or alleged fraud affecting the entity; • any fraud that we have identified or information we have obtained that indicates that fraud may exist; and • a discussion of any other matters related to fraud. 	Annual Audit Report and discussion at Board, Audit planning and clearance meetings

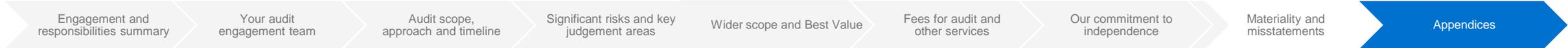
Appendix A: Key communication points

Required communication	Where addressed
<p>Significant matters arising during the audit in connection with the entity’s related parties including, when applicable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • non-disclosure by management; • inappropriate authorisation and approval of transactions; • disagreement over disclosures; • non-compliance with laws and regulations; and • difficulty in identifying the party that ultimately controls the entity. 	Annual Audit Report
<p>Significant findings from the audit including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • our view about the significant qualitative aspects of accounting practices including accounting policies, accounting estimates and financial statement disclosures; • significant difficulties, if any, encountered during the audit; • significant matters, if any, arising from the audit that were discussed with management or were the subject of correspondence with management; • written representations that we are seeking; • expected modifications to the audit report; and • other matters, if any, significant to the oversight of the financial reporting process or otherwise identified in the course of the audit that we believe will be relevant to the Board in the context of fulfilling their responsibilities. 	Annual Audit Report
Significant deficiencies in internal controls identified during the audit.	Annual Audit Report
Where relevant, any issues identified with respect to authority to obtain external confirmations or inability to obtain relevant and reliable audit evidence from other procedures.	Annual Audit Report



Appendix A: Key communication points

Required communication	Where addressed
<p>Audit findings regarding non-compliance with laws and regulations where the non-compliance is material and believed to be intentional (subject to compliance with legislation on tipping off) and enquiry of the Board into possible instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations that may have a material effect on the financial statements and that the Board may be aware of.</p>	<p>Annual Audit Report and Board meetings</p>
<p>With respect to going concern, events or conditions identified that may cast significant doubt on the entity's ability to continue as a going concern, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • whether the events or conditions constitute a material uncertainty; • whether the use of the going concern assumption is appropriate in the preparation and presentation of the financial statements; and • the adequacy of related disclosures in the financial statements. 	<p>Annual Audit Report</p>
<p>Reporting on the valuation methods applied to the various items in the annual financial statements including any impact of changes of such methods</p>	<p>Annual Audit Report</p>
<p>Indication of whether all requested explanations and documents were provided by the entity</p>	<p>Annual Audit Report</p>



Appendix B: Revised auditing standard on Identifying and assessing the risks of material misstatement: ISA (UK) 315 (Revised 2019)

Background

ISA (UK) 315 (Revised 2019) introduces major changes to the auditor's risk identification and assessment approach, which are intended to drive a more focused response from auditors undertaking work to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence to address the risks of material misstatement. The new standard is effective for periods commencing on or after 15 December 2021 and therefore applies in full for the VJB's 2022/23 audit.

The most significant changes relevant to the VJB's audit are outlined below.

Enhanced risk identification and assessment

The standard has enhanced the requirements for the auditor to understand the audited entity, its environment and the applicable financial reporting framework in order to identify and assess risk based on inherent risk factors which include:

- subjectivity;
- complexity;
- uncertainty and change; and
- susceptibility to misstatement due to management bias or fraud.

Using these inherent risk factors, we assess inherent risk on a spectrum, at which the higher end of which lies significant risks, to drive an audit that is more focused on identified risks. Auditors are now also required to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence from these risk identification and assessment procedures which means documentation and evidence requirements are also enhanced.

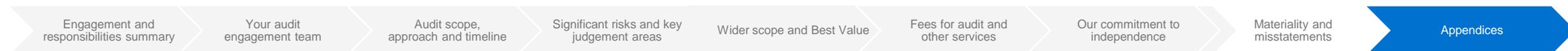
Greater emphasis on understanding IT

In response to constantly evolving business environments, the standard places an increased emphasis on the requirements for the auditor to gain an understanding of the entity's IT environment to better understand the possible

risks within an entity's information systems. As a result, we are required to gain a greater understanding of the IT environment, including IT general controls (ITGCs).

Increased focus on controls

Building on the need for auditors to gain a greater understanding of the IT environment, the standard also widens the scope of controls that are deemed relevant to the audit. We are now required to broaden our understanding of controls implemented by management, including ITGCs, as well as assess the design and implementation of those controls.



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Mazars is an internationally integrated partnership, specialising in audit, accountancy, advisory, tax and legal services*. Operating in over 90 countries and territories around the world, we draw on the expertise of 40,400 professionals – 24,400 in Mazars' integrated partnership and 16,000 via the Mazars North America Alliance – to assist clients of all sizes at every stage in their development.

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DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD**Report by Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer****Valuation Joint Board – 23 June 2023**

Subject: Best Value – Service Planning**1.0 Purpose of Report**

1.1 To seek Joint Board approval of the April 2023 update to the approved 2021-24 Service Plan.

2.0 Background

2.1 Service Planning on a 3-year cycle forms part of the Joint Board's Corporate Governance framework.

2.2 In June 2021 the Board approved a 3-year Service Plan for the period 2021-24 reflecting the strategic aims, operational and legislative requirements of the organisation over that period.

2.3 The Management Team also compile and use a Service Calendar which lays out the more detailed operations and tasks for the forthcoming year.

3.0 Progress

3.1 An April 2023 update to the Service Plan, which reflects the continually changing environment that the Joint Board operates within, has been agreed by the Management Team and is attached for Board Members consideration and approval (Appendix 1).

3.2 An Annual Calendar for 2023/24 has been derived from the Service Plan. The Annual Calendar, which provides more detail on activities, responsibilities and timelines throughout the current financial year, can be made available to members on request.

4.0 Next Steps

4.1 The Annual Service Calendar will be used by the Joint Board's Management Team to plan resources and activities and monitor progress.

4.2 The Service Plan will be reviewed and updated annually, with changes being reported to the Joint Board.

5.0 Recommendations

5.1 Members are asked to approve the April 2023 update to the Service Plan for the period 2021-24.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: DABVJB Service Plan 2021-2024 – 2023 Update



*Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute
Valuation Joint Board*

ASSESSOR AND ELECTORAL REGISTRATION OFFICER

SERVICE PLAN 2021-2024

April 2023 Update

Background

Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute Valuation Joint Board is committed to a three-year Service Planning cycle. The most recent Service Plan approved by the Joint Board covers the period 2021-2024.

As the environment in which the Board operates is constantly changing, there is a need to review the Service Plan annually. Rather than produce a fully revised Plan each year, however, this 'Update' includes such changes and new tasks as have occurred or been identified since approval of the main 3-year Plan. **It should therefore be read along with the main 2021-24 Service Plan.** Other than where new sections have been added, references and numberings contained within this document refer back to the original Plan.

During the 2022 Review of our Vision and Mission, a new Commitment was added to use and care for the data we hold in an appropriate way.

The Annual Service Calendar for 2023-24 will reflect the changes included in this Update.

Since the 2021-24 Service Plan was approved, several changes have occurred which have an effect on forward planning. These include:-

A raft of secondary legislation has been drafted to effect both the detailed implementation of the NDR Reforms arising from The Non-Domestic Rates (Scotland) Act (2020) and the transfer of Valuation Appeal Panel functions to the First Tier Tribunal (FTT) of the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service (SCTS).

The Valuation Timetable (Coronavirus) (Scotland) Amendment Order 2021 extended the last date for the disposal by a valuation appeal committee of an appeal lodged between 1 January 2020 to 31 March 2021 from 31 December 2021 to 31 December 2022. The effect of this is to extend the timetable for disposal of 'Coronavirus-related' material change of circumstances appeals. Since then, further Regulation has extended the deadline for disposal to 31 December 2023.

The Non-Domestic Rates (Coronavirus) (Scotland) Bill proposes that in calculating net annual value and rateable value, the assessor can have no account of any matter arising on or after 1 April 2021 that is directly or indirectly attributable to Coronavirus. The effect of this legislation would extend back to 2 April 2020, but not the period from mid-March 2020 when restrictions were brought in. Thus, despite government intention to 'rule out' Coronavirus related appeals, there is ongoing uncertainty regarding their disposal for that period.

In July 2021, the Scottish Minister for Community Safety announced that the transfer of the functions of Valuation Appeal Committees (VACs) to the Scottish Tribunals should be delayed to 1 January 2023. Aligned to this change, the date for the introduction of a new 2-stage proposals and appeals process was amended to 1 January 2023. This was further delayed, with the new Regulations coming in to force on 1 April 2023 at the same time as functions of VACs transferred to the SCTS.

The Council Tax (Dwellings and Part Residential Subjects) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2021 confirmed the introduction of a '70-days of actual use' test to the

definition of a self-catering unit with effect from April 2022. This will require a retrospective review of existing entries annually.

The UK Government brought in to law the Elections Act 2022 which aims to deliver on a number of its 2019 Manifesto commitments. Changes include:-

- (a) The requirement to provide Identification, known as Voter Authority Certificates (VAC) to vote at reserved elections. This new work stream requires the ERO to decide on applications, and approve the issue of Voter Authority Certificates.
- (b) Absent Vote applications will be able to be made online (for the UK Parliamentary Register only).
- (c) Absent Voters on the UK Parliamentary Register will be required to reapply for their absent votes every three years.
- (d) The extension of the overseas voting franchise by removal of the existing 15 year limit on overseas electors' right to vote in UK Parliamentary elections.

The application process for Voter Authority Certificates was launched in January 2023 with the changes to the Absent Vote applications process and extension of overseas voting scheduled for implementation in October 2023.

Notably, these changes only apply to UK elections and will not apply to the Local Government Register. Thus, a divergence in policy and administration will need to be resourced.

The Government has recognised the additional administrative burdens that these changes will bring and has committed to “ensuring those responsible for the conduct of electoral registration have the necessary resources to deliver our elections robustly and securely as they implement these new measures. Any additional funding required to cover identified new burdens arising from this programme will be adequately funded in line with longstanding government practice.”

PART ONE – SERVICE FUNCTION

1.0 Introduction

As at 1 April 2023, the staffing level stands at 48.03 FTE with an appointment pending. Recruitment has paused to allow the Management Team to consider a proposed change of structure to the Valuation Team, arising from an action in the Boards Risk Action Plan.

1.1 Valuation Roll

The total rateable value of 15,180 subjects in the Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute Revaluation Rolls at 1 April 2023 is £393,831,103.

The Assessor is also responsible for the valuation of the gas utility networks for all-Scotland and 3 values totalling £100,150,000 (included in the above rateable value) are currently entered in the Valuation Roll for West Dunbartonshire, in respect of these subjects.

As at April 2023, 60 Revaluation (2017) appeals remain outstanding, having been referred to the Lands Tribunal for Scotland.

1,460 appeals, many of which relate to the Coronavirus outbreak, remain outstanding and require to be disposed of prior to 31 December 2023.

The NDR reform priorities for 2023/24 will be:

- Delivery of system and processes to facilitate the receipt and subsequent processing of new 2-stage Non-Domestic Proposals.
- Requesting and receiving detailed evidence in relation to levels of lettings of Self Catering holiday accommodation for the previous financial year, and amending entries in the Valuation Rolls and Council Tax Lists where entries no longer satisfy the new requirements to remain in the Valuation Roll.
- Planning for the delivery of the 2026 Revaluation, with a valuation date of 01/04/2025. The first revaluation to be delivered only three years after the previous one, alongside dealing with Proposals and Appeals in relation to the 2023 Revaluation.

Direct Scottish Government funding to support the forthcoming change has been incorporated into the 2023/24 budget approved by the Board.

1.2 Valuation List

At 1st April 2023 there were 147,021 properties (including garages and stores) in the Council Tax Valuation List for the Joint Board area. Proposals and appeals continue to be received with 383 outstanding at 1 April 2023. These will be discussed with Council Taxpayers and disposed of as resources allow.

Council Tax appeals are now being administered by the SCTS from 1 April 2023.

1.3 Electoral Register

At publication of registers on 1 December 2022, the total electorate for the Joint Board area was 225,626.

The immediate priority for electoral staff is delivering the Annual Canvass, and preparing for changes resulting from the Elections Act 2022.

Procurement and set-up of hardware, software and processes has begun to allow the annual canvass which will start in July to be carried out using electronic tablets instead of paper. It is anticipated this will deliver processing efficiencies.

See above re the requirement to implement processes and systems to allow for the changes to Absent Voting procedures later in the year.

1.4 Other Functions

Any agreed actions arising from the ongoing Internal Audit of our workforce planning arrangements will be effected.

A project is planned to investigate and procure a replacement for the decades old Assessors System which is the primary database and case management software used for both Council Tax Valuation and Non Domestic Rating.

A number of ICT initiatives including hardware renewal, software development, software upgrades and communications improvements are proposed for the 2023/24 financial year.

In relation to Records Management, the Keeper has issued an invitation to submit a Progress Update Review by the end of May 2023.

PART TWO – CORE OBJECTIVES

2.1 Valuation Roll

- 2.1.1 The changes to the definition of self-catering accommodation (see above) will require a different approach to be taken to the entry and removal of these subjects into and from the Valuation Roll. A retrospective review of entries in the Roll in the previous financial year is now underway, and will require to be undertaken annually in April.
- 2.1.2 All 2017 Revaluation appeals have either been disposed of or referred to the Lands Tribunal. The timetable for appeal work related to the 2017 Revaluation will therefore be dictated largely by LT citation.
- 2.1.3 Appeals (and, from 1 April 2023, proposals) against entries in the 2017 valuation rolls and other types of ‘running roll’ appeal will be received on an ongoing basis (until 31 July 2023) and will be disposed of in accordance with the Valuation Timetable Order. Significant numbers of appeals claiming that the coronavirus outbreak constitutes a material change of circumstances were submitted during March 2020 and March 2021. Some of these have since been withdrawn, however a number still remain live, and are due to be disposed of by the SCTS by the end of 2023.
- 2.1.4 The scheduling of appeal disposal will pass to the First Tier Tribunal (FTT) of the Local Tax Chamber SCTS on 1 April 2023 and this change will require considered administration.
- 2.1.3/2.1.4 The introduction of a 2-stage proposals and appeals process combined with the transfer of powers to FTT will require that new processes and systems are developed to receive and administer proposals. Assessors will have to issue Proposal Disposal Notices, Statements to support the Valuation Roll entry and Assessor Decision Notices. Processes for administration of appeals will also be required.
- 2.1.6 The 2023 Revaluation was delivered on time, including a Draft Roll being made up on 30 November 2022, and the final Roll being made up on 15 March 2023. Valuation Notices were issued to all PTOs following both publications.
- 2.1.7 The first Civil Penalty Notices resulting from the non-return of Assessor Information Notices were issued in early 2023. Although processes are in place, they will need to be refined. This has proven to be a resource intensive exercise. Appeals against Civil Penalty Notices are now via the SCTS.
- 2.1.8 An information gathering exercise took place during 2022/23, and subsequently entries were made in the 2023 Revaluation Roll for some subjects in public parks which were previously exempt.

- 2.1.9 The Revaluation of the 'Gas Transmission Network', 'Gas Distribution Network' and 'Gas Meters' entries were complete, and now appear in the 2023 Revaluation Roll.
- 2.1.10 All expected legislation arising from the Non Domestic Rating Act 2020 is now in force, and processes and instructions continue to be formulated and refined for dealing with these.
- 2.1.11 As of 1 April 2023, the transfer of functions of VACs to the SCTS took place and is now complete.
- 2.1.13 A review of the 2023 Revaluation will take place with teams, the results of which will inform a project plan for the 2026 Revaluation which will be formed this year.

