



*Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute
Valuation Joint Board*

Council Offices
16 Church Street
Dumbarton
G82 1QL

11 June 2020

Dear Sir/Madam

DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD

The Convener has directed that the powers contained in Section 43 of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 will be used and so Members will attend the meeting remotely.

You are requested to attend a meeting of the above Joint Board to be held by video conference **at 11.00 a.m. on Friday, 19 June 2020.** Joining details will be provided separately.

The business is as shown on the enclosed agenda.

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 Donald MacMillan, Argyll & Bute Council
Councillor Iain Paterson, Argyll & Bute Council
Councillor Alastair Redman, Argyll & Bute Council
Councillor Richard Trail, Argyll & Bute Council (Chair)

Councillor Jim Gibbons, East Dunbartonshire Council
Councillor John Jamieson, East Dunbartonshire Council
Councillor Denis Johnston, East Dunbartonshire Council
Councillor Stewart MacDonald, East Dunbartonshire Council
Councillor Vaughan Moody, East Dunbartonshire Council (Vice Chair)
Councillor Sandra Thornton, East Dunbartonshire Council

Bailie Denis Agnew, West Dunbartonshire Council
Councillor Jim Brown, West Dunbartonshire Council
Councillor Jonathan McColl, West Dunbartonshire Council
Councillor Marie McNair, West Dunbartonshire Council
Councillor John Millar, West Dunbartonshire Council

All Substitute Councillors for information

Date of issue: 11 June 2020

DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD

FRIDAY, 19 JUNE 2020

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 - 14

Submit, for approval as a correct record, the Minutes of Meeting of the Valuation Joint Board held on 6 March 2020.

4 CORONAVIRUS / COVID-19 OUTBREAK 15 – 19

Submit report by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer advising members of the effect of the outbreak of Corona Virus/COVID-19, and the Government restrictions introduced to deal with the outbreak, on the functions and services of the Valuation Joint Board and steps taken to mitigate the above effects.

5 NON-DOMESTIC RATING AND COUNCIL TAX VALUATION UPDATE 21 – 25

Submit report by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer advising:-

- (a) of progress in relation to the Assessor's Non-Domestic Rating (NDR) valuation function;
- (b) of the progress in relation to disposal of 2017 Revaluation appeals;
- (c) of on-going activities to implement the Non-Domestic Rating (Scotland) Act and the recommendations of the 'Barclay' Review;
- (d) of the preparations being made for the 2022 Revaluation of non-domestic property;
- (e) of progress in relation to the Assessor's Council Tax valuation function; and

- (f) on the effects of the COVID-19 outbreak and the related government restrictions on NDR and Council Tax functions.

6 ELECTORAL REGISTRATION - UPDATE 27 – 30

Submit report by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer providing an update on the current position in relation to Electoral Registration including the effect of lockdown restrictions created by the Covid-19 pandemic.

7 BEST VALUE – PERFORMANCE REPORTING AND PLANNING 31 – 38

Submit report by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer:-

- (a) providing an update on progress in relation to Best Value, and in particular, advising on external performance reports for the year 2019/20.
- (b) seeking approval of the Public Performance Report for 2019/20; and
- (c) seeking approval of the KPI targets for 2020/21.

8 BEST VALUE – SERVICE PLANNING 39 – 62

Submit report by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer seeking approval of the April 2020 update to the 2018-21 Service Plan.

9 BEST VALUE – CUSTOMER SERVICE UPDATE 63 - 65

Submit report by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer:-

- (a) advising members of the results from the Customer Consultation process during 2019/20; and
- (b) advising of the outcomes from the Complaints Procedure during 2019/20.

10 BEST VALUE – RISK MANAGEMENT 67 – 106

Submit report by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer:-

- (a) seeking approval of the Joint Board's Strategic Risk Register for 2020/21;
- (b) reporting on the recently completed Internal Audit of the Joint Board's Risk Management arrangements;

- (c) seeking approval of the Action Plan contained in the above Internal Audit Report; and
- (d) advising on the efforts being made to manage the risks associated with the COVID-19 outbreak.

11 PERSONNEL POLICIES – CAREER BREAK POLICY 107 – 119

Submit report by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer seeking approval of a 'Career Break Policy' for application within the Joint Board.

12 SALARY OF POST OF DEPUTE ASSESSOR AND ERO 121 – 122

Submit report by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer:-

- (a) advising on the outcome of investigations into the salary applicable to the post of Depute Assessor & ERO and providing options for consideration; and
- (b) seeking Joint Board agreement on the preferred option for the salary grade of the post of Depute Assessor & ERO.

13 DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2020 123 – 182

Submit report by the Treasurer presenting the Draft Annual Accounts for the year ending 31 March 2020.

14 ASSURANCE STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2020 FROM THE SHARED SERVICE MANAGER – AUDIT AND FRAUD 183 – 187

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

DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD

At a Meeting of the Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute Valuation Joint Board held in The Pillar Room, Victoria Halls, Sinclair Street, Helensburgh on Friday, 6 March 2020 at 11.10 a.m.

Present: Councillors Donald MacMillan, Iain Paterson, Alastair Redman and Richard Trail, Argyll & Bute Council; Councillors Jim Gibbons, John Jamieson and Vaughan Moody, East Dunbartonshire Council; and Bailie Denis Agnew*, West Dunbartonshire Council.

*Arrived later in the meeting.

Attending: David Thomson, Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer (ERO); Robert Nicol, Depute Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer; Gillian McNeilly, Finance Manager (for the Treasurer); Joanne Thomson, Accountant; and Scott Kelly, Committee Officer, West Dunbartonshire Council.

Also attending: Richard Smith, Senior Audit Manager, and Kirsteen Sharp, Professional Trainee, Audit Scotland.

Apologies: Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Councillor Graham Archibald Hardie, Argyll & Bute Council; Councillor Sandra Thornton, East Dunbartonshire Council; and Councillors Jonathan McColl, Marie McNair and John Millar, West Dunbartonshire Council. An apology was also given for the Treasurer, Stephen West.