2.2 Council Tax List

- 2.2.3 With Council Tax appeals to be administered by the SCTS from 1 April 2023, efforts will be made to reduce the number of appeals which need to be passed over to the new administration. Additionally, new procedures will be required for transferring appeals to SCTS.

From 1 April 2023, instead of having 6 months to consider proposals made, Regulation now allows the Assessor only 6 weeks to consider and respond to the proposal. Procedures will need reviewed to accommodate this significant reduction in timescale.

2.3 Electoral Register

- 2.3.1 The 'reformed' annual canvass is now business as usual though this year it will be preceded by the procurement and set-up of hardware and software and implementation of process to allow tablet supported digital door-to-door canvassing.
- 2.3.3 The Scottish Government had previously stated its intention to hold an independence referendum 'during 2023'. It now seems unlikely that this will proceed.
- 2.3.4 The requirement for absent votes to be refreshed every 5 years will only be for absent voters on the Local Government Registers. Absent voters on the UK Parliamentary Registers will require to re-apply for their absent vote every three years (due for implementation in 2023).
- 2.3.6 The review of UK Parliamentary Boundaries is under way, and is planned to be presented to the speaker at the start of July 2023. Any resultant work required from the changes will be carried out thereafter. A review of Polling Districts and Polling places will follow. If this is not completed by publication of the Register in December, there may require to be a republication in early 2024.

- 2.3.7 Processes for the receipt and verification of Voter Authority Certificate applications were implemented in January 2023. Changes to absent votes, and votes for life are due to be implemented in the near future.

2.4 Corporate Governance

- 2.4.1 Following the Local Government elections in May 2022, a new Joint Board was formed. The Convener is Councillor Vaughan Moody of East Dunbartonshire Council, and the Vice-convener is Councillor Lawrence O'Neill of West Dunbartonshire Council. The planned briefing on the roles and functions of the Assessor & ERO is scheduled to take place in June 2023.
- 2.4.2 Revenue and Capital Budgets were agreed in March 2023 for the financial year 2023/24. The Board's Long Term Financial Strategy was also approved at that time.
- 2.4.3 The Joint Board's Financial Regulations were last updated in September 2022. The Scheme of Delegation was last updated in March 2023. The Standing Orders are due for review in June 2024.
- 2.4.5 The Counter Fraud and Corruption Policy and Business Irregularities Procedures were last reviewed in July 2021, and should next be reviewed in July 2024.
- 2.4.9 A Valuation Working Group is to be formed, with a remit to be agreed. This will be an evolution of the NDR Reform Working Group.

2.5 Accountability

- 2.5.4 Agreed actions arising from the Internal Audit into the digitisation of processes to permit remote working during the Coronavirus-related lockdown were added to the Audit Action Plan.

An internal audit of the Board's Workforce Planning arrangements is due to take place in April/May 2023. The results of this will be reported to the Board, and added to the Audit Action Plan.

- 2.5.8 A review of the Board's Ordering and Invoicing Procedures took place, with an update being approved in August 2022.

2.6 Best Value

- 2.6.4 The Customer Satisfaction procedure is due for a review, and the method of requesting and collating data will be considered.

2.7 Equal Opportunities

- 2.7.1 A report on the progress toward achieving the stated equalities outcomes which were set in 2021 is due to be published in 2023.
- 2.7.2 The Management Team are to undertake training on the carrying out of Equality Impact Assessments.

2.8 Staffing and Personnel Matters

- 2.8.1 The recently approved Agile Working Policy has been rolled out, and applications from staff are being considered by line managers.
- 2.8.2 A review of the Performance, Training and Development policy will be undertaken during 2023 to gauge the effectiveness of the policy.
- 2.8.3 A review of the Board's Workforce Planning Arrangements is due to be carried out by Internal Audit in April/May 2023.
- 2.8.4 The Depute Assessor will reconvene meetings with West Dunbartonshire Council's Human Resources & Organisational Development (HR&OD) service.

2.9 Finance and Budgeting

- 2.9.1 See 2.4.3 above re current status of these documents.
- 2.9.2 Funding received during 2022/23 from UK Government to cover the additional training needs arising from changes to legislation surrounding Voter ID. Further funding is expected in 2023/24.
- 2.9.5 Training on the use of the Agresso finance system is to be obtained for users during 2023.

2.10 Information Technology

- 2.10.2 As well as the regular refresh of laptops in 2023/24 the capital plan extends to procurement of additional monitors, firewalls and new routers which may be required for modernisation of the telephone systems. Projects to procure a new server to support the valuation functions and remote survey tools have been brought forward from 2022/23.

Following further investigation into the security and other related issues by WDC's ICT team, it is the intention that the Board will move to an internet based telephone service during 2023/24.

- 2.10.6 The Assessor's 'Progress' system is being amended to accommodate receipt and administration of proposals and subsequent appeals which following changes to Regulations which are effective from 1 April 2023.

The efficiency of the 'Progress' system (a legacy Strathclyde Regional Council system) is to be reviewed, and alternative options explored.

- 2.10.8 The Idox EROS system will continue to be developed as more details on electoral reform are known. The UK Government is working with the EMS suppliers to specify the requirements and functionality needed to implement changes to absent voting applications.
- 2.10.10 Continued input to the SAA Portal Project will be made, with developments during 2023 to include a bulk proposal logging system, and an online form to facilitate annual returns of self-catering evidence.
- 2.10.12 The platform running the internal intranet is outdated, and more documents are being migrated to either the public website, or network storage locations. A migration of the VJBs Microsoft 365 Environment scheduled for January 2024 will open opportunities for further document storage and retention capabilities.

2.11 Freedom of Information

No update from main 2021-24 Service Plan.

2.12 Key Partnerships

- 2.12.1 The Service Level Agreement governing the provision of support services from WDC was reviewed and updated in March 2023 and should, therefore be reviewed again by March 2026.
- 2.12.7 The UK Government responsibility for Electoral Reform has moved from the Cabinet Office to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC).
- 2.12.9 The procurement of a contract to provide the Board's print & mail services is now underway ahead of the existing contract expiring in May 2023.
- 2.12.10 Given the transfer of powers from Valuation Appeal Panels to the SCTs, new working relationships, processes and, IT systems are being developed with the service prior to transfer in April 2023.

2.13 Records Management

- 2.13.2 Following submission of a Progress Update Review to the Keeper in May 2022, an invitation to provide a further update was received in February 2023. An update will be provide to the Keeper in May 2023.

2.14 Miscellaneous

- 2.14.1 Ongoing effects of the Coronavirus outbreak are all but over, with the exception being workstreams with backlogs built up during the pandemic, and

slow progress with training toward professional qualifications. From February 2023, a return to office working has been the norm, with the Board's Agile Working Policy now fully rolled out.

PART THREE **KEY ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES**

Key To Business Objectives

The codes in the table below relate each Activity and Outcome contained in Part Three of the Service Plan to the relevant Business Objective(s) within the Joint Board's **Mission, Vision and Commitments** Statements.

Number 15 was added as a new commitment during 2022/23.

Number	Business Objective
1	Compile the Valuation Roll
2	Compile the Council Tax Valuation List
3	Compile the Electoral Register
4	Maintain the Valuation Roll
5	Maintain the Council Tax Valuation List
6	Maintain the Electoral Register
	All of the above are underpinned by the aim of providing these services in a high quality, effective and responsive manner.
7	Listening and responding to Stakeholders needs
8	Valuing staff and providing them with opportunities to develop and contribute
9	Reacting innovatively to change
10	Treating all stakeholders in a fair, consistent manner and in accordance with equal opportunities requirements
11	Striving for continuous improvement in all aspects of service delivery
12	Ensuring that we are accessible and accountable to stakeholders
13	Pro-actively planning workloads and deploying resources
14	Using 'plain English'
15	Using and caring for the data we hold in an appropriate way

Where there is no narrative in this section please see original 2021-24 Service Plan.

3.1 THE VALUATION ROLL

3.1.1 Maintenance of the Valuation Roll

Item	Description	Objective(s)	Ownership	Date/Recurrence
(b) –(i)	Amend procedures for making new self-catering accommodation entries to account for the requirement to evidence 70 days of actual letting	1,4,10,11	Divisional Assessors	April 2022
(s)	Initiate a review of existing self-catering accommodation for compliance with new 70-day rule	1,4,10,11	Divisional Assessors	March Annually
(t)	Delete such subjects as do not comply with the new requirement from the Valuation Roll (and enter these in the Council Tax List)	1,4,10,11	Divisional Assessors	June Annually

3.1.2 2017 Revaluation Appeals

Item	Description	Objective(s)	Ownership	Date/Recurrence
(c)	Prepare LT and/or LVAC cases including rental analysis, valuations, photographs, plans and other productions	1,4,10,11,12,14	Divisional Assessors	As required

3.1.3 Running Roll Appeals

As per Service Plan albeit reference to VAC should be replaced by First Tier Tribunal and references to submission and administration of 'appeals' should be replaced by 'proposals' with effect from April 2023. Some processes from the original service plan are no longer relevant and have been scored through below.

Item	Description	Objective(s)	Ownership	Date/Recurrence
(d)	Deadline for Covid MCC appeals is now December 2023	4,10,11,12	Divisional Assessors	31 December 2023
(e)	In Liaison with (Asst) Secretary, cite and ensure disposal of all outstanding Running Roll Appeals in accordance with the statutory timetable appropriate to each appeal.	4,10,11,12	Divisional Assessors/ VAC Asst Secretary	Ongoing
(g)	Produce 'on the day' VAC Lists and administer VAC Hearings	4,10,11,12,14	Divisional Assessors	As scheduled

3.1.3A Proposals and Appeals – post 1 April 2023

Item	Description	Objective(s)	Ownership	Date/Recurrence
(a)	Record proposals received arising from amendments made to the Valuation Roll or where mcc, statutory error etc are claimed.	4,10,13	Admin Supervisors	Continuous
(b)	Receive and process proposals received via SAA Web Portal	4,7,9,10,11,12,14	Admin Supervisors	Continuous
(c)	Maintain records of proposals including their status in relation Proposals Disposal Dates/Notices, Statements to support valuation roll entry and Assessor Decision Notices	4,10,13	Divisional Assessors	Continuous
(d)	Negotiate and settle proposals with ratepayers and their agents in accordance with new procedures	4,10,11,12	Divisional Assessors	Continuous
(e)	Issue Assessor Decision Notices	4,10,11,12	Divisional Assessors	Continuous
(f)	Receive notice of, and record, appeals subsequently submitted to FTT	4,10,11,12	Divisional Assessors	As required
(g)	Receive notice of appeal hearings and prepare FTT cases (including rental/cost analysis, valuations, photographs, plans and other productions if/as permitted by the FTT)	4,10,11,12	Divisional Assessors	As required
(h)	Where appropriate, amend the Valuation Roll to reflect proposal settlements in accordance with procedures at 3.1.1.	4,10,11,12	Admin Supervisors	Continuous
(i)	Consider decisions of FTT and appropriateness of appeal to Upper Chamber	4,10,11,12	Assessor/ Depute Assessor/ DAs	As required
(j)	Arrange transfer of all existing NDR Appeals to LTC during April 2023 (per new regulations)	4,10,11,12	Divisional Assessors	April 2023

3.1.4 Valuation Appeal Committee Hearings

As of 1 April 2023, there will be no further Valuation Appeal Committee hearings. All functions transfer to SCTS on that date. All items in this section cease to be relevant.

3.1.4A Local Taxation Chamber Hearings - post 1 April 2023

Item	Description	Objective(s)	Ownership	Date/Recurrence
(a)	Receive notification of hearing from LTC and allocate sufficient resource	4,10,11,12	Divisional Assessors	As required
(b)	Manage cited appeals in accordance with Appeal Regulations including exchange of necessary submissions and Notices	4,10,11,12	Divisional Assessors	Per appeal regulations
(c)	Prepare cases including rental/cost analysis, valuations, photographs, plans and other productions	4,10,11,12	Divisional Assessors	As required

(d)	Liaise with Counsel to schedule attendance at, and preparations for hearings as necessary	4,10,12,13	Depute Assessor	As required
(e)	Process any changes arising from appeal settlements or decisions in accordance with processes described above.	4,10,13	Divisional Valuers/ Clerical Supervisors	Ongoing
(f)	Consider First Tier Tribunal (FTT) decisions and make arrangements for any case transcript, stated case, appeal or appeal responses.	4,10,13	Assessor/ Depute Assessor	As required
(g)	Consider any requests for referrals to the Upper Tribunal and arrange for relevant responses	4,10,13	Assessor/ Depute Assessor	As required
(h)	Devise procedures for the transfer of data to, and the receipt of data from the SCTS.	4,7,9,11,13,15	Valuation Working Group	April 2023

3.1.5 Land Tribunal Appeals

As per Service Plan up to 31 March. From 1 April 2023, the powers and responsibilities of the Lands tribunal will transfer to the Upper Chamber of the Local Taxation Chamber.

3.1.6 Revaluation 2023 – To include Gas Utilities

No changes since update in 2022.

3.1.7 Civil Penalty Notices

As per the 2021-24 Service Plan, except that references to VACs will be to the FTT from 1 April 2023. Note also that from that date appeals against CP Notices will be made to the FTT and not (as per 3.1.7(d)) to the Assessor.

(i)	Refine processes for the issuing of Civil Penalties, and the record keeping of those issued and paid.	1,4,9,10,12,13,15	Assessor/Divisional Assessors	April 2023
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3.1.8 Public Parks

No further changes since the 2022 update.

3.1.10 NDR Reform Act – Secondary Legislation

See 3.1.1 above re self-catering accommodation.

3.1.11 Transfer of VAC to Scottish Tribunals Service

See various references above.

3.1.13 2026 Revaluation

(a)	Arrange to receive feedback from staff on the 2023 Revaluation to feed in to plans for the 2026 Revaluation	1,4,10,11,12,13,14	Assessor/Depute Assessor	April 2023
(b)	Draft a Revaluation 2026 Project Plan	1,4,10,11,12,13,14	Assessor/Depute Assessor	July 2023

3.2 THE COUNCIL TAX VALUATION LIST

From 1 April 2023, Valuation Appeal Committee functions transferred to the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service. Certain items are now no longer relevant and have been score through below.

Item	Description	Objective(s)	Ownership	Date/Recurrence
(b)	Negotiate and settle proposals/appeals with council taxpayers and their agents, including defence, where appropriate, to FTT or Court of Session.	5,7,10,12,13	Divisional Assessors	Change from VAC to FTT from 1 April 2023
(c)	Facilitate the settlement of appeals by scheduling of VAC Hearings on an annually agreed basis.	5,10,11,12	Divisional Assessors	Not required after 31 December 2022
(d)	Prepare FTT cases including sales analysis, valuations, photographs, plans and other productions, including written submissions where appropriate.	5,10,11,12	Divisional Assessors	From 1 April 2023
(e)	Produce ‘on the day’ VAC Lists and administer VAC Hearings	5,10,11,12	Divisional Assessors	Not required after 31 December 2022
(j)	Establish new procedures for referral of CT appeals to SCTS	5,7,9,10,13	Assessor (possibly through SAA)	April 2023
(k)	Transfer of existing appeals to the SCTS.	5,7,9,10,13	Assessor	April 2023

(l)	Formulate new procedures to deal with change in Council Tax legislation which allows 6 weeks (6 months previously) to deal with a proposal	5,7,9,10,13	Divisional Assessors	April 2023
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3.3 THE ELECTORAL REGISTER

3.3.1 Annual Register of Electors

No change to overall process but note the following:

Item	Description	Objective(s)	Ownership	Date/Recurrence
(d)	Consider tenders and award contract for above.	3,9,10,11,12,13,14	ERO/PAO	April 2023

3.3.1A Procure and Implement Digital Canvassing

There was some slippage on this project which will now be delivered for the 2023 Canvass.

Item	Description	Objective(s)	Ownership	Date/Recurrence
(a)	Confirm requirements and test market	3,9,11,13	Depute ERO/PAO	April 2022
(b)	Procure relevant hardware, software	3,9,11,13	Depute ERO/ PAO/WDC	January 2023
(c)	Set up tablets, install required software and test	3,9,11,13	Depute ERO/ PAO/WDC	May - June 2023
(d)	Establish new door-to-door canvass procedures and revise Canvasser/Admin Instructions	3,8,9,11,13,15	PAO	July – August 2023
(e)	Train canvassers and back-office staff	3,8,9,11,13,15	PAO/Supervisors	September 2023

3.3.2 Maintenance of Register of Electors

No update to main 2021-24 Service Plan

3.3.3 Elections/Electoral Events

See main 2021-24 Service Plan and specific Election timetables as agreed with ROs.

3.3.4 Absent Vote Procedures

Changes to procedures arising from the Elections Act will need implemented. Divergence between UK registers and Local Government registers in new processes for the former.

Item	Description	Objective(s)	Ownership	Date/Recurrence
(j)	Put in place procedures for dealing with online applications for Absent Votes (UK Registers only)	3,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13	ERO/PAO	October 2023
(k)	Train staff on the new legislation in relation to online absent vote applications and changes to proxy rules, with emphasis on divergence.	3,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13	ERO/PAO	October 2023

3.3.6 Boundary Changes

Item	Description	Objective(s)	Ownership	Date/Recurrence
(d)	Implement changes arising from Polling District/Polling Places reviews following the UK Parliamentary Constituency Review.	6,7,9,10,12,13	PAO/ Admin Manager	Aug-December 2023

3.3.7 Implementation of Voter ID process

Legislation on this new process was delayed, with implementation taking place in January 2023.

Item	Description	Objective(s)	Ownership	Date/Recurrence
(a)	Remain aware of passage of primary legislation through Parliament and take note of any changes requirements	3,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13	ERO/PAO	Ongoing
(b)	Retain an awareness of the various Business Change Bulletins for the Electoral Integrity Unit and other communications regarding the Voter ID project	3,6,7,9,10,11,12,13	ERO/PAO	Ongoing
(c)	Liaise with EMS supplier re system changes and updates related to Voter ID	3,6,7,9,10,11,12,13	PAO	Ongoing
(d)	Design and implement new processes in accordance with legislative requirement and EMS functionality	3,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13	PAO/Supervisors	Autumn 2022
(e)	Train staff in new systems and processes	3,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13	PAO/Supervisors	January 2023
(f)	Receive and process Voter ID applications and issue Voter Authority Certificates	3,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13	ERO/PAO/ Supervisors	From January 2023

3.4 CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

3.4.1 The Joint Board/3.4.2 Valuation Joint Board Meetings

As per Main Service Plan but note provisional date for inaugural meeting of new Board is 24 June 2022.

(d)	Assessor to provide an 'Introduction to the duties and functions of the VJB' presentation.	7,9,10,12,13,14	Assessor	June 2023
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3.4.5/3.4.6 Corporate Governance, Counter Fraud, Corruption and Business Irregularities

Note that the Counter Fraud & Corruption Policy and Business Irregularities Procedures were updated in July 2021. They will therefore be scheduled for further review by July 2024 unless a need arises.

3.4.9 Internal Working Groups

Item	Description	Objective(s)	Ownership	Date/Recurrence
(j)	Form Valuation Working Group to carry on the work of the former NDR Reform Working Group.	1,3,7,8,9,11,12,13	Depute Assessor	April 2023

3.5 ACCOUNTABILITY

3.5.3/3.5.4 Audit Plan/Audit Recommendations

Item	Description	Objective(s)	Ownership	Date/Recurrence
(c)	Co-operate with internal auditors in completion of review of workforce planning arrangements	7,12	Managers	April 2023
(d)	Take forward any agreed actions arising from above internal audit recommendations	1-6,7,10,11,12,13,14	Management Team	When reported
(e)	Provide Joint Board with above Internal Audit Report and report progress against Action Plans	1-6,7,10,11,12,13	Assessor	June 2023

3.6 BEST VALUE

3.6.1 Best Value – General Performance

Item	Description	Objective(s)	Ownership	Date/Recurrence
(a)-(c)	Collate agreed KPI statistics for Electoral Performance and share with SAA	3,6,11,12,13	PAO	December 2023 and as required

3.6.6 Customer Service Standards

Note that 3.6.6 (b) has ceased.

3.7 EQUALITIES

3.7.4 Promotion and Training

Item	Description	Objective(s)	Ownership	Date/Recurrence
(g)	Management Team to complete on-line training in Impact Assessment Procedures.	10,11,12	Management Team	July 2023

3.8 STAFFING AND PERSONNEL MATTERS

3.8.1 Development and Review of Personnel Policies

Item	Description	Objective(s)	Ownership	Date/Recurrence
(g)	Implement Agile Working Policy	8,10,11,14	Assessor /Management Team	February 2023

3.8.2 Training and Development Policy

Item	Description	Objective(s)	Ownership	Date/Recurrence
(a)	Review the timing and frequency of Performance, Training and Development meetings	8,10,11,14	Assessor /Management Team	Ongoing

(g)	Review Performance, Training and Development policy	7,8,10,11,13,14	Assessor/Depute	September 2023
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3.9 FINANCE AND BUDGETING

3.9.1 Financial Regulations and Standing Orders

See 2.4.3 above re review of Financial Regulations

3.9.2 Budget Preparation

Item	Description	Objective(s)	Ownership	Date/Recurrence
(a)	Incorporate a review of funding and expenditure on Voter ID process during budget process	3,6,7,8,9,11,12,13	ERO	When circumstances become clear

3.9.4 Financial Procedures – Debtor Accounts

Item	Description	Objective(s)	Ownership	Date/Recurrence
(d)	Train relevant staff in the use of the Agresso Finance System	7,8,11,12,13,14	Depute/PAO	August 2023

3.10 INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

3.10.2 ICT Asset Management

Item	Description	Objective(s)	Ownership	Date/Recurrence
(e)	Procure and install new laptops and monitors for staff.	1,2,4,5,7,8,9,11,13	Depute Assessor/ WDC ICT	April 2023
(f)	Review telephony requirements. Procure and install firewalls and new routers which may be required for modernisation of the telephone systems. Migrate to an internet based telephone service	1-6,9,11,13	Depute Assessor/ WDC ICT	April 2023
(h)	Procure, install and migrate Assessors system/data to new Unix Server or alternative.	1,2,4,5,9,11,13	Depute Assessor	June 2023

(i)	Specify requirement, procure and install hard and software to facilitate remote survey data capture	1,2,4,5,7,8,9,11,13,15	Depute Assessor	TBC
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3.10.6 Assessors Progress System

Item	Description	Objective(s)	Ownership	Date/Recurrence
(c)(d)	Maintain and further develop system to meet agreed business requirements of of NDR Reform, Barclay recommendations and appeal reform in accordance with specifications provided by NDR Reform Project Team. Namely, i. Delivery of 3-yearly Revaluations ii. 2-stage Proposal and appeal system changes iii. Expansion of valuations available at the SAA portal iv. Provision of comparisons to support revalued NAVs	1,2,4,5,7,8,9,11,13	Depute, Systems Officer, Analyst/Programmer	Autumn 2022 April 2023 April 2023 Autumn 2022
(h)	Commence a project to review the effectiveness and efficiency of this legacy system	1,2,4,5,7,8,9,11,13,15	Management Team	April 2023

3.10.8 EROS II Electoral System

Item	Description	Objective(s)	Ownership	Date/Recurrence
(d)	Test and implement upgraded versions of EROS, specifically to implement:- i. Online Absent Vote Applications ii. Change to Proxy Provisions iii. Votes for Life	3,6,8,9,10,11,13	All PAO/Systems Officers	From October 2023
(f)	Provide training for changes to system in line with above (d) changes	3,6,7,8,9,10,11,13	PAO	As required

3.10.10 Assessors Portal

Item	Description	Objective(s)	Ownership	Date/Recurrence
(d)(h)	Revise DTF to allow extraction, upload and display of Portal Property Rental Lists	1,4,7,8,9,11,13	Systems Officer/ Systems Analyst	Autumn 2022

(i)	Input in to development (and subsequent testing) of bulk proposal system, and interfacing with Assessors system	1,4,7,8,9,11,13	Systems Officer/ Systems Analyst	April 2023
(j)	Input in to development (and subsequent testing) of self-catering online annual return form, and interfacing with Assessors system	1,4,7,8,9,11,13	Systems Officer/ Systems Analyst	October 2023

3.11 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

All as per the 2021-24 Service Plan.

3.12 KEY PARTNERSHIPS

3.12.1 Support Services – West Dunbartonshire Council

Item	Description	Objective(s)	Ownership	Date/Recurrence
(m)	Review Service Level Agreement in liaison with Treasurer and service delivery representatives (Reviewed February/March 2023). In particular, take account of the changes to the service delivery model of WDC's ICT department.	7,9,10,11,13,14,15	Assessor	By February 2026

3.12.7 Cabinet Office

Replace heading with **Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities** (DLUHC).

3.12.9 External Suppliers

Item	Description	Objective(s)	Ownership	Date/Recurrence
(b)	Invite tenders for printing and issuing canvass forms.	3,9,10,11,12,13,14	ERO/PAO/WDC Procurement Team	Autumn 2024

3.12.10 Scottish Courts & Tribunals Service

Item	Description	Objective(s)	Ownership	Date/Recurrence
(a)	Work with SCTS to establish communication lines and processes required for transfer of powers	1-6, 7,8,9,11,12,13	Assessor (through SAA working group)	Ongoing

(b)	Implement new procedures to transfer Council Tax appeals to SCTS and to monitor progress of NDR appeals made to SCTS	1-6, 7,8,9,11,12,13	Assessor	April 2023
(c)	Implement ICT system changes/development to facilitate (b) above	1-6, 7,8,9,11,12,13	Depute Assessor/ Systems Programmer	January to June 2023

3.13 RECORDS MANAGEMENT

Item	Description	Objective(s)	Ownership	Date/Recurrence
(d)	Consider Process Update Review (PUR) submission	7,9,10,11,12,15	Depute Assessor	May 2022
(d)	Consider Process Update Review (PUR) submission	7,9,10,11,12,15	Depute Assessor	May 2023

3.14 MISCELLANEOUS

3.14.1 Coronavirus Outbreak/Restrictions

Operations will reviewed constantly in light of the changing infection levels, and in line with public health and government guidance.

DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD

Report by Depute Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer

Valuation Joint Board – 23 June 2023

Subject: Best Value - Performance Reporting and Planning

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To update the Members of the Joint Board on progress in relation to Best Value and, in particular, to advise on external performance reports for the year 2022/23.
- 1.2 To seek approval of the Public Performance Report for 2022/23
- 1.3 To seek approval of the Key Performance Indicator (KPI) targets for 2023/24.

2.0 Background**2.1 Best Value – General**

By placing a formal requirement on local government bodies, including Valuation Joint Boards, to 'secure Best Value', The Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 created a statutory requirement to provide continuous improvement in public services.

2.2 Performance Monitoring/Key Performance Indicators**2.2.1 Performance in Valuation Functions**

Assessors provide measures of Council Tax List and Valuation Roll performance to the Scottish Government, annually. These also form the basis of the Board's Public Performance Reports. The performance targets for 2022/23 were approved by the Board at its meeting on 24 June 2022.

3.0 Progress**3.1 Performance Monitoring/Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)****3.1.1 Performance in Valuation Functions**

The KPIs for the Joint Board area for the year 2022/23 have been compiled and are attached (Appendix 1) for members consideration.

Performance in relation to Non-Domestic Rating was down on last year, as we continued to be affected by loss of staff and had difficulties recruiting qualified replacements. This was exacerbated by our statutory requirement to deliver the 2023 Revaluation. This was the first Revaluation undertaken with a 1 year tone

date. New legislation placed a number of additional duties on Assessors to deliver Draft Values 4 months ahead of Revaluation, further reducing the time available to our teams to carry out the Revaluation work. Other new requirements included the provision of Portal Rented Property Lists (PRPLs) for certain subjects valued on the comparative basis, increased valuation templates at the SAA portal and the inclusion of some formerly exempted Public Parks.

Our targets were not achieved and performance has not yet returned to levels seen over a longer period of time (see Appendix 2).

In relation to Council Tax the workload relating to the entry of new houses into the Council Tax List was broadly similar to last year. Despite that, our targets for the year were narrowly missed.

The 2022/23 KPI statistics and targets for the year 2023/24, as contained in Appendix 1, have been submitted to the Scottish Assessors' Association for collation and onward transmission to the Scottish Government.

3.1.2 Public Performance Report

The above KPIs have been included in our 2022/23 Public Performance Report which is attached for Members' consideration (Appendix 3).

4.0 Next Steps

4.1 Performance Monitoring/Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

4.1.1 The proposed KPI targets for 2023/24 are presented today for approval (see Appendix 1). NDR targets have been retained at existing levels on the basis that we would aspire to meet these in a non-revaluation year. CT targets have been broadly retained with a small adjustment to the 3-6 month and over 6 month targets.

4.1.2 It is noted that there are a number of uncertainties which all have the ability to impact on KPI targets for 2023/24. These include the unpredictability of Non-Domestic proposal / appeal volumes, the impact on resources following the move of VACs to the First-tier Tribunal Service for Scotland, ongoing changes in Self-Catering requirements for NDR and our ability to adequately fill staff vacancies.

4.1.3 Performance against these targets will be monitored by the Management Team throughout the year and resources applied or redirected as required.

4.1.4 The Public Performance Report for 2022/23 will, subject to the approval sought below, be posted on our website.

5.0 Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- (a) Note the performance in relation to the Valuation Roll and Council Tax List KPIs for 2022/23.
- (b) Approve the Public Performance Report for 2022/23.
- (c) Approve the KPI targets for 2023/24.