Councillor Richard Trail in the Chair

QUORUM

After hearing Councillor Trail, Chair, it was noted that the meeting was inquorate in terms of the Valuation Joint Board's Standing Orders, there being no Member from West Dunbartonshire Council present. In the circumstances, it was agreed that the meeting would proceed on an informal basis until a West Dunbartonshire Member attended and that if none did attend then the meeting would reconvene on a future date in order that consideration could be given to those items of business which required approval.

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 Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute Valuation Joint Board held on 25 September 2019 were submitted for approval as a correct record.

It was noted that the Minutes would require to be reconsidered, either later in the meeting should a Member from West Dunbartonshire Council be in attendance, or at a reconvened meeting.

In respect of the item under the heading 'Dates of Future Meetings', it was agreed that the next meeting of the Joint Board would be held on Friday, 19 June 2020 at 11.00 a.m. in East Dunbartonshire Council Offices (venue to be confirmed).

DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD FINANCE WORKING GROUP

Having heard Councillor Trail, Chair, and the Assessor and ERO it was noted that the Note of Meeting of the Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute Valuation Joint Board Finance Working Group held on 6 December 2019 had been omitted from the agenda in error.

Councillor Trail confirmed that he was content to accept the Note of Meeting as an additional item of business as the Finance Working Group was not a decision-making body and no decisions were recorded in the Note of Meeting which the Joint Board was only expected to note. Accordingly, the Note of Meeting was circulated (tabled) and noted.

NON-DOMESTIC RATING AND COUNCIL TAX VALUATION PROGRESS

A report was submitted by the Assessor and ERO:-

- (a) advising of the progress in relation to the Assessor's Non-Domestic Rating (NDR) valuation function;
- (b) advising of the progress in relation to the disposal of 2017 Revaluation appeals;
- (c) providing an update on the progress in relation to reform of the NDR system and the forthcoming 2022 Revaluation; and
- (d) advising of progress in relation to the Assessor's Council Tax valuation function.

Following discussion and having heard the Assessor and ERO in further explanation of the report and in answer to Members' questions, the Joint Board agreed to note:-

- (1) the progress in relation to the disposal of NDR appeals;
- (2) the progress in relation to general maintenance of the Valuation Roll;
- (3) the progress in relation to implementing the NDR (Scotland) Bill;
- (4) that planning and preparations for the 2022 Revaluation had commenced;
- (5) the progress in relation to general maintenance of the Council Tax List; and
- (6) the progress in relation to the disposal of Council Tax proposals and appeals.

ELECTORAL REGISTRATION PROGRESS

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

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

- (1) to express its thanks to ERO staff for their efforts in preparing for the UK Parliamentary General Election; and
- (2) otherwise to note the contents of the report.

SCHEME OF DELEGATED POWERS

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

Having heard the Assessor and ERO in further explanation of the report it was noted that this matter would require to be reconsidered, either later in the meeting should a Member from West Dunbartonshire Council be in attendance, or at a reconvened meeting.

REVIEW OF SUPPORT SERVICES AGREEMENT

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

Having heard the Assessor and ERO in further explanation of the report it was noted that this matter would require to be reconsidered, either later in the meeting should a Member from West Dunbartonshire Council be in attendance, or at a reconvened meeting.

WORKFORCE PLANNING

A report was submitted by the Assessor and ERO advising of progress in relation to Workforce Planning within the Joint Board and seeking approval of a Workforce Plan for 2020/21.

Having heard the Assessor and ERO in further explanation of the report it was noted that this matter would require to be reconsidered, either later in the meeting should a Member from West Dunbartonshire Council be in attendance, or at a reconvened meeting.

PRINT & MAIL SERVICES CONTRACT

A report was submitted by the Assessor and ERO seeking approval to authorise the Assessor and ERO, in consultation with the Strategic Lead – Regulatory in West Dunbartonshire Council, to conclude the award of the contract for the Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute Valuation Joint Board's Print and Mail Services.

Following discussion and having heard the Assessor and ERO and the Finance Manager in further explanation of the report, it was noted that this matter would require to be reconsidered, either later in the meeting should a Member from West Dunbartonshire Council be in attendance, or at a reconvened meeting.

REVISED EMPLOYER DISCRETIONS – LOCAL GOVERNMENT PENSION SCHEME (SCOTLAND) AND SALARY SACRIFICE SHARED COST AVCs

A report was submitted by the Assessor and ERO:-

- (a) updating on the review of the Joint Board's Statement of Policy in relation to Pension Scheme Discretions;
- (b) seeking approval of the proposed revisions to the Statement;
- (c) providing details of the amendment to section R17 (1) of the Joint Board's Discretions Policy Statement (a copy of which formed Appendix 1 to the report) to allow shared cost AVCs (SCAVC) by way of salary sacrifice; and
- (d) seeking approval of the above amendment.

Having heard the Assessor and ERO in further explanation of the report and in answer to a Member's question, it was noted that this matter would require to be reconsidered, either later in the meeting should a Member from West Dunbartonshire Council be in attendance, or at a reconvened meeting.

Note: Councillor Gibbons left the meeting at this point.

AUDIT SCOTLAND'S ANNUAL AUDIT PLAN 2019/20

A report was submitted by the Treasurer presenting Audit Scotland's Annual Audit Plan for the audit of financial year 2019/20 to the Board for information.

Having heard the Senior Audit Manager in further explanation of the report, the Joint Board agreed to note the contents of the report.

REVENUE & CAPITAL BUDGETARY CONTROL REPORT TO 31 JANUARY 2020 (PERIOD 10)

A report was submitted by the Treasurer advising on the progress of the revenue budget and the capital programme for 2019/20.

Having heard the Accountant and the Assessor and ERO in further explanation of the report and in answer to a Member's questions, the Joint Board agreed:-

- (1) to note the projected favourable revenue variance of £0.152m (5% of the total budget);
- (2) to note the 2019/20 budgetary position of the capital account; and
- (3) to note the updated position in relation to paragraph 3.3 of the report and that the Scottish Government would no longer recover underspends relating to the £0.032m of funding for Barclay implementation costs which would not be used in 2019/20.

Note: Bailie Agnew entered the meeting during consideration of this item.