Person to contact:

Darryl Rae (Depute Assessor and ERO)

Tel: 0141 562 1260;

E-mail: darryl.rae@dab-vjb.gov.uk

Appendices

Appendix 1: KPI Statistics

Appendix 2: KPI Trends

Appendix 3: Public Performance Report

Best Value - Performance Reporting and Planning

KPI STATISTICS
2022/2023 Report and 2023/24 Targets

Valuation Roll

Total No of entries as @ 1st April 2022 15,207
Total Rateable Value @ 1st April 2022 £365.5million

During the year, 847 amendments were made to the Valuation Roll within the following periods

Period	Actual 2021/22	Target 2022/23	Actual 2022/23	Target 2023/24
0-3 months	70%	70%	55%	70%
3-6 months	17%	20%	18%	20%
>6 months	13%	10%	27%	10%

Total No of entries as @ 31st March 2023 15,134
Total Rateable Value @ 31st March 2023 £367.1 million

Council Tax

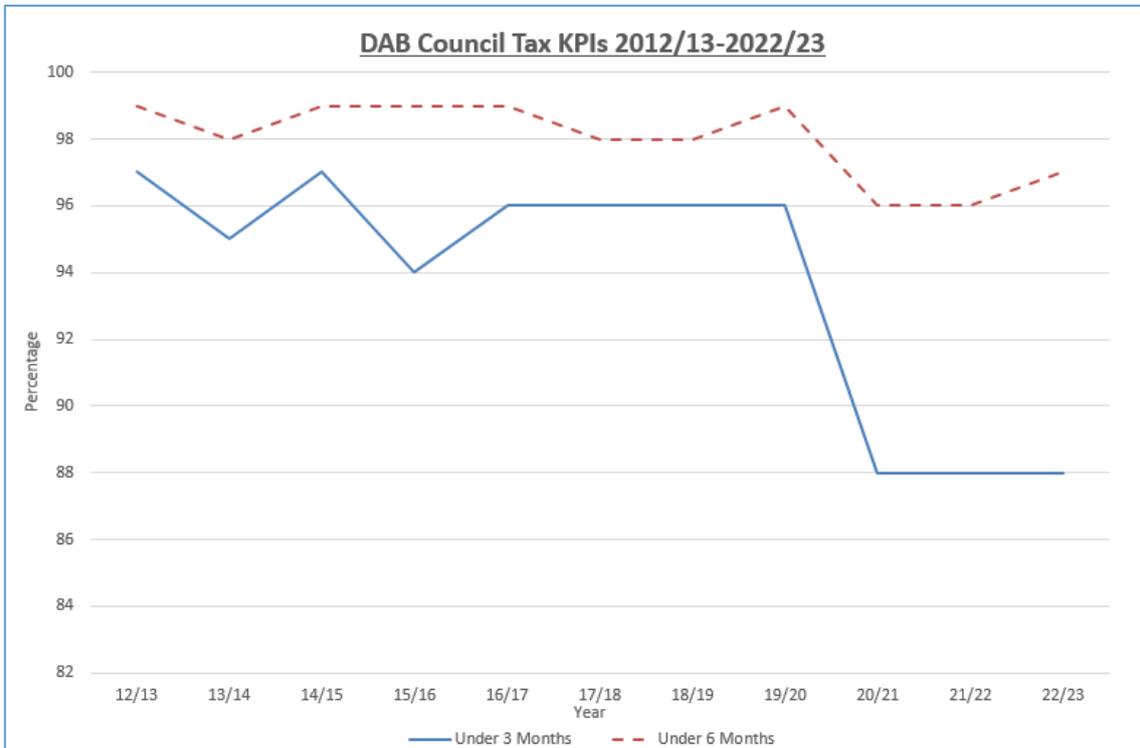
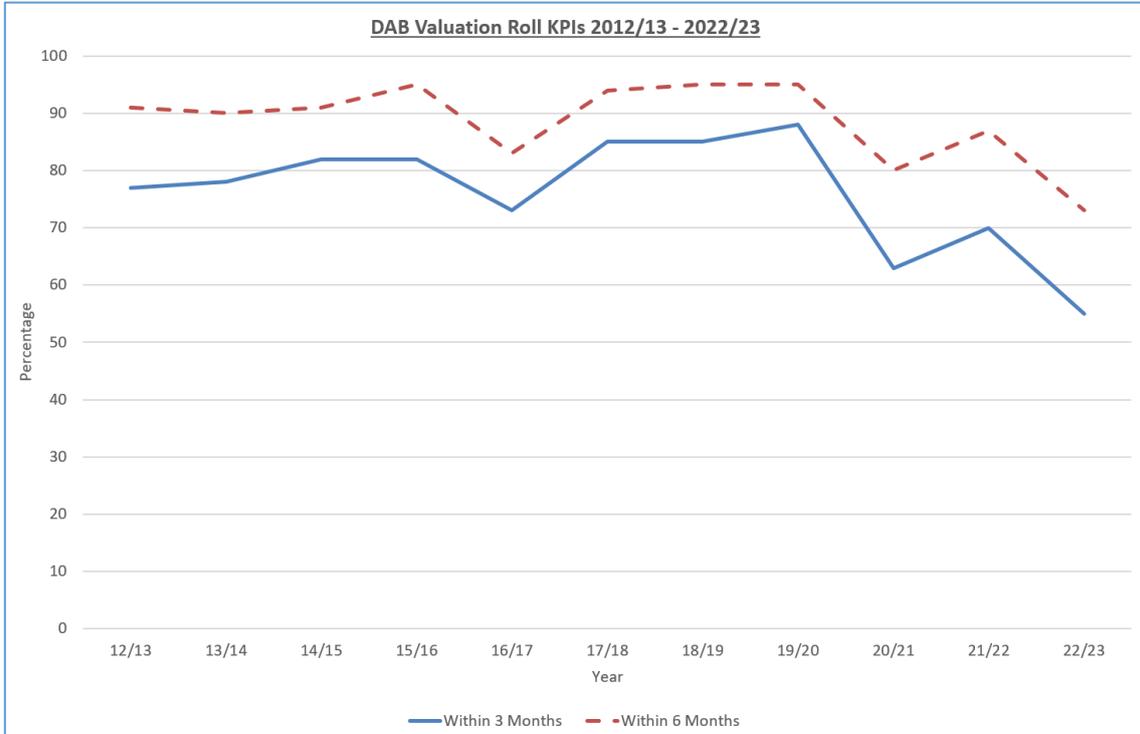
Total Number of entries @ 1st April 2022 147,021

1,231 new entries were added to the Valuation List within the following periods

Period	Actual 2021/22	Target 2022/23	Actual 2022/23	Target 2023/24
0-3 months	88%	90%	88%	90%
3-6 months	8%	5%	9%	7%
>6 months	4%	5%	3%	3%

Total Number of entries @ 31st March 2023 147,973

Best Value - Performance Reporting and Planning - KPI Trends





*Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute
Valuation Joint Board*

Public Performance Report 2022/23

235 Dumbarton Road
CLYDEBANK
G81 4XJ

0141 562 1200

Kilbrannan House
Bolgam Street
CAMPBELTOWN
PA28 6JY

01586 555300

assessor@dab-vjb.gov.uk

saa.gov.uk/dab-vjb

1.0 Background

The Assessor for Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute Valuation Joint Board is an independent statutory official who is responsible for the preparation and maintenance of the Valuation Rolls and Council Tax Valuation Lists for East and West Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute Councils. The Assessor has also been appointed as the Electoral Registration Officer for these three areas and he is therefore required to prepare and maintain their Registers of Electors and Absent Voting lists.

The service is conducted from two main offices located at the addresses above.

2.0 General Information

During the year to 31st March 2023, the organisation had a full-time equivalent staff of 48.03 and a staffing budget of £2.3m. A total of 367.69 full-time equivalent days (7.66%) were lost through illness, an increase from 4.33% in 2021/22.

The COVID Pandemic has had lasting impact on how services are delivered with some staff favouring a blended approach to office and home working. We have recently introduced an Agile working policy which allows staff to request to formalise blended/agile working arrangements. Survey work has returned without restriction, however we continue to utilise information sources which negate the need for full site visits where appropriate.

3.0 The Council Tax Valuation List

The Council Tax Valuation List contains all domestic properties and shows their allocated Council Tax band which is based on the market value of the property as at 1991. The bands shown are used by our constituent authorities for the production of Council Tax bills.

As at 31st March 2023, the Valuation Lists for Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute contained 147,973 subjects. Of the 1,231 houses added to the List between 1st April 2021 and 31st March 2022, the time between the date of occupation/completion and the issue of the Notice of Banding is shown in the following table. The 3 month target was missed by 2% this year and the 6 month target surpassed by 2%. Whilst the total number of new entries was down on the previous year it is noted that 2022/23 was the third highest year in the past 11 years for total number of new entries.

The targets which we have set for 2023/24 are 90% within 3 months and 97% within 6 months.

Year	Number	Within 3 Months		Within 6 Months	
		Target	Achieved	Target	Achieved
2022/23	1231	90%	88%	95%	97%
2021/22	1395	96%	88%	98%	96%
2020/21	917	86%	88%	95%	96%
2019/20	1061	96%	96%	98%	99%
2018/19	992	96%	96%	98%	98%
2017/18	832	95%	96%	98%	98%
2016/17	932	95%	96%	98%	99%
2015/16	1077	95%	94%	98%	99%
2014/15	1269	95%	97%	98%	99%
2013/14	1074	95%	95%	98%	98%
2012/13	1110	93%	96%	98%	99%

4.0 Non Domestic Valuation Rolls

Valuation Rolls contain the rateable values of all non-domestic properties within the valuation area. The rateable values shown are used by the Joint Board's constituent local authorities for the production of non-domestic rates bills, and for the calculation of various different relief schemes operated by local authorities and Scottish/UK Governments. They are also used by water suppliers for calculating water bills for non-domestic properties.

As at 31st March 2023 the Valuation Rolls for Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute contained 15,403 subjects with a total rateable value of £365.5 million. Of the 847 amendments made to the Valuation Roll between 1st April 2022 and 31st March 2023, the performance reflecting time between the effective date of the alteration and the issue of the Valuation Notice is shown in the following table, along with previous years' data. The performance was below the 3 months target and the 6 month target and was impacted by a number of factors including the delivery of the 2023 general rating Revaluation.

The targets we have set for 2023/24 are 70% within 3 months and 90% within 6 months.

Year	Number	Within 3 Months		Within 6 Months	
		Target	Achieved	Target	Achieved
2022/23	847	75%	55%	90%	73%
2021/22	949	75%	70%	90%	87%
2020/21	984	76%	63%	91%	80%
2019/20	928	86%	88%	95%	95%
2018/19	1084	85%	85%	95%	95%
2017/18	989	83%	85%	95%	94%
2016/17	848	83%	74%	95%	84%
2015/16	969	80%	81.9%	94%	95.4%
2014/15	950	80%	82%	94%	91%
2013/14	892	80%	78.4%	94%	90.5%
2012/13	1369	80%	78%	92%	91%

4.0 Electoral Registers

The Electoral Registers list the name and addresses of everyone who is registered to vote.

Local Government Elections were held in May 2022 which saw plans enacted to continue to service the anticipated increase in demand of applications to vote by post, and also of emergency proxy applications where voters were affected by Covid.

The final Absent Vote lists contained 47,831 electors, a slight decrease from the peak position at the Scottish Parliamentary Elections the previous year. The electorate for the election was 224,600.

The newly reformed Canvass continued in 2022 with a more targeted approach to the canvass. This allowed the ERO to issue different forms to households dependant on whether he believed that a change to the existing registered electors at that address was likely.

Annual Registers were published on 1st December 2022. The total electorate figure was slightly down on the total at publication in November 2021.

Year	Electorate at Publication
2022	226,626
2021	229,336
2020	224,800
2019	219,861
2018	219,637
2017	222,507
2016	221,078
2015	218,668
2014	223,594

5.0 Other items of note

During the year the organisation:

- Published a Draft 2023 general Revaluation Roll and issued Draft Valuation Notices to ratepayers on 30 November 2022.
- Published the Final 2023 general Revaluation Roll and issued Valuation Notices to ratepayers on 31 March 2023.
- Compiled and uploaded Portal Rented Property Lists (PRPL) for subjects valued on the comparative method of valuation which were valued with reference to a rate per square meter.
- Continued work on the expansion of the number and type of Non-Domestic valuations available online at the SAA Portal.
- Undertook initial ICT development to build a system for logging and tracking of NDR appeals following appeal reform. Draft legislation with requirements laid in December 2022 for implementation in April 2023.
- Facilitated automation of Revaluation processes, requiring over 15,000 less manual operations to be carried out.
- Appointed a new Assessor & ERO (Jan 2023) and Depute Assessor and ERO (March 2023).

- Had 11 members of staff (around 20% of the total) retire, resign, or move to another post within the organisation, including 60% of the management team.
- Introduced an Agile working policy which allows employees to apply for agile/blended working pattern.
- Delivered registers and absent vote lists on schedule for the 2022 Scottish Local Government Elections.
- Continued disposal of 2017 Revaluation Appeals, with all appeals dealt with, or having been subject to referral to the Lands Tribunal for Scotland in line with legislation.
- Completed a Progress Update Review, and received positive feedback from the Keeper of Records on progress with our Records Management Plan.
- A review of the Code of Conduct, to reflect the Board's new Public Interest Disclosure Policy and make explicit the Board's zero tolerance to fraud and corruption, was finalised and presented to the Board for approval.
- Our Vision and Mission was reviewed, with an addition providing clarity that we will use and care for the data we hold in an appropriate way.
- Testing of our Business Continuity processes for Electoral Registration took place, with systems and processes performing as expected.
- To ensure its relevance and to reflect changing technologies, the Board's ICT Strategy was reviewed and updated, and approved by the Board.
- The Health and Safety Committees merged to form a single Health and Safety Working Group, enabling consistent approach and guidance to be applied throughout the whole organisation.
- Following an internal audit report, new procedures were put in place to define procedures for overtime working.
- The Boards scheme of Delegated powers was reviewed, and received a minor update.
- The Boards support services agreement with West Dunbartonshire Council received an extensive review, and was agreed by the parties.

Our customer satisfaction survey showed that last year 94% of respondents reported that their dealings with our services were brought to a satisfactory conclusion.

A copy of the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer's Annual Report is available on request from either office and also online at www.saa.gov.uk/dab-vjb/best-value/annual-report-financial-statement.

DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD**Report by Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer****Valuation Joint Board – 23 June 2023**

Subject: Best Value – Risk Management Update**1.0 Purpose of Report**

1.1 To seek Board approval of the Joint Board's Risk Register for 2023/24.

2.0 Background

2.1 Risk Management and Planning form vital parts of both the Best Value and Performance Management process and the Joint Board's Governance framework.

2.2 The Joint Board's Risk Management Strategy requires that the Risk Registers and Action Plans are revised annually.

3.0 Progress

3.1 The Management Team reviewed all current risks in March 2023 and the revised Board Risk Register is presented (See Appendix 1) for approval today.

3.2 Members should note that officers also utilise a more extensive and detailed Operational Risk Register and Risk Action Plan for the management of day-to-day, operational, matters along with a number of process or project specific Risk Registers.

3.3 The Operational Risk Register and Risk Action Plan can be made available to members on request.

4.0 Next Steps

4.1 The Management Team will continue to review changes to the risks and risk levels contained in the Risk Registers and will monitor progress against any outstanding actions on an ongoing basis.

5.0 Recommendations

5.1 Members are asked to approve the Board Risk Register, including the actions shown therein, for 2023/24.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Board Risk Register

**ITEM 9
APPENDIX 1**



*Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute
Valuation Joint Board*

BOARD RISK REGISTER 2023

Version Control

Version	Originator	Summary of Changes	Date
2023 v0.1	Russell Hewton	Draft of MT Annual Review outcome	02/06/2023
2023 v1.0	Russell Hewton	MT approved	07/06/2023

Introduction

At its meeting in June 2014 the Valuation Joint Board commented that their preferred approach to Risk would be for the Board to see, and approve, a Strategic Risk Register which highlighted the main areas of risk to the Board. At that same meeting the auditors present confirmed that a change towards a more strategic Risk Register would also be their recommendation for reporting to the Joint Board.

Thus the approach taken by the Management Team at annual reviews since has been to identify and include all the main strategic risks in a 'Board Risk Register'. Other risks are contained in an Operational Risk Register. Further, a number of additional registers continue to be maintained for specific functional areas such as those listed below.

Specific Risk Registers
Annual Electoral Canvass
Rolling Registration
Electoral Integrity
Electoral Awareness
Eros Electoral Management System
NDR Reform

This document constitutes the Board Risk Register for 2023/24 but, for consideration of the Board's full Risk Management Regime, reference should also be made to the Risk Management Strategy, the Operational Risk Register and these other documents referred to above.

An Internal Audit of the Joint Board's risk management arrangements completed in 2019/20 concluded that the systems were working effectively.

Methodology

The Assessor's Management Team is responsible for the annual review of the Board's Risk Registers and Action Plans, with the Board's approval being sought for the 'Board Risk Register' on an annual basis. The Management Team takes collective ownership of the risks identified. Ownership of, and responsibility for, mitigating actions are identified in Action Plans.

At or before annual review workshops, managers, using their business experience and knowledge, identify the internal and external factors affecting, or likely to affect the service provision of DABVJB.

Once risks have been identified they are systematically and accurately assessed. This process requires managers to judge:

- The probability of an event occurring
- The potential severity of the consequences should such an event occur

These can be evaluated using the definitions in the table below:-

<p>Likelihood - “Probability of a risk event occurring”</p> <p>1. Unlikely but could happen (Low) 2. Likely to happen (Medium) 3. Very likely or already happening (High)</p>	<p>Impact - “Severity of the consequences should such an event occur”</p> <p>1.This will cause some problems but could be managed (Low) 2.This will cause significant delay or interruption to our services (Medium) 3. This could cause our services to fail (High)</p>
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The likelihood and severity/impact scores will then be used to identify overall risk using the following Risk Matrix:-

I M P A C T	3	4	7	9
	2	2	5	8
	1	1	3	6
		1	2	3
LIKELIHOOD				

‘Risk Score’ in the tables below represents the extent of the risk (taken from the above table) to the Valuation Joint Board that would arise in an uncontrolled world i.e. if no actions were/had been taken to mitigate the risk.

‘Residual Risk’ in the tables below represents the extent of the real risk (also taken from the above table) to the Valuation Joint Board having taken the steps and/or mitigating actions included in the ‘Controls’ column.

It should be noted that, in the tables below, it is the ‘Residual Risk’ which represents the real current risk to the Joint Board. To emphasise this, the Residual Risk will be coloured coded as follows:-

Residual Risk Score	Traffic Light indicator of risk	Nature of Residual Risk
1, 2 or 3	Green	Low Risk
4, 5 or 6	Amber	Medium Risk
7, 8 or 9	Red	High Risk

The removal or closure of certain risks is also part of the review process.

Once the Risk Registers are completed, Action Plans, which contain the person responsible for carrying out the action and the target date for completion, are completed. Progress against Action Plans is reviewed regularly at Management Team Meetings and formally recorded in revised versions of the Action Plan and any actions taken during any year being included as ‘Controls’ in subsequent registers.

Board Risk Register

Risk 1	Operational Area	All Functions		
<p><u>Risk Title/Description</u> Failure to comply with Legislation, including:- (a) Council Tax (b) Electoral Registration (c) Non-Domestic Rating Valuation (d) Best Value, Health & Safety, Freedom of Information, Equalities, Records Management, Data Protection etc</p> <p>Significant change has and will continue to be required to the service as a consequence of the NDR (Scotland) Act, including the move to 3-yearly Revaluations, the annual checking of evidence that self catering properties continue to be eligible for entry in the Valuation Roll, and other 'Barclay' reforms.</p> <p>The uncertainties that such changes brings, when combined with the ongoing restrictions on local government funding, must increase the risk of failure to deliver statutory functions.</p> <p>Further, the implications of the Scottish Government's commitment to review local government funding, and in particular to reform Council Tax, are unknown at this time.</p> <p>Implementation of a new 2-stage appeals process which came in to effect on 1 April 2023, introduces further uncertainties.</p> <p>The known and unknown effects of the Elections Act 2022 increase the risk of failure to meet new duties/requirements.</p> <p>Delays in the training and development of valuation staff due to recruitment problems, and difficulties carrying out face to face training during the pandemic has caused a lack of experienced and qualified staff to carry out key functions.</p>				
Likelihood	3	Impact	3	Risk Score
				9
<p><u>Controls</u> (a) <u>Council Tax</u> Professional staff, checking procedures, authorising 'signatories'. Performance targets, monitoring and reporting. Regular supply of planning and development information from councils and sales info from RoS. Audit and control systems. Staff training and shadowing. Tailor made IT system. Review of procedures such as logging and dealing with house sales and associated band reviews, review of Council Tax Proposal processes, including prioritising those stakeholders who have engaged timeously. Retain copies of existing legislation and monitor all new legislation. Membership of SAA Domestic Subjects Committee. Awareness of relevant cases. Council Tax Staff Guide in place, which is being reviewed with more granular step by step instruction.</p> <p>(b) <u>Electoral Registration</u> Appropriate staff, checking procedures, authorising 'signatories'. Performance targets, monitoring and reporting. Audit and control systems. Staff training and shadowing. Tailor made IT system with input restrictions. Review of procedures such as canvass method by Electoral/Admin working group. Retain copies of existing legislation and monitor all new legislation. Membership and active involvement in SAA Electoral Registration Committee and Association of Electoral Administrators. Additional staff during canvass as required. Input to new legislation. Liaison with Electoral Commission. Compliance with ER legislation and good practice confirmed by internal audits. Main requirements of Elections Act are understood and the DLUHC has established a Business Change Network to ensure that policy developments are communicated to administrators. DLUHC also in liaison with EMS suppliers re systems development.</p> <p>(c) <u>Rating Valuation</u> See CT legislation above. Collection of necessary rentals, costs etc. Involvement in variety of SAA Committees and application of SAA Practice Notes. Provide sufficient training. Monitor progress of running roll monthly. Processes in place to handle pre 01/04/2023 appeals, and guidance and processes continually evolving for new Proposals. Liaison with partners in SAA to achieve consistency of practice, in particular where new legislation is encountered. Progress made re</p>				

back-office developments for NDR Reform. 2023 Revaluation delivered, and debriefs almost complete. Plans have begun toward the 2026 Revaluation.

(d) Best Value, Health & Safety, Freedom of Information, Equalities, Records Management, Data Protection etc

Relevant Policies and processes are in place. Training and induction have been provided as appropriate and regular reports are provided to the Management Team and Joint Board as appropriate.

Alternative language, translation, Braille etc facilities available. Customer Service appropriately monitored. Operational targets and monitoring in place.

Compliance with Local Government Model Publication Scheme and Guide to Information.

In line with above, much more information is now published on a pro-active basis.

Fire Risk Assessments in force (and reviewed regularly). Fire and smoke detectors, intruder alarm system installed, routinely maintained and tested. Fire/evacuation drills completed. H&S Risk Assessments reviewed annually. Induction procedures in place. Lone Working arrangements in place with alert/tracker phones in use by staff on survey. Training provided in First Aid, Asbestos Awareness and Violence in the Workplace policies. Annual PAT tests completed. H&S Task register in place. Core Training Plan created for all staff.

Awareness and training in relation to Data Protection Act 2018. Data Protection Policy in place along with Data Audit, Data Breach procedures, Subject Access Request procedure and Privacy Impact Assessment process. DPO appointed. DSAs in place. Internal Audit of Data Protection and Freedom of Information structures and procedures concluded that the Board were generally compliant

Records Management Plan in place and Progress Update Review completed in 2023.

Likelihood	2	Impact	3	Residual Risk	7
Action	Resp Person		Target Date	Progress	
(a) Council Tax					
Ensure survey records are current	DAs		Ongoing		
Pro-actively seek to dispose of proposal and appeals	DAs		Ongoing	Significant inroads made in this recently, and new procedures being put in place to deal with these within 6 weeks.	
(b) Electoral Registration					
Maintain links to SAA, Scottish Government, AEA, Scotland Office, Electoral Commission, EMB and DLUHC re changes in legislation. Respond to consultations etc.	ERO/PAO		Ongoing		
Continue to review budgetary provision, and availability of government grants.	ERO		Annually	Additional funding received 2023 to aid in training for Elections Act changes.	
(c) Rating Valuation					
Continue to dispose of Running Roll appeals.	DAs		Ongoing	Deadline for 2017 Roll appeals is now December 2024.	
Lobby government/respond to consultation on draft legislation.	Assessor (via SAA)		Ongoing	Consultation responses:	

			Appeal Disposal Deadline Decap Rate Setting Representation on New Deal for Business Non-Domestic Rates Sub Group
(d) Best Value, Health & Safety, Freedom of Information, Equalities etc			
All policies and procedures, including Core Training, to be subject to regular reviews	Assessor/ Man Team	As required	
Effect the Records Management Improvement Action Plan	Depute Assessor	Ongoing	3rd Progress Update Review submitted to the Keeper in May 2023.
Complete Annual Core Training	All Staff	Annually	
Continue to ensure compliance with the Data Protection Act (2018), including implementation and review of Data Sharing (DSA) and Data Processing Agreements (DPA).	Assessor/ Depute Assessor	Ongoing	DPO Training being arranged for new Depute Assessor
Update Personal Data Audit, and Review Data Retention Schedule in line with Internal Audit requirements.	Depute Assessor	Ongoing	Retained as annual reminder

Risk 2	Operational Area	All Functions			
<p><u>Risk Title/Description</u></p> <p>Current and expected future local government settlements, potentially with static or reduced funding, bring a number of related financial risks and/or risk of failure to meet statutory duties or maintain service/performance levels, particularly in light of the changes to NDR, Electoral Registration Reform and the likely long terms effects on public sector funding caused by COVID.</p> <p>Scottish Government indicated the provision of funding to assist with implementation of NDR Reform between 2019/20 and 2024/25. Notification was received in 2022 that future agreed funding was to be capped, creating a funding gap of around £180k. This will come to an end in the medium term, however, creating a ‘cliff-edge’ funding issue where the requirements of providing the new rating system remain.</p> <p>An unprecedented rises in costs due to economic and/or political climate unforeseen at time of budget setting. In the short term, at least, increasing inflation is a risk to sound financial management.</p> <p>The excess space at 235 Dumbarton Road remains vacant resulting in non-remunerative overhead costs.</p> <p>An annual budget gap remains in estimates projected for 2023/24 and beyond.</p>					
Likelihood	3	Impact	3	Risk Score	9
<p><u>Controls</u></p> <p>Financial Regulations and Standing Orders in place and updated. Liaison with Treasurer and constituent councils, statutory requirement to fund Assessor and ERO. Budget monitoring reports to MTM in line with audit recommendations. Procurement processes aligned with WDCs. Scottish Government commitment to provide NDR Reform funding to Assessors in 2023/24. Joint procurement of IS systems and services through WDC. Using ‘We-Buy’ procurement system and other approved procurement frameworks. Inflation considered in parts of the budget process. Planned delays in recruitment where appropriate etc. Various money saving changes made including outsourcing the majority of our print and mail requirements. Advance planning of processes and resources. Board approval of use of reserves. Voluntary Early Retirement/Severance (VER/S) scheme in place with criteria which require the VJB to consider financial viability and service provision. Staff have been released in previous years under this scheme with significant year-on-year savings. Complete review of budgetary need undertaken in preparation for 2023/24 budget. Canvass reform reduced the extent of the door-to-door canvass requirement from 2020. Reserves are available, although may be exhausted after this year. Several underspends in recent years have reduced or delayed the pressure on use of reserves.</p>					
Likelihood	3	Impact	2	Residual Risk	8
Action	Resp Person	Target Date	Progress		
Legal advice if necessary.	Assessor	As required			
Continue to closely monitor budget spend and cost of various processes.	Assessor/ Man Team	Ongoing			
Continue to consider each budget line for cut in budgetary planning. Continue to include inflationary uplift in budget process where appropriate.	Assessor	Annually, prior to February	Full consideration given to operational requirements in producing the 2023/24		

			draft budget along with indicative budgets for following years. Accrued reserves to be used to offset expenditure in forthcoming years. 2023/24 Budget approved at March VJB meeting, and Long Term Financial Strategy highlights funding gap from 2024/25.
Continue to review and plan processes in advance. In particular, review where duplication exists across the Joint Board's 2 locations	Man Team	Ongoing	
Meet with Finance Officers of constituent Councils	Assessor / Treasurer	As required	
Seek new tenants for vacant part of 235 Dumbarton Road, Clydebank	Assessor	Ongoing	
Continue to monitor effect on service provision/performance arising from staff losses.	Assessor/ERO/ Man Team	Ongoing	
Continue to lobby UK and Scottish Governments, as appropriate, for funding to deliver NDR and Electoral Reform as detailed elsewhere.	Assessor/ERO	Ongoing	Through SAA
Seek mechanism to 'cement' Scottish Government grant funding for Barclay/NDR Reform into core budget	Assessor/ERO	On/before cessation of direct grant funding	Reference included in 2023/24 Long Term Financial Strategy document
Review property requirement/profile	Assessor/ERO/ Treasurer	TBC	
Joint Board to seek increased requisitions	Joint Board	As required	Preferably this would be done with the agreement of council finance officers.

Risk 3	Operational Area	Non-Domestic Rating			
<u>Risk Title/Description</u>					
<p>Failure to deliver a successful and accurate Revaluation in 2026 and/or implement the changes introduced by the Non-Domestic Rating (NDR) Act. The challenges include:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) the move to a 3 yearly Revaluation cycle, with a valuation date 1 year in advance, (b) significant change to the proposals/appeals system, (c) The current back-log in disposal of NDR/running roll appeals (d) The loss of experienced qualified surveyors staff over recent years, and the associated additional work of training and mentoring unqualified staff who replace them. (e) Transfer of appeals processes from Valuation Appeal Committees to First Tier Tribunal of Local Taxation Chamber of the SCTS. (f) Deficiencies of a decades old IT system make processes inefficient, and development difficult. <p>Separate risks specific to NDR Reform and the implementation of 3-yearly Revaluations are included in the Operational Risk Register. Board Members should remain aware of the far-reaching implications, including financial implications, of the change to 3-yearly Revaluations. Any major change to the role of the Assessor is likely to have knock-on implications for the post of ERO.</p> <p>Loss of experience in SAA may increase this risk.</p> <p>The late laying of Regulations (4 months prior to launch) to implement the new Barclay 2-stage Appeals process may result in delays in delivering systems and processes to handle new NDR Proposals.</p>					
Likelihood	3	Impact	3	Risk Score	9
<u>Controls</u>					
<p>Revaluation processes are known and understood, although are now carried out in a much shorter timescale than before.</p> <p>Statutory functions met continually in line with statutory requirements and established methodologies.</p> <p>Expected Performance Standards may require to be relaxed in order to ensure statutory functions are delivered.</p> <p>Customer satisfaction is at high levels.</p> <p>SAA meetings with Government officials in respect of development of policy and legislation.</p> <p>SAA Revaluation/NDR Reform Project Plan is being formulated which will form the basis of a local project plan.</p> <p>Additional funding received in 2019/20 - 2022/23 and expected in 2023/24.</p> <p>Assessors' new information gathering powers and deterrent of Civil Penalties are designed to increase information available to inform Revaluation, although this comes with an added overhead in administering the Civil Penalty Process.</p> <p>Initiation of a project to replace the aged Assessors Computer System with a new purpose built application.</p> <p>Valuation Working Group formed to promote consistency, share practice, and introduce more efficient methods, along with staff guidance and training.</p> <p>Project team set up to drive forward developments and instructions for new NDR Proposals.</p>					
Likelihood	2	Impact	3	Residual Risk	7
Action		Resp Person	Target Date	Progress	
Focus on statutory requirements as priority over other non-statutory reform proposals		Assessor	Ongoing	Prioritising of additional portal valuations based on needs of ratepayers.	