After hearing Councillor Trail, Chair, it was noted that, in view of Bailie Agnew's attendance, the meeting was now quorate in terms of the Joint Board's Standing Orders and the Joint Board confirmed that it was content to note those items of business which had been considered earlier in the meeting and which had not required approval, namely:-

- (a) 'Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute Valuation Joint Board Working Group';
- (b) 'Non-Domestic Rating and Council Tax Valuation Progress';
- (c) 'Electoral Registration Progress'; and

- (d) 'Audit Scotland's Annual Audit Plan 2019/20'.

The Joint Board then reconsidered those items which had been considered earlier but which required approval and disposed of them as detailed below.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of Meeting of the Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute Valuation Joint Board held on 25 September 2019 were approved as a correct record.

SCHEME OF DELEGATED POWERS

The Joint Board agreed to approve the revised Scheme of Delegated Powers.

REVIEW OF SUPPORT SERVICES AGREEMENT

The Joint Board agreed to approve the revised Support Service Agreement and noted that it would be signed appropriately.

WORKFORCE PLANNING

Following discussion, the Joint Board agreed:-

- (1) to note that a process of Workforce Planning had been undertaken,
- (2) to approve the Workforce Plan and its appendices; and
- (3) to note that progress would be monitored and evaluated and that further actions would be taken as circumstances required.

PRINT & MAIL SERVICES CONTRACT

Having heard Assessor and ERO in answer to Member's questions, the Joint Board agreed:-

- (1) to authorise the Assessor and ERO and Strategic Lead – Regulatory to conclude the award of the contract for Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute Valuation Joint Board Print and Mail Services to CFH Docmail Ltd; and
- (2) to note that the contract shall be for a period of two years, with the option to extend a further 12 months, at an estimated overall value of £291,879, excluding VAT, and that the estimated commencement date of the contract was 1 June 2020.

REVISED EMPLOYER DISCRETIONS – LOCAL GOVERNMENT PENSION SCHEME (SCOTLAND) AND SALARY SACRIFICE SHARED COST AVCs

The Joint Board agreed:-

- (1) to approve the revised Statement of Policy in respect of Pensions Discretions; and
- (2) to approve the implementation of shared cost AVCs (SCAVC) by way of salary sacrifice for employees of the Joint Board.

The Joint Board then gave consideration to the final item of business on the agenda which it had not considered previously.

DRAFT FINANCIAL STRATEGY AND REVENUE AND CAPITAL ESTIMATES 2020/2021

A report was submitted by the Treasurer:-

- (a) seeking approval of the Financial Strategy, the revenue estimates for 2020/21 and the level of constituent authority requisitions;
- (b) seeking approval of the draft Capital Estimates for 2020/21; and
- (c) advising of the indicative budget positions for 2021/22 and 2022/23.

It was noted that Appendix 3 to the report had been revised following the issue of papers for the meeting and, accordingly, copies of the revised appendix were submitted (tabled).

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

- (1) to note that the report contained two typographical errors and that:-
 - (i) the table under paragraph 3.11 had been based on Grant Aided Expenditure (GAE) levels for 2019/20 and not 2018/19; and
 - (ii) that the correct sum referred to in paragraph 5.1 (f) was £12,500 and not £12,100;
- (2) the updated Long Term Financial Strategy as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report;
- (3) the draft revenue budget for 2020/21;
- (4) that any surplus as at 31 March 2020 be carried forward into 2020/21, for future use and that that free reserves would continue to be held to help manage future budgets and the level of constituent authority contributions;

- (5) to note the indicative revenue budgets for 2021/22 and 2022/23;
- (6) to note the 2020/21 revenue requisition was based on each Council's 2020/21 GAE figures with the apportionment as identified at paragraph 3.8 of the report;
- (7) the proposed 2020/21 capital spend (as detailed in Appendix 5 to the report) to be progressed of £12,500 to be funded from available Barclay Review Funding and constituent Council contributions as detailed in paragraph 3.10 of the report;
- (8) to note the indicative capital bids for 2021/22 and 2022/23 (as detailed in Appendix 5 to the report);
- (9) to note the likely slippage of spend and earmarked resources to be carried forward from 2019/20 into 2020/21 for the flexi system and the server upgrade (anticipated to be £0.035m); and
- (10) to note the indicative capital programmes for 2021/22 to 2022/23 and indicative constituent contributions, based upon current GAE allocations, and that requests for final approval would be requested year on year.

The meeting closed at 12.30 p.m.

DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD

Report by Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer

Valuation Joint Board – 19 June 2020

Subject: Corona Virus/COVID-19 Outbreak

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To advise members of the effect of the outbreak of Corona Virus/COVID-19, and the Government restrictions introduced to deal with the outbreak, on the functions and services of the Valuation Joint Board.
- 1.2 To advise members of the steps and actions taken to mitigate the above effects.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 On 16 March, the Prime Minister introduced guidance to combat the outbreak which included advice that individuals in certain 'at risk' groups should isolate at home and that everyone should "start working from home where they possibly can".
- 2.2 On 17 March, in a statement to the Scottish Parliament, the First Minister reiterated the advice that all persons in certain 'at risk' groups should isolate in their homes and that all social contact should cease.
- 2.3 On 23 March, the First Minister announced an 'effective lockdown' by making a clear direction that "you must stay at home unless it is absolutely essential to go out, and that includes working from home wherever possible".

3.0 Progress

- 3.1 In the days following 17 March certain staff members, including myself, remained at home and it was clear that further restrictions were likely to be imminent. At this stage we:-
 - Provided employees with guidance on isolating if suffering symptoms, and precautionary measures to be employed including hand washing and avoiding open coughing and sneezing.
 - Started to review our home working capability and our options to expand it.
 - Stopped all survey work and face-to-face meetings.
 - Closed our offices to the general public.
 - Planned an orderly close-down including bringing forward several year-end processes.

- 3.2 Following the announcement on 23 March, the offices of the Joint Board were closed completely and, those who could, commenced working from home. Appropriate signage was posted in each location and on our website. Telephone answering messages were amended and automated e-mail responses with an appropriate message were introduced.
- 3.3 Initially, 12 (23%) of our employees had access to home working, albeit some had issues in obtaining connectivity in the first instance. By late April, and following 2 phases of rollout, 31 (60%) employees were able to work from home. A host of complications arose during this process and the effort and time invested by our in-house ICT staff cannot be understated. The success in expanding home working provision was also only made possible through partnership working with West Dunbartonshire Council's IT support team.
- 3.4 An exercise has been completed to identify employees who are categorised as extremely vulnerable, vulnerable, have public transport issues or have childcare commitments. Regular contact is being made with staff who are not currently working on daily basis.
- 3.5 Initially, several key functions were hampered by, or prevented from occurring, due to the existence of physical or hard copy stages in the relevant processes. These were rapidly developed out, again, by our in-house ICT team and this allowed us to proceed with delivering on statutory requirements using home working only.
- 3.6 There remains a dependency on our offices for issues such as handling incoming and outgoing mail. This is facilitated by a single employee attending the Campbeltown office on a daily basis and regular, but less frequent, visits to the Clydebank office. These visits allow the scanning of mail to relevant persons for processing and provide limited opportunities for access to hard copy files and other office based references.
- 3.7 A COVID-19 Risk Register has been produced and a range of mitigating actions taken. The Risk Register is reported to today's meeting under separate cover.
- 3.8 As alluded to above, all statutory services are continuing either as before or in slightly amended fashion and several other services and functions are progressing as, or close to, normal. These include:
- Applications to be included in the Electoral Register are being processed and the Register is being updated monthly in accordance with the statutory timetable. The one caveat on this service is that updates are not currently being provided to local Libraries (which, at time of writing, remain closed).

- The non-domestic Valuation Roll and Council Tax Valuation List are being maintained to reflect new, demolished and altered properties (subject to the caveats, below) and to effect appeal settlements.
- New proposals and appeals are being received and acknowledged in line with statutory requirements.
- Planning for future workloads, including the annual electoral canvass, is proceeding as normal.
- All Freedom of Information and Data Protection requests are being dealt with within their required timetables.
- Updates to the Electoral Management System are being applied on release.
- In-house development of valuation systems for Revaluation has progressed, subject to the diversion of resources to remote working roll-out.
- Financial processes are ongoing and all financial year-end procedures were completed timeously.
- Most senior management processes are fully enabled through home working.

Further information on ongoing service provision is contained with the Electoral Registration and Valuation update reports which are provided to members, separately, today.

3.9 Issues which continue to provide challenges include:-

- Our offices being closed means that we cannot provide public access to Electoral Registers, Valuation Rolls or Council Tax Lists, though the latter two are available at www.saa.gov.uk.
- Ongoing government restrictions on attending workplaces and on unnecessary travel currently constitute a prohibition on carrying out survey work, which is a pre-requisite of many aspects of NDR and Council Tax maintenance work.
- Also in relation to NDR and CT functions, our property attribute information (including plans, area calculations, specifications etc) is largely held in paper files and, in many instances, is not accessible through home working.
- Several 'back-office' processes, including the recording of property sales, planning applications and building warrants, are not being completed. These are no bar to progress in the short term, particularly as development and sales activity are so low, but they will create a back-log of work and could affect front line services as time goes on.
- The Secretaries to the Valuation Appeal Panels cancelled all Valuation Appeal Committee hearings up to September and surveying firms have been closed, some also having 'furloughed' staff. The combined effect is that progress in relation to appeals disposal has slowed significantly. The knock-on effect is that additional hearings have had to be established for the autumn period and appeals have been re-cited for these later dates.
- Secondary legislation to support the Non-Domestic Rates (Scotland) Act 2020 has not been forthcoming and this has delayed implementation of the

Assessors new information gathering powers and prevented detailed specification and development of some systems changes which will be required to implement the Act, deliver the 2022 Revaluation and effect the other non-statutory requirements of the Barclay Review.

- Detailed analysis for the 2022 Revaluation has not yet commenced as would have been expected. This is not critical at this stage but, combined as it now is with a condensed diet of appeal hearings in the coming months, it does represent a significant pressure on surveying staff over the coming months.

3.10 The COVID-19 outbreak has directly resulted in additional workload and pressures as below:

- The Scottish Government has introduced a range of COVID-support grants for small businesses based on the relevant property's entry in the Valuation Roll. This has resulted in hundreds of enquiries for new Valuation Roll entries to be made, existing entries to be split and for description and other changes to be effected.
- Almost 2,500 NDR appeals have been received claiming that the outbreak constitutes a material change of circumstances. The administration of their receipt and their acknowledgement proved to be extremely challenging, coming as they did at the very point where we were in transition from office to home working. These have to be disposed of by March 2021.

4.0 Next Steps

- 4.1 The Scottish Government route map through and out of the crisis, published on 21 May, includes the opening of non-essential indoor office workspaces in Phase 3. Also included in Phase 3 is the planned opening of schools on 11 August so this is the best indicator of when we might reasonably expect to return to our offices in a significant capacity again.
- 4.2 Notwithstanding the likelihood that home working may remain the 'norm' for many for the foreseeable future, we are embarking on a series of risk assessments of returning to the workplace and safe working practices will be implemented in line with government guidance.
- 4.3 The annual electoral canvass will commence with a mail out of circa 140,000 forms on 3 August and this will result in a large increase in paper/hard copy return mail received, so we will need to have a daily presence in each office to scan and index the forms returned. The door-to-door part of the canvass is scheduled for October and a decision on proceeding with that task will be taken after reviewing whatever government advice is in place nearer the time.

- 4.4 Similarly, an active review of government and the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors advice on travel and visiting properties other than the home or workplace will be maintained with a view to re-establishing survey work.
- 4.5 In due course, a review of our reaction to the outbreak will be undertaken in order to review and highlight any lessons learned.

5.0 Recommendations

Members are asked to note:

(a) the effect of the outbreak of Corona Virus/COVID-19, and the Government restrictions introduced to deal with the outbreak, on the functions and services of the Valuation Joint Board.

(b) the steps and actions taken to mitigate the above effects.