Continue to develop ICT systems to provide enhanced analysis and valuation capability	Assessor	Various	
Investigate off the shelf software which may assist staff in the delivery of 3 yearly revaluations.	Assessor / Depute	June 2023	Initial meetings have taken place with 3 suppliers.
React to any legislation and government policy requirements	Assessor/ Joint Board	As req'd	
Continue to promote professionalism, performance levels (including KPI areas of function) and customer satisfaction.	All Staff	Ongoing	KPI Targets reviewed for the year 2023/24.
Dispose of running roll appeals, including COVID material change of circumstance appeals promptly	All valuation staff	Ongoing	Disposal date further delayed to 31/12/2024.
Ensure that funding is made available for the additional requirements of NDR Reform	Joint Board/ Assessor/ Constituent Councils	Ongoing	Funding received for 2022/23. Budget for 2023/24 now agreed.
Continue to provide resources, including personnel and ICT, required to deliver reform.	MT	Ongoing	Overtime used to deliver 2023 Revaluation, with significant amounts required ahead of Draft Roll and Final Roll publication.
Ensure local 2026 Revaluation/NDR Reform Project Plan is created, maintained and adhered to.	Valuation WG	Ongoing	
Actively participate in development of Practice Notes including input at Committee and Working Group meetings	Relevant valuation staff	Ongoing	Committee and Working Group Memberships agreed June 2023.
Ensure ongoing ingather of relevant rental, cost, throughput and other information required to complete Revaluation	Divisional Assessors	August 2023	

Risk 4	Operational Area	All Functions		
<u>Risk Title/Description</u>				
<p>VJB is very dependant for delivery of its statutory functions and its day-to-day operations on various uses of ICT. Failure of these systems presents a significant risk to the operations of the Assessor and ERO, especially at key dates. The risk also extends to loss of data from systems.</p> <p>The following contribute, or could potentially contribute, to this risk:- Failure of WDC to comply with the terms of the existing Service Level Agreement; Potential loss of connectivity to the internet at Aurora House, Clydebank; Potential loss of skill sets for legacy ICT systems; Single point of dependency/failure on/of programming capability. NDR Reforms increase the need for ICT development and system change.</p>				
Likelihood	3	Impact	3	Risk Score 9
<u>Controls</u>				
<p>Systems are tested and robust. SLA with WDC to provide support, in particular for e-mail, internet access, security etc. Systems and data are backed-up in line with industry best practice. Electoral Management System replicated over two servers in two locations several times per hour. Risk Registers and action plans exist and are regularly reviewed. Staff trained and user manuals available. Security controls, requirement for passwords and protocols are all in place, including encryption of all laptops. Contract in place covering supply and maintenance of EMS software – updates being provided and implemented as required. Maintenance and support arrangements and a rolling programme of hardware replacement are in place. Paper/alternate procedures could be implemented for several functions. Current versions of software in use. Business Continuity Procedure in place and regularly reviewed. Contingency arrangements with Government Digital Service tested. Regular liaison meetings with WDC. Task Manager used to log issues and keep track of progress towards resolution. Knowledge base created as a resource to help resolve issues. Regular IT Team meetings, which are minuted and reported to the Management Team. Board approved IT Strategy covers security issues. IT team members and WDC support staff are made aware of critical timetables etc. Communication lines to both offices upgraded in 2020/21. Disaster Recovery procedures for Electoral Management System have been tested and work as expected.</p>				
Likelihood	2	Impact	3	Residual Risk 7
Action		Resp Person	Target Date	Progress
Maintain and keep current all of the above		Assessor/ Depute Assessor	Ongoing	
Continue development of NDR systems to facilitate NDR Reform and Barclay requirements		Assessor	Ongoing	
Continue to replace and decommission PCs		Assessor	Ongoing	
Review options to replace Unix server		Assessor / Depute Assessor	June 2023	Will be dependant on Assessors system replacement project.

Install web based telephony system	Assessor	Summer 2023	There is a dependency on WDC ICT relating to network and security issues which remains outstanding.
Crash-test and recover 'Progress' Valuation System	Assessor	TBC	
Continue to consider programming capability	Assessor/Depute Assessor	Ongoing	
Install second internet connection to Clydebank office	Assessor	Ongoing	Temporary solution in place which would allow internet connectivity in the result of the failure of the main connection. Permanent solution has a dependency for WDC ICT to input to specification.

Risk 5	Operational Area	Non-Domestic Rating/Council Tax			
<u>Risk Title/Description</u>					
<p>The combined effect of the pandemic and tranches of material change of circumstance appeals submitted in March 2020 and March 2021, which must be disposed of by 31 December 2024, have resulted in a build-up of both NDR and Council Tax appeal workload. The risks arising are:-</p> <p>(a) Failure to dispose of appeals by their statutory disposal dates, (b) Failure to robustly defend existing rateable values on appeal, and (c) An increased number of complaints and contacts from ND Rates and Council Tax payers due to lack of progress with appeals.</p>					
Likelihood	3	Impact	3	Risk Score	9
<u>Controls</u>					
<p>Revaluation appeals disposed of by statutory date. Government action to 'rule out' Covid appeals, although short period exists which has not been 'ruled out' by legislation. Pro-active engagement in relation to Council Tax proposals and appeals has commenced. Recent consultation with the Scottish Government led to the extension of deadline for Covid related appeals to 31 December 2024</p>					
Likelihood	2	Impact	3	Residual Risk	7
Action		Resp Person	Target Date	Progress	
Increase pro-activity in seeking to dispose of Council Tax appeals		Divisional Assessors	Ongoing		
Write new office wide guidance for staff to follow, to allow consistent and most efficient progress to be made.		Depute	June 2023		
Consider liaising with Scottish Government regarding a possible further extension of the appeal disposal timetable		Assessor via SAA	If required/ appropriate	SAA Response to consultation. Deadline extended until December 2024.	
Continue with various rounds of recruitment to bolster valuation/technical capability		Assessor/ Depute Assessor	Ongoing	Awaiting outcome of MT action to review structure of Valuation Team.	

Risk 6	Operational Area	All Functions			
<p><u>Risk Title/Description</u> The Valuation Joint Board may fail to meet its duties or to maintain service levels in light of the loss and absence of staff, along with the associated recruitment difficulties in attracting qualified chartered surveyors.</p> <p>This risk is multiple in nature, arising from:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) the loss of staff (i.e. numbers/complement) (b) the loss of experience and knowledge (c) the loss of Management Team experience (d) difficulties in attracting suitably qualified and/or experienced staff (e) the above is amplified by the salary levels in private sector for qualified valuers (f) levels of turnover in clerical and administrative staff (g) the inability to bring on trainees as had been scheduled, during the covid-related restrictions on attending the workplace (h) The additional workloads and diversion of senior staff into the almost continual recruitment process (i) More restricted applicant pools than was the previous experience <p>Associated with this risk is that, being a small organisation, the Valuation Joint Board has a number of posts/functions where there is a single point of potential failure. Failure to appoint a Divisional Valuer in the Campbeltown office leaves this location extremely short of qualified staff.</p>					
Likelihood	3	Impact	2	Risk Score	8
<p><u>Controls</u> Wide range of attractive Terms & Conditions including attractive pension scheme and flexible working and 'family friendly' policies. Strong commitment to all strands of Equality in the workplace and the recruitment process. Several recent rounds of prompt/successful recruitment. Career progression opportunities. Barclay funding provided for additional posts. Workforce Plan in place and budgetary provision made for 2023/24.</p>					
Likelihood	3	Impact	2	Residual Risk	8
Action		Resp Person	Target Date	Progress	
Consider re-evaluation of Valuation staff grades to reflect market pressures		Assessor	As required	Will be subject to HR&OD approval and resource availability	
Consideration of structure of valuation teams to better meet requirements of the organisation, and to provide opportunities to retain and attract qualified staff.		Management Team	April 2023	Management Team have considered current vacancies and proposed a small restructure. Treasurer is reviewing financial calculations.	
Implement Workforce Plan		Management Team	As required	Recruitment will recommence on completion of the action above.	
React to any ongoing retirements and resignations with prompt recruitment					
Make the most of attractive Ts & Cs in recruitment adverts					
Consider other means of securing resources such as use of short-term contracts or employing contractors		Assessor	As required	Subject to HR&OD advice	

Consider how roles can be performed from either of the Joint Boards offices, ensuring the needs of trainees are met in respect of training, mentoring and development.	Valuation Working Group	July 2023	
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Risk 7	Operational Area	Electoral Registration (primarily)		
<u>Risk Title/Description</u>				
<p>There is a risk that the ‘additional burdens’ of the Elections Act and its secondary legislation cause failure to deliver on ERO’s statutory duties or have negative effects on other areas of service delivery.</p> <p>The ERO will need to implement processes and procedures to:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Accept and validate applications and issue Voter ID Cards as required; (b) Accept applications for Absent Votes for UK elections (not devolved polls) via a new (to be launched) Digital Service; (c) Require postal voters to reapply for a postal voters on the UK Parliamentary register every three years; (d) Limit the number of electors any individual may act for as proxy; (e) Allow <u>all</u> British citizens living overseas to vote in UK Parliamentary elections, regardless of when they left the UK. <p>It should be noted that several of the provisions will only apply to reserved elections and so there will be additional complexity in having different rules for the UK Parliamentary Register and the Local Government Register.</p> <p>Limited funding has been made available by the UK Government to fund staff training associated with these changes.</p>				
Likelihood	3	Impact	3	Risk Score
9				
<u>Controls</u>				
<p>Current knowledge of draft legislation.</p> <p>Department of Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC) has established a communications framework for disseminating information.</p> <p>AEA web page established for supply of information and sharing of good practice.</p> <p>Electoral Commission commitment to provide new guidance.</p> <p>DLUHC engagement with EMS suppliers to ensure system changes are effected and funded.</p> <p>Government Digital Service web site (for on-line applications) and data exchanges are well established and secure.</p> <p>Existing process in place for validating overseas applications.</p>				
Likelihood	2	Impact	2	Residual Risk
5				
Action		Resp Person	Target Date	Progress
Retain close watch on development of, and changes to, both primary and secondary legislation		ERO/ PAO	Ongoing	Monthly Bulletins being received. Interim Guidance on planning for change published by EC.
Continue to liaise with EMS suppliers re new functionality		ERO/ PAO	Ongoing	
Consider use and apply DLUHC funding to relevant resources when quantum and procedure for receipt are known		ERO	When known	Funding has been used for training, and the remainder earmarked for improving training facilities at both offices.
Implement processes as required		ERO/ PAO	Various timings	Voter ID applications implemented January 2023. Online Absent Vote applications due in October 2023.
Retain a close watch on/for guidance provided by DLUHC, EC and AEA		ERO/ PAO	Ongoing	

DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD**Report by Depute Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer****Valuation Joint Board – June 2023**

Subject: Best Value – Customer Service Update**1.0 Purpose of Report**

1.1 To advise members of the results from the Customer Consultation process during 2022/23.

1.2 To advise members of the outcomes from the Complaints Procedure during 2022/23.

2.0 Background**2.1 Customer Satisfaction Survey**

A key component of Best Value is consultation with stakeholders. A satisfaction survey of recent users of the Joint Board's services has been in place for some years.

2.2 Complaints Procedure

The Joint Board operates a Complaints Procedure which is in line with the Public Sector Ombudsman's Model Complaints Handling Procedure.

3.0 Progress**3.1 Customer Satisfaction Survey**

For some years, recent users of the Joint Board's services have been randomly sampled and issued with questionnaires by post seeking their perception of the service provided to them.

During the year, the procedure for requesting customer feedback was changed. Now, as a matter of course, an invitation to provide feedback (via a weblink), is included in most of our outgoing correspondence.

A summary of the results for the year is provided below:

- By far the majority of our stakeholders (94%) who provide us with feedback find us professional, courteous and helpful.
- 64% of queries or transactions are completed at the first point of contact.
- Only 6% of matters are not concluded to the satisfaction of the stakeholder.

- Most users of Joint Board services (93%) are satisfied with the information and/or advice provided to them.

The summary below illustrates that satisfaction levels, having dipped slightly in 2020/21, returned to previously high levels during the year.

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Was the person with whom you communicated professional, courteous and helpful?	94%	98%	92%	97%	94%
Was the matter brought to a satisfactory conclusion immediately?	60%	61%	56%	64%	64%
Was the matter brought to a satisfactory conclusion?	93%	97%	89%	94%	94%
Are you satisfied with the quality of the information or advice given to you?	93%	96%	90%	96%	93%

No Customer Satisfaction forms were requested in alternative languages, Braille or other formats. A breakdown of the returns which indicated relevant protected characteristics is shown below.

Characteristic	Category	Percentage
Race	White	80%
	Non-white	7%
	Not declared	13%
Gender	Male	40%
	Female	53%
	Not declared	7%
Disability	Disabled	15%
	Able-bodied	72%
	Not declared	13%
Sexual orientation	Bisexual	0.5%
	Gay/Lesbian	0.5%
	Heterosexual	81%
	Other	18%
Marital status	Married	44%
	Never Married	22%
	Other	34%
Age	16-17	1%
	18-21	2%
	22-30	2%
	31-40	9%
	41-50	12%
	51-60	18%
	61-65	12%

	66-70	12%
	71+	7%
	Not declared	31%

Sample sizes within the various equality groups were generally too small to draw firm conclusions. The results are monitored by management with any apparent variations within any of the groups with protected characteristics being followed up to ensure that we are carrying out our functions in a fair and equitable manner.

Qualitative comments provided by service users are used by Management to either commend staff or investigate areas and procedures that might be improved upon.

3.2 Complaints Procedure – outcomes 2022/23

The Joint Board implemented a new Complaints Procedure, which is in line with the Scottish Public Sector Ombudsman’s (SPSO) Revised Model Complaints Handling Procedure, with effect from 1 April 2021.

There were 4 complaints received during 2022/23, compared to 8 in 2021/22. All of the complaints were made in respect of Electoral Registration services. All of the complaints were resolved at the frontline resolution stage.

No complaints were made in respect of our Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rating functions.

As well as our annual customer complaints report, quarterly reports are prepared and published on our website. The content and outcome of complaints are discussed at the regular management team meetings and any opportunities for organisational learning are implemented.

4.0 Next Steps

- 4.1** Results of both the Customer Satisfaction Survey and the Complaints Procedure will continue to be used by the Management Team, where possible, to identify further improvement action.

5.0 Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- (a) Note the positive results from the Customer Satisfaction Survey.
- (b) Note the results from the Complaints Procedure.

Person to contact:

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DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD**Report by Depute Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer****Valuation Joint Board – 23 June 2023**

Subject: Non-Domestic Rating and Council Tax Valuation Update**1.0 Purpose**

The purpose of the report is to advise Members of:-

- 1.1 The outcome of the 2023 general Revaluation of all non-domestic property.
- 1.2 On-going activities to implement reform brought about by the Non-Domestic Rating (Scotland) Act 2020 and the recommendations of the 'Barclay' Review.
- 1.3 Progress in relation to maintenance of the Non-Domestic Rating (NDR) valuation roll.
- 1.4 Progress in relation to disposal of Revaluation and 'running roll' appeals.
- 1.5 Progress in relation to the Assessor's Council Tax valuation function.
- 1.6 Forthcoming priorities and next steps.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The Assessor is required to carry out a general Revaluation of all Non-Domestic properties. Historically this was generally carried out every 5 years but, from 1 April 2023, Revaluations will take place every 3 years. The latest general Non-Domestic Revaluation took effect from 1st April 2023 with a valuation date of 1 April 2022. This was the first Revaluation since 2017.
- 2.2 The Non-Domestic Rating (Scotland) Act was passed in March 2020 and subsequent Regulations since have specified a range of dates, from November 2020 to April 2023, on which various sections of the Act came into force. Grant funding of £236,000 was available, (comprising of carried forward funds of £55k and new funding of £181k), for the 2022/23 financial year to assist with the implementation of the reforms. Funding for 2023/24 & 2024/25 has been capped at £181k despite funding bids of £261k and £300k respectively being made to the Scottish Government. Funding for these ongoing new burdens after 2024/25 remain uncertain.
- 2.3 The existing powers and duties of the independent local Valuation Appeal Panels/Committees passed to the First Tier Tribunal (FTT) of the newly formed Local Taxation Chamber of the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service (SCTS) on 1 April 2023 (delayed from 1 January 2023).
- 2.4 Once a Revaluation Roll is made up, the Assessor is required to maintain the Roll for his area by amending it to reflect a number of circumstances including

physical changes to properties. Any such change to the Valuation Roll may be challenged by relevant parties. From 1 April 2023 this process will consist of two stages – a proposal stage to the Assessor. Where this does not lead to an agreed outcome for both parties, an appeal stage to the Local Taxation Chamber follows.