Person to contact:

David Thomson (Assessor and ERO)

Tel: 0141 562 1260

E-mail: david.thomson@dab-vjb.gov.uk

DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD

Report by Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer

Valuation Joint Board –19 June 2020

Subject: Non-Domestic Rating and Council Tax Valuation Update**1.0 Purpose**

- 1.1 To advise members of the Joint Board of progress in relation to the Assessor's Non-Domestic Rating (NDR) valuation function.
- 1.2 To advise members of the progress in relation to disposal of 2017 Revaluation appeals.
- 1.3 To advise the Joint Board of on-going activities to implement the Non-Domestic Rating (Scotland) Act and the recommendations of the 'Barclay' Review.
- 1.4 To advise members of the preparations being made for the 2022 Revaluation of non-domestic property
- 1.5 To advise members of the Joint Board of progress in relation to the Assessor's Council Tax valuation function.
- 1.6 To advise members on the effects of the COVID-19 outbreak and the related government restrictions on NDR and Council Tax functions.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The Assessor is required to carry out a general Revaluation of all Non-Domestic properties normally every five years. A general Non-Domestic Revaluation took effect from 1st April 2017.
- 2.2 Consequent to the Revaluation, 3,569 appeals against 3,460 subjects with a total rateable value of £252,557,705 were received by the statutory deadline of 31 December 2020.
- 2.3 Appeals against entries in the 2005 and 2010 Valuation Rolls remain outstanding and require to be disposed of.
- 2.4 The Assessor is required to maintain the Valuation 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 appealed by relevant parties.

2.5 In March 2020 it was reported to the Board that The Non-Domestic Rating (Scotland) Bill had completed its passage through Stage Three of its Parliamentary scrutiny and was expected to obtain assent in March.

2.6 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

3.1 COVID-19 Outbreak and Government Restrictions

3.1.1 Although our offices are currently closed, the majority of valuation staff have home working facilities and are continuing to provide NDR and CT maintenance functions, albeit at a reduced capacity. The majority of our physical attribute information (plans, areas, specifications etc) for both systems remains largely dependent upon hard copy filing systems and that is proving to be fairly limiting, particularly when time is of the essence. Construction activity has also been impaired during the 'lock-down' period so the amount of completed development work which requires new or amended valuations may well be small.

3.1.2 The government's restrictions on non-essential travel and the guidance to avoid entering non-essential properties other than the home has made survey and inspection work impossible and have therefore further restricted our ability to maintain service function.

3.1.3 All Valuation Appeal Committee hearings for the period April to June were cancelled by the relevant Secretary/Assistant Secretary and this, along with the unavailability of some appellants' agents who were 'furloughed' or made redundant, has resulted in a significant slow down in the progress of Revaluation appeals.

3.1.4 In March, 2,415 appeals were received, the majority of which claim that the COVID-19 outbreak constitutes a material change of circumstances. The disposal dates for these appeals are in March 2021 and dealing with these appeals constitutes a very significant additional and unexpected burden on the service. Since April, a further small number of such appeals have been received but, with ratepayers not having to make appeals for the current year until 31 March 2021, many more can be expected.

3.1.5 Members may be aware that some of the government's support for businesses affected by the outbreak is provided through a grants system which is based on the rateable value of the relevant property. This has resulted in a stream of enquiries with significant numbers of:-

- New entries being made to the Valuation Roll
- Existing entries being split
- Description changes

This activity is a new drain on resources deriving directly from the outbreak and which could not have been planned for.

- 3.1.6 Looking forward, it is expected that the effective closure of the hospitality industry will have lasting effects on our ability to complete survey and inspection work for some time to come, particularly for our Campbeltown staff who regularly spend days away from home carrying out inspections in rural and remote areas.

3.2 Non-Domestic Rating Valuation

3.2.1 2017 Revaluation

Notwithstanding the comments at 3.1.3 above, disposal of Revaluation appeals has been a focus in recent months for our valuation staff. By the end of May, 3,181 Revaluation appeals, representing 89.1% of those submitted, have been disposed of.

3.2.2 2005 and 2010 Revaluation Cycle Appeals

No progress has been made since the last report to the Board in March.

3.2.3 Maintenance of the Valuation Roll ('Running Roll')

In the year to March 2020, 928 changes were made to the Valuation Roll to reflect new, deleted and amended properties. In April and May 2020, 86 such changes to the Valuation Roll were made.

At the start of the 2019/20 financial year 466 running roll appeals (i.e. those relating to maintenance of the valuation roll) were outstanding. During the year, 2,507 running roll appeals were received, including the COVID-related appeals referred to above, and 161 were disposed of leaving 2,812 outstanding at the end of March. During April and May a further 58 'running roll' appeals were received and 45 disposed of. The outstanding running roll appeals will be disposed of in parallel with revaluation appeals, and in accordance with the statutory timetables for disposal.

3.2.4 Non-Domestic Rating (Scotland) Act

The Non-Domestic Rates (Scotland) Act received assent on 11 March 2020 and parts of it were brought into force on 1 and 2 April. Members will be aware that this Act and the associated secondary legislation will have significant effects on the Assessors' service.

The new powers to require information from ratepayers, and others, came into effect on 1 April along with powers to serve Civil Penalty Notices for failure to supply the requested information. The government has not, however, brought forward the secondary legislation which is required to practically implement the Civil Penalty appeals process so we have been unable to use the new

powers. In the meantime, an ICT systems development project is under way to facilitate the collection of penalties through West Dunbartonshire Council's finance systems.

Further secondary legislation will be required to provide the detail around other provisions within the Act.

Significant progress has been made towards the provision of valuation details at the Scottish Assessors web portal for a much wider range of subjects than is currently the case. Further, at time of writing, a new mapping facility on the portal is about to 'go-live'. These are concrete examples of Assessors taking forward the non-statutory recommendations of the Barclay Review Report.

3.2.5 2022 Revaluation

The valuation date for the 2022 Revaluation was 1 April 2020 and, with that falling during a worldwide pandemic, the effect on the Revaluation is now uncertain. It is understood that government is considering options to move either the valuation date, the effective date of the Revaluation, or both.

Meanwhile we will continue to prepare for the Revaluation as it currently scheduled with a series of actions being included in the Service Plan for 2020/21. The first stage will involve a general ingather of rental and other information and this will be followed by extensive analyses at local and national levels to derive schemes of valuation for over 100 property categories.

Later in the year we will aim to commence the draft valuations of the 'bulk class' subject (Shops, offices and industrial subjects).

3.3 Council Tax Valuation

3.3.1 Maintenance of the Council Tax Valuation Lists

In the year to March 2020, 1,061 new dwellings were added to the Council Tax bringing the total number of dwellings in the Joint Board area to 145,569. Since 1 April, 104 dwellings have been added to the List and 48 have been deleted.

3.3.2 Council Tax Proposals and Appeals

During the year to March 2020, 327 proposals to change property Bands were received and 302 were disposed of leaving 217 outstanding. Since the start of April, 61 new proposals have been received and 15 disposed of.

4.0 Recommendations

4.1 Members are asked to note:-

- (a) The progress in relation to disposal of Non-Domestic Rating appeals,
 - (b) Progress in relation general maintenance of the Valuation Roll,
 - (c) Progress and planning which is ongoing to effect the Non-Domestic Rating (Scotland) Act and the recommendations of the 'Barclay' Review
 - (d) Progress in relation general maintenance of the Council Tax List
 - (e) Progress in relation to the disposal of Council Tax proposals and appeals, and
 - (f) To note the effect of the COVID-19 outbreak on the valuation activities and the efforts being made to ensure continued service provision.
-

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DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD

Report by Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer

Valuation Joint Board – 19 June 2020

Subject: Electoral Registration Update**1.0 Purpose**

To provide the members of the Joint Board with an update on the current position in relation to Electoral Registration including the effect of lockdown restrictions created by the Covid-19 pandemic.

2.0 Background

The report provided to the Joint Board at the last meeting on 6 March 2020 referred to the 2019 Annual Canvass, ITR Canvass, IER Funding 2019/20, the UK Parliamentary Election, Fresh Signatures for Absent Voters, Scottish Elections Franchise & Reform Bills and Canvass Reform.

Also at the meeting in March, the Joint Board authorised the Assessor and ERO and WDC Strategic Lead – Regulatory Service to conclude the award of the print and mail services contract to CFH Docmail Ltd.

3.0 Current Position**3.1 Staff Remote Working**

Home working is available to several administrative and clerical staff and this allows us to carry out most functions in relation to Electoral Registration.

Where it is not feasible for any specific task to be carried out remotely, individual staff members can attend either office, for the duration of the task and whilst observing the social distancing guidelines.

3.2 Electoral Registration Processes

Since the lockdown we have endeavoured to keep as many electoral registration processes as up to date as possible with the limited workforce that has access to home working. All registration applications, including postal and proxy voter applications, whether made on-line or on paper forms, are being processed in line with statutory timetables.

The monthly register updates have been published and distributed, mainly by electronic means. Where paper copies of updates are required, the service has suffered some interruption. Where recipients, such as libraries and council offices, are not currently open, paper versions of the register updates

are being held until such times as we can be sure they will be delivered securely.

Since the last Board meeting, the updates to the Register have been published for 1 April, 1 May and 1 June, resulting in a total of 4,011 additions and 3,134 deletions.

3.3 IER Funding 2019/20 - Cabinet Office (CO) funding for offsetting the additional costs of IER

The Justification Led Bid for additional IER funding which was submitted on 15th January 2020 for £14,659 was approved by CO and payment was received on 6th May 2020. No such funding is expected, or has been budgeted for, in 2020/21.

3.4 Print & Mail Services

The contract for print & mail services with CFH Docmail Ltd. was concluded with a start date of 1 June 2020 and, as the successful candidate is also the incumbent supplier, planning mail-outs for the annual canvass and beyond has progressed seamlessly.

4.0 Preparation for 2020 Canvass Reform

The Cabinet Office has been providing guidance and updates for canvass during the pandemic restrictions. Whilst they recognise that planning during these uncertain times will be difficult they are clear that:-

1. The canvass will go ahead and will not be cancelled
2. It will be the reformed canvass and will not revert to the old canvass format.

We have set our canvass start date as 3 August 2020, with publication of the revised register by 1 December 2020, as normal.

The 2020 Canvass Reform will see significant changes to processes. It will commence with a mandatory national data matching step, followed by a discretionary local data matching step to identify which form of canvass is appropriate for each household.

DABVJB's scheduled upload to the national data matching process is Tuesday 7 July 2020 with results being expected within 5 days. We will perform a local data match step against council tax records between national results being received and data being sent to our print and mail service provider on 20 July 2020.

A new 'Communication A' form will be sent to 'Route 1' households – this is where the matching process suggests there has been no change to residents in the property. These households do not need to make a reply if the elector

details are correct and they do not require any follow-up. Where changes are required, electors will be directed to the on-line registration service.

A 'Canvass' form (formerly Household Enquiry Form) will be sent to any property where the matching suggests there are, or are likely to be, changes in residents. These 'Route 2' households must make a return and must be followed-up by further contacts, including a personal contact, where no return is made.

These 'Communication A' and 'Canvass' forms are prescribed in legislation and must be used as drafted by the Electoral Commission.

Our Electoral Management System (EMS) provider (Idox) is currently updating the Eros system to accommodate the new forms and the other changes required to deliver the reforms and are providing remote webinar training as each stage is available. This office is pro-actively working with the system providers in testing these developments and providing feedback from an administrator perspective.

Whilst we will endeavour to fulfil the need for a personal contact during the canvass by employing canvassers for a door knocking stage during October, this may change depending on Government guidance at that time.

In accordance with our Data Protection Policy, a Data Protection Impact Assessment has been carried out in advance of implementing the National Data Match.

As alluded to above, draft timetables for the issue of canvass mail and the ongoing rolling registration updates have been agreed with the print & mail supplier.

5.0 Scottish Elections Franchise & Reform Bills

Reference to these changes was made in the last report to the Board on 6 March. The current position is below.

- 5.1 Prisoners serving sentences of 12 months or less – Data sharing agreements have been set up between EROs and the Scottish Prison Service. A list of prisoners affected will be sent to the relevant ERO at regular intervals. A single secure email address has been identified to receive this information and, to minimise access to sensitive personal data, processing of such applications will be restricted to a limited group of staff members.
- 5.2 Foreign Nationals with indefinite leave to remain – the secondary legislation required to fully effect this change to the franchise is still subject to Parliamentary approval but a full specification of requirements has been provided the EMS suppliers to enable them to develop the system to enable the registration of these new electors. It is hoped that these electors will be

'captured' during the annual canvass. To that end, both the Electoral Commission and the collective Scottish EROs intend to run public engagement campaigns aimed at this group around the time of the canvass.