- 2.5** In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, 2,415 appeals were received in March 2020 and 2,165 in March 2021. The statutory date for disposal of these appeals was amended by Statutory Instrument to 31 December 2023. An additional Statutory Instrument was laid this month further extending the disposal deadline to 31 December 2024.
- 2.6** Complex appeals proceeded to the Lands Tribunal for Scotland rather than the local Valuation Appeal Committee and in these cases, no disposal date applies. A number of appeals from the 2005, 2010 and 2017 Valuation Rolls remain outstanding and have now transferred from the Lands Tribunal to the Upper Tribunal of the Local Taxation Chamber.
- 2.7** The Assessor is required to maintain the Council Tax Valuation List for his area by amending it to reflect new, altered and demolished properties. Additionally he must dispose of any proposals which are made against any entry in the Council Tax Lists.

3.0 Current Position

Non-Domestic Rating Valuation

3.1 2023 Revaluation

- 3.1.1** The final 2023 Revaluation Roll was made up on 15 March 2023 and came in to force on 1 April 2023. New valuations for 15,180 properties were published online at the Assessors Portal, and as required by legislation, final Valuation Notices were issued to all Proprietors, Tenants and Occupiers. Between publication of the Draft and Final Rolls we continued to ingather rental and other information to fill gaps in existing analyses, and revisit valuations where necessary. We also followed up any representations from ratepayers in response to their Draft Valuations.

3.2 Non-Domestic Rating Reform (Barclay)

- 3.2.1** Rented Property Lists were displayed at the Assessors Portal for prescribed subjects which had entries in the Draft Revaluation Roll on the 30 November 2022. These were revisited, updating with new information received, for Final Revaluation Roll publication on 15 March 2023.
- 3.2.2** The identification of certain public parks, parts of parks and buildings within parks which entered the Valuation Roll with effect from 1 April 2023 was carried out with relevant subjects being surveyed/inspected beforehand. These subjects were valued in accordance with the relevant valuation method and entered into the final Revaluation Roll in March 2023.

- 3.2.3** A standardised Revaluation Notice was agreed across Scotland and was issued to all Proprietors, Tenants and Occupiers on 31 March 2023.
- 3.2.4** The transfer of VAC powers to the new Local Taxation Chamber and the introduction of a new Proposals and Appeals System came into force on 1 April 2023. Work continues with the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service (SCTS) regarding the transfer of data for appeals which were submitted to assessors and will need 'ported' to SCTS.
- 3.2.5** ICT development focus has turned to producing a system to handle the receipt of Proposals, and the associated case workload resulting from these. Draft Regulations were laid in December which set out the detail of how the new system will work when it came in to force on 1 April 2023. Our valuation team have been involved in creating specifications for the new system in line with the legal requirements, and have been heavily involved in testing. Timescales to deliver this project are very tight due to the lateness of legislation.
- 3.2.6** The deadline for receipt of Proposals against Revaluation entries is 31st July 2023. Workforce and financial planning was carried out nationally on the basis of a reduction in proposals (appeals) of 25% compared to the 2017 Revaluation.

3.3 *Maintenance of the Valuation Roll ('Running Roll') including appeals*

- 3.3.1** Since April, 30 changes (5 additions, 20 Deletions and 5 material changes) have been made to the Valuation Roll.
- 3.3.2** Of the 9199 appeals received between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2023, 7702 have been disposed of.
- 3.3.3** The vast majority of the remainder of appeals are material change of circumstance appeals lodged on the basis of the Covid outbreak. These require to be disposed of by the end of 2024.
- 3.3.4** There remain some appeals which relate to electricity generators which are stayed pending the outcome of a Valuation Appeal Committee/Lands Valuation Appeal Court case.

Council Tax Valuation

3.4 Maintenance of the Council Tax Valuation Lists

- 3.4.1** Since April, 225 properties have been added to the Council Tax List and 229 have been deleted bringing the total number of dwellings in the Joint Board area to 147,970.

3.5 Council Tax Proposals and Appeals

- 3.5.1** At 1 April 2023, 383 Council Tax Proposals and Appeals were outstanding. Since then 25 new proposals have been received and 186 have been disposed of.

4.0 Forthcoming Priorities and Next Steps

4.1 Non-Domestic Rating Valuation

4.2 *Consideration of evidence in support of Self-Catering entries in the Valuation Roll*

4.2.1 The Council Tax (Dwellings and Part Residential Subjects) (Scotland)

Amendment Regulations 2021 introduced significant changes to the requirements for Self-Catering classification in the Valuation Roll. The largest change impacting Assessors is the annual provision of evidence of 70 days letting in a financial year. Existing Self-Catering subjects in the Valuation Roll which no longer meet the criteria will be deleted from the Roll and entered into the Council Tax Valuation List.

4.2.2 The exercise to reconsider all existing Self-Catering Unit entries has required a write out to 2253 Self-Catering Unit operators advising them of the changes in legislation and new qualifying requirements, along with a request to provide evidence that they have met the requirement for the financial year. At present we have a response rate of around 50%. Valuation teams are currently considering evidence and supporting documentation provided. This is a large exercise requiring significant resource and represents a new ongoing annual burden. In tandem with other Assessors across the country we have agreed to follow up contact with non-responders this year. It's unlikely we will be in a position to do this in future years. This is a new annual burden resulting from Barclay Reforms.

4.3 *Transfer of VAC Powers and New Proposals and Appeals System* 4.3.1

We continue to plan for, and implement, processes and ICT systems to accommodate the changes associated with the new 2 stage NDR Proposals and Appeals process. Staff training will also be delivered. Data for all appeals lodged under the previous system was transferred to the SCTS during April.

4.3.2 Under the new system Revaluation or running roll proposals which are not withdrawn or agreed may be subject to further challenge. Proposals which remain outstanding beyond their determination date can be appealed to the First Tier Tribunal (FTT) of the Local Tax Chamber SCTS. From 1 April 2023 The FTT will also hear Council Tax appeals.

4.3.3 Factors beyond the Assessor's control include scheduling of appeals. Removing timetabling of appeals from local control provides a degree of uncertainty in service planning.

4.4 *Launch of Revaluation 2026 Project*

4.4.1 We have undertaken debriefing sessions with valuation, administration and IT teams to identify any issues or areas for improvement within the 2023 Revaluation project. This feedback will be collated and used to steer the project plan for Revaluation 2026.

4.4.2 This will be the first revaluation undertaken within a three year cycle balancing other workloads including overlapping proposal/appeal disposal and maintenance and upkeep of the Valuation Roll and Lists.

4.5 Maintenance of the Valuation Roll and Council Tax List

4.5.1 Resources will be applied to the maintenance of the Valuation Roll and the Council Tax List, including progress with existing proposals and appeals.

5.0 Recommendations

5.1 Members are asked to note:-

- (a) The timeous completion and delivery of the 2023 Revaluation,
- (b) Progress and planning which is ongoing to effect reform brought about by the Non-Domestic Rating (Scotland) Act and the recommendations of the 'Barclay' Review including the transfer of the powers of the local Valuation Appeal Committees to the First Tier Tribunal of the Local Taxation Chamber of the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service,
- (c) Progress in relation to the general maintenance of the Valuation Roll and the disposal of both 'running roll' appeals and appeals that are before the Lands Tribunal,
- (d) Progress in relation to the general maintenance of the Council Tax List, including the disposal of Council Tax proposals and appeals, and
- (e) Progress being made in relation to forthcoming priorities and next steps.

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DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD

Report by Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer

Valuation Joint Board – 23 June 2023

Subject: Electoral Registration Update

1.0 Purpose

1.1 To provide the members of the Joint Board with an update on the current position in relation to Electoral Registration.

2.0 Background

2.1 The report provided to the Joint Board at the last meeting on 3 March 2023 referred to:-

- Canvass 2022
- ITR Canvass
- Collection of Fresh Signatures for Absent Voters
- Elections Act 2022

3.0 Current Position

3.1 Electoral Registration Processes

All registration applications, including postal and proxy voter applications, whether made on-line or paper format, are being processed in line with statutory timetables.

We continue to publish and distribute monthly register updates. Most of these are now provided in digital form instead of paper following the purchase of some additional software earlier this year.

3.3 Fresh Signature for Absent Voters

The final stage of this process has now taken place with 491 (12.13% of those requiring a refresh) absent votes being cancelled. Those electors have been invited to reapply should they still prefer to vote using this method.

4.0 Preparation for the 2023 Canvass

4.1 The 2023 canvass will start on Monday 3 July 2023, with publication of the revised register to take place by 1 December 2023.

6.2 As a precursor to the annual write-out to electors, National Data Matching of the

Register to the records of DWP took place on Monday 12 June 2023, with local data matching following. These matching stages, the results of which will be reported to the next Board meeting, help identify the appropriate form of communication to be issued to each household.

6.3 As last year we will make use of the Government's 'Notify' email sending facility to contact those households allocated to 'Route 1' where we have an email address available. This email issue seeks to confirm residents of the household without the

need to send a paper Canvass Communication Form A (CCA). 'Route 2' households will receive a Canvass Form (CF) at stage 1 of the canvass process.

- 6.4 Prior to above being issued we will, for the first time this year, also use Notify to send encouragement emails in advance of the canvass to anyone we hold an email address for. This will advise them of when the canvass will start and ask them to follow the included instructions to make a response.
- 6.5 As alternatives to returning forms by mail, telephone, internet and short message service/text reply options will be offered to electors and the internet option will permit households to report "changes" as well as "no changes" electronically.
- 6.6 There is normally very little uptake of the facility to make a response in a different language. Our Electoral Management System (EMS) supplier offers up to 8 languages in their package so, in an attempt to engage with electors from different communities, we have chosen some different languages for 2023 replacing those which were unused previously.
- 6.7 As was the case in 2022, additional response options will be available through the internet service, including the facility for electors to request forms to change their open register preference and/or to download/request absent vote application forms.
- 6.8 Any potential elector added via the internet service will be sent an encouragement email (if they have supplied email address) giving directions on how to register online thereby reducing the need for application forms to be issued. If no response is received, an Invitation to Register will be issued by post.
- 6.9 At stage 2 of the canvass (reminder stage), we will not issue a second canvass form as we have previously, sending a CCB (Canvass Communication B) instead. This form is very similar to a Canvass Form, in that it lists all residents and offers the same response channels, but cuts down on costs as it contains only 2 pages (instead of 4) and there is no requirement to include a prepaid business reply envelope.
- 6.10 A door-to-door canvass of Route 2 households that provide no response will form part of the annual canvass process and this will take place from September.
- 6.11 We recently purchased a Tablet Canvassing module for our EMS along with a tablet for each canvasser. We will no longer use paper canvass registers, and canvassers will not carry paper forms.
- 6.12 Where canvassers do not get a reply from a property they will leave a "calling card" asking the household to make a response using the forms they have already received, or in the absence of those to make contact with one of our offices.
- 6.13 Admin staff are due to receive training from our EMS in early July and will cascade that training to canvassers prior to them visiting properties.

7.0 Elections Act 2022

- 7.1 Applications for Voter Authority Certificates (VAC) have increased slightly due to promotion of the facility for council elections in England & Wales.

- 7.2 The Electoral Commission in Scotland have designed a leaflet, promoting Voter Authority Certificates, and highlighting the potential issues surrounding devolved elections.
- 7.3 The leaflet will be included as an insert with all first stage canvass communications.
- 7.4 VACs in Scotland are only required for those who do not hold an official form of ID, and who wish to vote in reserved elections from October 2023.

8.0 Recommendations

- 8.1 Members are asked to note the content of this report.

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DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD**Report by Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer****Valuation Joint Board – June 2023**

Subject: Internal Audit Report 2023

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To report on the recently completed Internal Audit of the review of workforce planning arrangements.
- 1.2 To seek Members' approval of the Actions contained in the above Internal Audit Reports.
- 1.3 To advise Members of progress in relation to the agreed Action Plan.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The Internal Audit process supports the Joint Board's Governance, improvement efforts and management planning. Internal Audit Services are provided by West Dunbartonshire Council.

3.0 Progress

- 3.1 As part of the Audit Planning process, consideration was given to the key risks and issues facing the Assessor & ERO.
- 3.2 It was agreed that the 2023 Audit should review and give assurance on the workforce planning arrangements that the Board have in place. The objective of the audit was to provide management and the Valuation Joint Board with an assessment of the adequacy and effectiveness of the governance, risk management and controls surrounding the key risks in relation to workforce planning arrangements.
- 3.3 Following a self-assessment of the Joint Board's compliance with CIPFA's 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework', it was identified that the Joint Board did not have a current Workforce Plan and the development of such a plan was included in the Good Governance Action List which was approved by the Joint Board in March 2018.
- 3.4 The Board approved its first Workforce Plan in March 2020
- 3.5 Audit Field work took place in April and May 2023, and a report was produced in early June 2023.

3.6 The review concluded that the overall control environment was 'Satisfactory' although isolated areas of control weakness were identified. Two areas were identified which, whilst not systemic, put some objectives at risk. Actions that would improve the control environment were agreed for these issues.

3.7 The Audit Report is attached for Members' consideration.

4.0 Next Steps

4.1 It was agreed that an interim report on workforce planning would be presented to the Board at its meeting in September each year. The first of these will be scheduled for September 2023.

4.2 In the next full review of the workforce plan (due early 2024), the plan is to be aligned with the long term financial strategy and service plans. This will be presented to the Board during 2024.

4.3 Both of these actions have been incorporated in to the Board's Audit Action Plan document, and the annual schedule of Board Papers has been updated accordingly, satisfying 3 of the 5 action points to date.

5.0 Recommendations

5.1 Members are asked to:-

(a) Note the positive conclusions of the recently completed Internal Audit Report as regards the control environment around workforce planning.

(b) Approve the Action Plan contained in the Audit Report.

(c) Note the progress toward the actions therein.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Internal Audit Report on the Valuation Joint Boards Workforce Planning Arrangements.

Valuation Joint Board
WORKFORCE PLANNING ARRANGEMENTS

JUNE 2023

FINAL REPORT

**Control Environment Opinion:
SATISFACTORY**

In our opinion *isolated* areas of control weakness were identified which, whilst not systemic, put some service objectives at risk.

	RED	AMBER	GREEN
FINDINGS	0	2	0

Draft Distribution

To: Russell Hewton, Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

This audit was conducted between April and May 2023 in accordance with the 2022/2023 Internal Audit Plan, as agreed by the Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute Valuation Joint Board.

Background

Workforce planning is a proactive approach to ensure the organisation's current and future objectives are delivered, the needs of service users are managed effectively and efficiently, the amount and sources of funding are available to meet the legislative and operational requirements, wider policy and legislative environment is undertaken.

Objectives

The objective of this audit is to provide management and the Valuation Joint Board with an assessment of the adequacy and effectiveness of the governance, risk management and controls surrounding the key risks in relation to workforce planning arrangements.

Scope & Approach

The scope of the review covered high level processes and procedures in relation to workforce planning and concentrated on identifying areas of perceived higher risk, such as not adequately translating the workforce strategy into clearly defined actions and timescales or not adequately monitoring and reporting to members on the progress being made with implementing the strategy. To facilitate this audit key risks were outlined in the agreed Terms of Reference set out at Appendix 1.

The audit approach was planned to fall in line with the agreed Terms of Reference and included:

- discussions with management and staff involved in the VJB workforce planning arrangements to identify and agree where the risks are high; and
- reviewing relevant policies and procedures and other documentation in relation to workforce planning arrangements.