- 5.3 14 years of age and over able to register – the legislative change is a minor technical amendment to the registration of attainers, as some 14 year olds are currently eligible to register depending on their date of birth. Again, the EMS will be upgraded to accommodate the registration of all 14 year olds. This change will have only a minor effect on workload.

6.0 Recommendation

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 –19 June 2020

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 2019/20.
- 1.2 To seek approval of the Public Performance Report for 2019/20
- 1.3 To seek approval of the KPI targets for 2020/21.

2.0 Background

2.1 Best Value – General

By placing a formal requirement on local authorities, 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 2019/20 were approved by the Board at its meeting on 28 June 2019.

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 2019/20 have been compiled and are attached (Appendix 1) for members consideration.

In relation to our Non-Domestic Rating function our target was marginally surpassed at 'less than 3 months' and met at 'less than 6 months'. In relation to Council Tax our targets were achieved or surpassed.

Appendix 2 shows performance trends over the period since the year 2010/11.

The statistics and targets for the year 2020/21, 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 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 2020/21 are presented today for approval (see Appendix 1). The proposed targets are down on previous years reflecting the interruption to our services and future uncertainties arising from the COVID-19 outbreak. These include uncertainty over government advice and restrictions on carrying out surveys, travel, the availability of overnight accommodation for staff and a host of other factors. Performance will, however, remain a regular item for consideration and scrutiny at Management Meetings.

4.1.2 The Public Performance Report for 2019/20 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 2019/20.
- (b) Approve the Public Performance Report for 2019/20.
- (c) Approve the KPI targets for 2020/21.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: KPI Statistics

Appendix 2: KPI Trends

Appendix 3: Public Performance Report



*Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute
Valuation Joint Board*

Best Value - Performance Reporting and Planning

KPI STATISTICS 2019/2020

Valuation Roll

Total No of entries as @ 1st April 2019 14,972
Total Rateable Value @ 1st April 2019 £368.7million

During the year, 928 amendments were made to the Valuation Roll within the following periods

Period	Actual 2018/19	Target 2019/20	Actual 2019/20	Target 2020/21
0-3 months	85%	86%	88%	76%
3-6 months	10%	9%	7%	15%
>6 months	5%	5%	5%	9%

Total No of entries as @ 31st March 2020 15,141
Total Rateable Value @ 31st March 2020 £367.7million

Council Tax

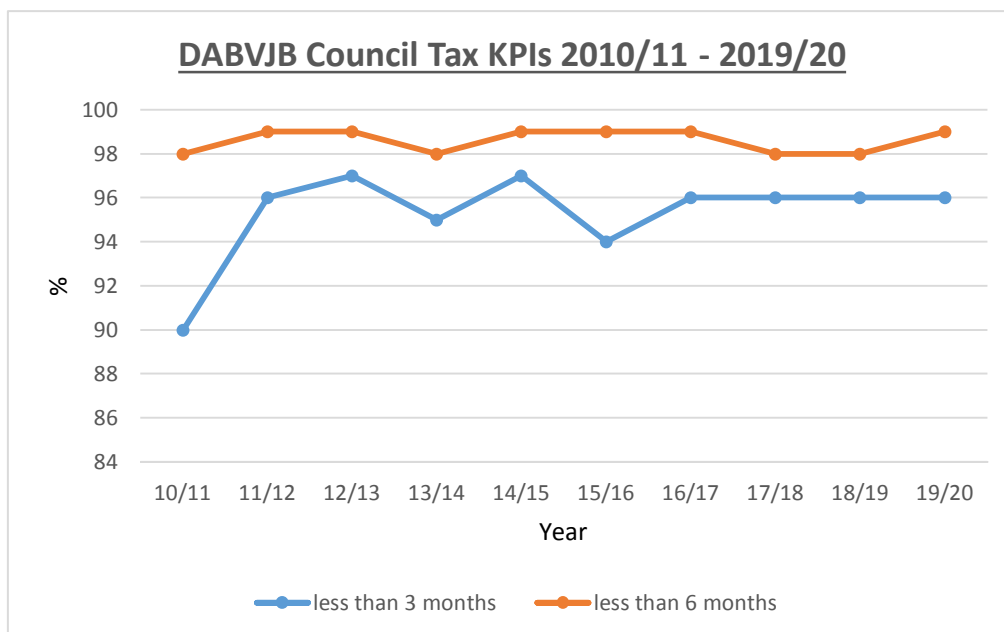
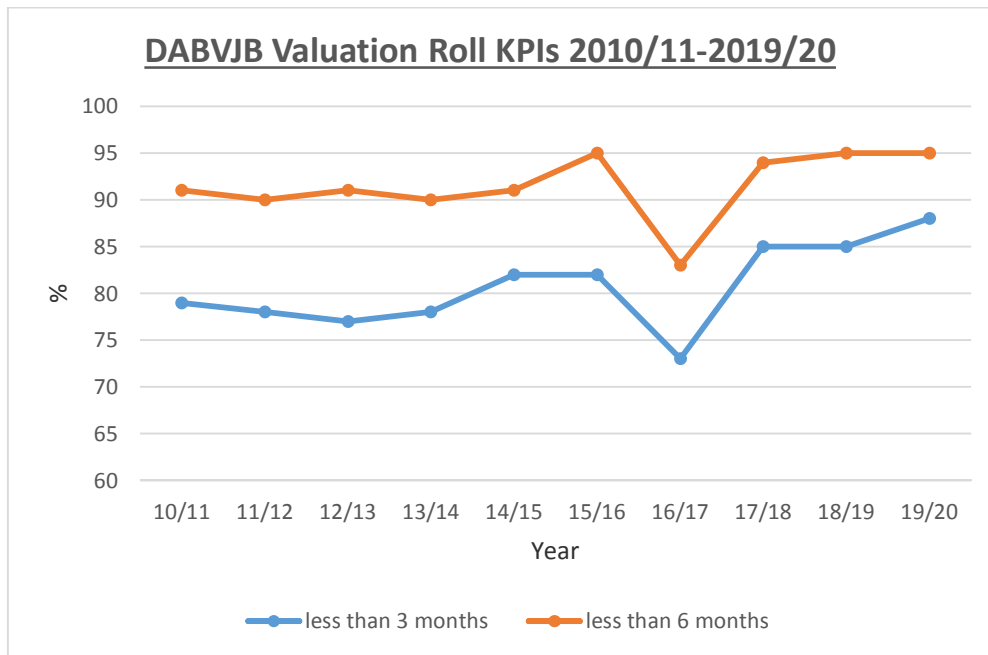
Total Number of entries @ 1st April 2019 145, 266