Summary Findings

There are two AMBER issues which we consider to be individually significant and which are summarised in the following table. These issues are set out in more detail in Section 2 of this report, together with management’s intended action to strengthen the control environment. (The audit Grading Criteria is provided in Appendix 2).

AMBER	<p><u>Adequacy of Workforce Planning Process</u></p> <p>The DAB VJB, workforce planning process is carried out on an annual basis, however the process is not aligned to the VJB’s overall longer term strategic and financial planning to take account of the strategic priorities for the VJB and identify future workforce requirements on a longer term basis.</p> <p><u>Adequacy of Monitoring and Reporting of Workforce Plan Actions</u></p> <p>The DAB VJB workforce plan is submitted annually to the Board. The plan combines progress made on the prior year agreed actions and also details forthcoming actions, which are matched to the internal and external drivers to the organisation. However the actions do not have specific timescales for completion and some are noted as ongoing. Furthermore, whilst there are operational workforce updates to the Board at the June and September meetings, there is no formal reporting of progress on current workforce plan actions during the year.</p>
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Summary Findings

There are two AMBER issues identified which if implemented by management would improve the control environment. These are set out in more detail at Section 2 of this report. (The audit Grading Criteria is provided in Appendix 2).

Conclusions

The overall control environment opinion for this audit review was **Satisfactory**.

Acknowledgements

The co-operation and assistance of all staff during the audit was greatly appreciated.

Andi Priestman
Chief Internal Auditor

Lesley McCabe
Lead Internal Auditor

2 DETAILED FINDINGS

	FINDING	RISK/IMPACT/RULE BREACH	AGREED ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY DUE DATE
AMBER	<p>1. <u>Adequacy of Workforce Planning Process</u></p> <p>Effective workforce planning is a proactive approach to ensure the organisation’s current and future objectives are delivered, the needs of service users are managed effectively and efficiently, the amount and sources of funding are available to meet the legislative and operational requirements, wider policy and legislative environment is undertaken.</p> <p>Strategic workforce planning aligns the workforce supply and demand to the organisation’s strategic planning process and takes a longer term view to prepare for future needs and develop action plans to address any gaps or inefficiencies identified.</p> <p>Currently for the DAB VJB, the workforce planning process is carried out on an annual basis and does not align with the VJB’s overall longer term strategic and financial planning process to take account of the strategic priorities for the VJB and identify future workforce requirements on a longer term basis.</p>	<p>Workforce skills and competencies required for the organisation’s longer term strategic plan may not be identified which will impact on the ability of the VJB to deliver and achieve its long-term vision. There is also the risk that the VJB may be over or under staffed resulting in excessive payroll costs/inefficiencies.</p>	<p>Workforce Plan to be revised taking cognisance of the guidance contained in the WDC Workforce Planning & Strategy Framework (recently implemented in Feb 2023), leading to better alignment with long term service and financial plans.</p> <p>Recommendations to be added to the Board’s Audit Action Plan.</p>	<p>Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer 28 February 2024</p> <p>Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer 30 June 2023</p>

	FINDING	RISK/IMPACT/RULE BREACH	AGREED ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY DUE DATE
AMBER	<p>2. <u>Adequacy of Monitoring and Reporting of Workforce Plan Actions</u></p> <p>The DAB VJB workforce plan is submitted annually to the Board. The plan combines progress made on the prior year agreed actions and also details forthcoming actions, which are matched to the internal and external drivers to the organisation. However the actions do not have specific timescales for completion and some are noted as ongoing. In addition, the appendices to the current workforce plan details the current workforce/workload drivers for which approval of action plans is being sought. However, the appendices also include actions from prior year which have already been approved and in some cases completed.</p> <p>Furthermore, whilst there are operational workforce updates to the Board at the June and September meetings, there is no formal reporting of progress on current workforce plan actions during the year.</p>	<p>Where target delivery dates for action plans are not specific it is more challenging to measure overall progress on the Workforce Plan actions. In addition, where completed actions from prior year are included, it may not be clear on the new actions identified for the current plan which require approval.</p> <p>Also, where interim reporting is not in place the Board will not have the ability to monitor and review action plan progress to ensure any issues arising with progress are highlighted and discussed.</p>	<p>Recommendations to be added to the Board’s Audit Action Plan.</p> <p>Update annual schedule of VJB papers to include an update report on Workforce Management to be presented at the September meeting of the Board.</p> <p>Review Workforce Plan Actions ahead of interim report to ensure actions have a defined timescale that is appropriate for the action.</p>	<p>Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer 30 June 2023</p> <p>Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer 30 June 2023</p> <p>Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer 31 August 2023</p>

Terms of Reference

To review the adequacy and effectiveness of the governance, risk management and controls surrounding Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute (DAB) Valuation Joint Board (VJB) workforce planning arrangements which mitigate the key risks detailed below.

Risks

1. DAB VJB workforce plan actions are not specific and measurable or do not have realistic timescales set or appropriate resources allocated to achieve the related outcomes.
2. Adequate arrangements are not in place to monitor progress being made with implementing the DAB VJB workforce plan and make all necessary adjustments to ensure its delivery.
3. Adequate arrangements are not in place to regularly report on the progress being made with implementing DAB VJB workforce plan and to highlight any areas of slippage.
4. The DAB VJB has not identified its future staffing and training requirements as part of its service planning process and the need to meet future operational demands.
5. Strategies to address future gaps by recruiting, developing and retaining key staff have not been put in place. These could include HR initiatives, policies, procedures, recruitment, selection and staff development strategies and succession planning.

Internal Audit Report Findings – Risk/Impact Grading Criteria

<p>Report Grading & Criteria</p> <p>Business Risk/Impact (Actual or Potential)</p>	<p>GREEN</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Process improvements/efficiencies may be actioned if it is cost-effective or at management’s discretion – in consultation with IA. To be managed by the appropriate service manager. Low risk - can be prioritised to fit in with wider business activities and priorities (normally start within 6 months of audit) Will not be reported in any Committee papers. 	<p>AMBER</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mandatory - corrective action must be taken (some exceptions agreed by IA) To be overseen to completion by Head of Service. Remedial action to address an amber issue should start within a “<i>reasonable</i>” timescale (normally within 3 months of audit) Will be reported in Audit Committee papers. 	<p>RED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mandatory – immediate corrective action must be taken. To be overseen to completion by a member of the Corporate Mgmt Team. Remedial action to address a red issue should start <i>immediately</i>. Will be reported in Audit Committee papers.
<p>Financial</p> <p>Actual or potential loss which will impact either the Income & Expenditure Account or Balance Sheet within any twelve-month period (i.e. loss of profit or loss of asset)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Process improvement identified which will enhance operational efficiency. Non-material control weakness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Material impact at Service level. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Material impact at Corporate Level.
<p>Reputation</p> <p>Actual or potential impact to the reputation of the Council in the external environment. This includes the views held by the regulator.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Isolated, non-systemic, or restricted scope events that may have a limited impact on our standing with any of our business partners/stakeholders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Events that may tarnish our reputation with a specific customer, group or third parties. Moderate impact on our standing with our key partners/stakeholders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong likelihood of or actual adverse comment in the national media. Significant impact on our standing with any of our key partners/stakeholders
<p>Legal & Regulatory</p> <p>Actual or potential impact arising from operational/management failure that leads to a failure to comply with regulation or legislation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Isolated, non-systemic, or limited scope events which statutory body would not consider the need for additional supervision activity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Events that may lead statutory body to consider increasing level of supervision activity; and damaging the ongoing relationship. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Events/breaches resulting in the strong likelihood of increased levels of supervision from a statutory body.
<p>Operational</p> <p>Actual or potential impact arising from any operational/management failure that leads to an inability to maintain a quality service to any of the Council's stakeholders (staff, service users, customers, suppliers, regulators etc)</p>	<p>Impact upon the delivery of a Service area’s plan/objectives, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Affecting a small number of stakeholders. Small (non-systemic) errors, omissions or delays in operational plans, processes, projects or systems. Non-material failure at Service level. 	<p>Impact upon the delivery of a Service area’s plan/objectives, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Affecting a moderate number of stakeholders. Non-material systemic errors, omissions or delays in operational plans, processes, projects or systems. Material Control failure impacting at Service level. 	<p>Impact upon the delivery of the Council's Corporate objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Affecting a significant number of stakeholders. Material systemic errors, omissions or delays in strategic or operational plans, processes, projects or systems. Material control failure impacting at Corporate level.
<p>Timescale for start of agreed action</p>	<p>Discretionary (6 months)</p>	<p>Reasonable (3 months)</p>	<p>Immediate</p>

Internal Audit Report – Overall Environment Opinion

<p>Strong</p>	<p>In our opinion there is a sound system of internal controls designed to ensure that the service is able to achieve its objectives.</p>
<p>Satisfactory</p>	<p>In our opinion isolated areas of control weakness were identified which, whilst not systemic, put some service objectives at risk.</p>
<p>Requires improvement</p>	<p>In our opinion systemic and/or material control weaknesses were identified such that some service objectives are put at significant risk.</p>
<p>Unsatisfactory</p>	<p>In our opinion the control environment was considered inadequate to ensure that the service is able to achieve its objectives.</p>

DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD

Report by Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer

Valuation Joint Board – 23 June 2023

Subject: Print & Mail Services Contract

1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Joint Board on the conclusion of the award of the Print and Mail Services Contract. This is a follow up report to the one presented to the Board in March this year.

2. Background

2.1 At the meeting of the Joint Board in March of this year, delegated authority was given to the Assessor & ERO, in consultation with either the Clerk to the Board, or the Treasurer to the Board, to conclude the award of the Print and Mail Services Contract.

2.2 The procurement exercise was conducted in accordance with the Joint Board’s Standing Orders and Financial Regulations and the Public Contracts (Scotland) Regulations 2015 for Services.

3. Update

3.1 Two submissions were received by the submission deadline, and these were evaluated by officers of the Joint Board along with West Dunbartonshire Council’s Corporate Procurement Unit, Health and Safety Services and Finance Services against pre-determined selection criteria forming part of the published tender documents which assessed competence, experience, and capacity.

3.2 The tender submissions were evaluated against a set of award criteria which are based on a Price/Quality ratio of 60%/40% as follows:

	Weighting	CFH Docmail Ltd	Critiqom Ltd
Quality (40%)			
Cost	(10.02%)	10.02%	5.01%
Quality	(25.02%)	25.02%	7.82%
Service	(15%)	15%	12.19%

Social Benefits	(4.98%)	4.98%	4.98%
Fair Work First	(4.98%)	4.98%	3.74%
Quality Sub-Total %:	(60%)	60%	33.74%
Price (60%)			
Price Sub Total £	-	£177,822.82	£154,155.12
Price Sub Total %	(40%)	34.68%	40%
Total Score	100%	94.68%	73.74%

3.3 Based on the above exercise, the recommendation from WDC's Corporate Procurement Unit was that the contract should be awarded to CFH Docmail Ltd.

3.4 Following consultation with the Clerk and the Treasurer, the Assessor & ERO agreed to accept the recommendation of Corporate Procurement, and proceeded to sign the contract.

3.5 The contract began on 1 June 2023, for a period of 2 years (with the option to extend for an additional 1 year). The annual contract value is £177,822.82 inclusive of VAT.

4. People Implications

4.1 CFH Docmail Ltd has committed to paying all staff as a minimum the real Living Wage, and promotes Fair Working Practices across their organisation.

4.2 Further, CFH Docmail Ltd has committed to delivery of the following social benefits across all 3 constituent authorities covered by the Joint Board as a direct result of delivery of this contract:

- Donation of £300 of goods to local food-share scheme;
- Donation of £300 to a community group or charity that supports health and wellbeing within the community;
- Donation of £600 of materials to support a local community project;
- Support of environmental educational projects in schools;

5. Risk Analysis

- 5.1** Checks were carried out to ensure the successful bidder has no known links to Serious and Organised Crime which would have significant political and reputational ramifications for the Joint Board.

6. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)

- 6.1** An equalities screening was undertaken for this report to determine if there is an equalities impact. The results were that there is no equalities impact.

7. Recommendations

- 7.1** Members are asked to:

- a) Note the conclusion of the Print and Mail Services Contract, at an annual value of £177,822.82 inclusive of VAT per annum.
- b) Note that the contract shall be for a period of two years, with the option to extend a further 12 months. Commencement date of the contract was 1 June 2023

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DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD**Report by Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer****Valuation Joint Board – 23 June 2023**

Subject: Replacement Assessors System**1. Purpose**

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to introduce a project to the Joint Board which will see the replacement of the decades old Assessors 'Progress' System.

2. Background

- 2.1** The 'Progress' System was designed and written for Strathclyde Regional Council, and was used as the main property database for both Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates records. It is believed to have been introduced in the very early 90's, and it remains the main system and database which holds the Joint Board's property records to this day.
- 2.2** The system is a text based, menu driven system, which operates in terminal mode. No mouse input is possible, and sequences of keyboard inputs are required for its operation. The system was designed from the ground up for processing single records at a time.
- 2.3** There is an acknowledgement that reforms brought about under the Non-Domestic Rates Act 2020 (Barclay Reforms), have introduced many new systems and processes which have both increased frequency of key processes along with reducing the time available to carry them out. Bulk processing operations are becoming the industry 'norm' for dealing with such changes.
- 2.4** Feedback from staff (at all levels) during the recent review of the 2023 Revaluation, has consistently cited 'system problems and inefficiencies' as being a major cause of concern and delay in many processes that are undertaken. The 2023 Revaluation had a 6 year 'run-in'. The 2026 Revaluation will have only three years, which will coincide with the period for dealing with 2023 Proposals and Appeals.
- 2.5** The Management Team undertook to review the system requirements, and consider how a project to deliver a new system could be funded.

3. Options

- 3.1** Three suppliers in the marketplace offer an 'off-the-shelf' solution, specifically designed for Assessors to manage their property records. These have, to

varying degrees, parts of systems to deal with many of the new Barclay Reforms.

- 3.2 Initial estimates of ongoing licensing costs are in the region of £60k to £100k per annum.
- 3.3 Meetings have taken place with the three suppliers who have demonstrated their product.

4. Funding

- 4.1 The Management Team, having considered a number of vacancies currently existing in the organisation, have agreed a change to the structure and number of posts in the valuation teams.
- 4.2 As part of this review, the Management Team have identified 5 posts (which are currently vacant) which will be permanently deleted from the establishment. One new post will be created.
- 4.3 The savings generated from this restructure (£132,265) would be sufficient to fund a replacement valuation system. Calculations have been checked by the Treasurer.
- 4.4 Some of the options will require investment in server hardware. The Board has already agreed a Capital Budget (carried forward from 2021/22) for replacing the Assessors System Server. Initial indications are that this would be sufficient to fund any upfront costs associated with the project.
- 4.5 The valuation managers were clear that they would be able to deliver the required efficiencies to reduce the number of posts due to the efficiencies of having a replacement system.
- 4.6 For this reason, the restructure is contingent on the project to deliver a renewed valuation system proceeding.
- 4.7 As the expenditure on this project will exceed £50,000, the consent of the Joint Board is required under the Board's Financial Regulations.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 The identified posts which are not to be filled will be deleted from the establishment.

5.2 Recruitment will commence for posts to be filled.

5.3 A request will be made to West Dunbartonshire Councils Procurement Team to commence a procurement project for a system to meet the Joint Board's needs.

6. Recommendations

6.1 Members are asked to:

- a) Note the need for a replacement of the Assessors 'Progress' System.
- b) Give approval for procurement to commence for a project to replace the Assessors 'Progress' System, a project which is expected to exceed £50,000 and therefore requires consent of the Board to proceed.
- c) Approve the virement of required funds (from within existing agreed budgets) from employee costs to Computer Costs to fund the project.

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