1,061 new entries were added to the Valuation List within the following periods

Period	Actual 2018/19	Target 2019/20	Actual 2019/20	Target 2020/21
0-3 months	96%	96%	96%	86%
3-6 months	2%	2%	3%	9%
>6 months	2%	2%	1%	5%

Total Number of entries @ 31st March 2020 145,569

Best Value - Performance Reporting and Planning



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Public Performance Report 2019/20

Kilbrannan House
CAMPBELTOWN
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Phone 01586 555300
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Textphone 07821 643267

Background

The Assessor for Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute is an independent statutory official who is responsible for the preparation and the maintenance of the Valuation Rolls and Council Tax Valuation Lists for East and West Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute. 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. The Assessor's service is conducted from two main offices located at the addresses above.

You can contact us by e-mail at assessor@dab-vjb.gov.uk

General Information

During the year to 31st March 2020, the Assessor had a full-time equivalent staff of 48.45 and a staffing budget of £2.25m. A total of 348.5 days (3.19%) were lost through illness, a slight increase from 2.95% in 2018/19.

Council Tax List

The Council Tax List contains all domestic properties showing an allocated Council Tax band which is based on the market value of the property as at 1991. The bands shown are used by the local authorities within the Joint Board's boundaries for the production of domestic Council Tax bills. As at 31st March, 2020, the Council Tax Lists for Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute contained 145,569 subjects. Of the 1061 houses added to the List between 1st April 2019 and 31st March 2020, the time between the date of occupation/completion and the issue of the banding notice is shown in the following table. Both the 3 month and 6 month targets were achieved.

The targets which we have set for 2020/21 are 86% within 3 months and 95% within 6 months.

Year	Number	Within 3 Months		Within 6 Months	
		Target	Achieved	Target	Achieved
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%
2011/12	988	92%	96%	98%	99%

Valuation Roll

The Valuation Roll contains the rateable values of all non-domestic properties within the area. The rateable values shown are used by the Joint Board's constituent local authorities for the production of non-domestic rates bills.

As at 31st March 2020 the Valuation Rolls for Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute contained 15,141 subjects with a total rateable value of £367.7 million. Of the 928 amendments made to the Valuation Roll between 1st April 2019 and 31st March 2020, 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 on the 3 months target and marginally ahead of the 6 month target.

The targets we have set for 2020/21 are 76% within 3 months and 91% within 6 months.

Year	Number	Within 3 Months		Within 6 Months	
		Target	Achieved	Target	Achieved
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%
2011/12	930	80%	77.8%	92%	90.4%

Electoral Registration

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

There were no major electoral events scheduled during 2019/20 but the extension to the UK's membership of the European Union resulted in a European Parliamentary Election being held in May, which was planned and implemented at short notice. To accommodate the timetable for the 'snap' UK Parliamentary election in December, the annual canvass was terminated and the revised Electoral Register was published early. There was a very significant level of public engagement in the registration process with almost 12,000 applications to be added to the register being received in the period leading up to the last date for registrations.

At 11th November 2019 the total electorate figure was marginally up on the total at publication in December 2018.

Year	Electorate at Publication
2019	219,861
2018	219,637
2017	222,507
2016	221,078
2015	218,668
2014/15	223,594
2013/14	221,453

Rolling Registration is the process of dealing with applications for changes to the register which are not part of the canvass project. During 2019/20 there were 9,451 additions to the register and 6,759 deletions from the register. IER requires a pro-active approach to change throughout the year and we have continued use a variety of sources of information to initiate the issue of Invitations to Register.

Other Items of Note

During the year we also:

- Made preparations for the introduction of Canvass Reform and changes to the Local Government franchise
- Made preparations for the expansion of the number and type of Non-Domestic valuations available online.
- Implemented an Employee Wellbeing Charter
- Created a Workforce Plan for implementation during 2020/21
- Disposed of 1,012 2017 Revaluation Appeals. The vast majority of 2017 Revaluation Appeals (70%) have been withdrawn without any adjustment to the issued valuation.

Our Customer satisfaction survey showed that last year 97% 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 – 19 June 2020

Subject: Best Value – Service Planning

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To seek Joint Board approval of the April 2020 update to the 2018-21 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 2018 the Board approved a 3-year Service Plan for the period 2018-21 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 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 The Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak has both direct and indirect effects on the resourcing and operations of the Joint Board and management of the challenges is flexing on a daily basis. It is currently unclear how far these effects will reach or for how long. Notwithstanding these issues, the Service Plan Update has been prepared on a 'business as usual' basis and will need to be constantly reviewed as time passes, particularly in light of the viral outbreak. As a result, the plan does not include activities, such as extending our home working capability, which are specific to managing the outbreak.
- 3.3 An Annual Calendar for 2020/21 which has been derived from the Service Plan (as updated) has also been prepared and 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 monitor progress.
- 4.2 Given the 3-yearly review cycle, the Service Plan will be completely reviewed towards the end of the year and a new 3-year plan will be presented to the Joint Board for approval in 2021/22.

5.0 Recommendations

- 5.1 Members are asked to approve the April 2020 update to Service Plan for the period 2018-21.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: DABVJB Service Plan 2018-21 – 2020 Update



*Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute
Valuation Joint Board*

ASSESSOR AND ELECTORAL REGISTRATION OFFICER

SERVICE PLAN 2018-2021

April 2020 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 2018-2021.

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, 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 2018-21 Service Plan and the 2019 Update.** Other than where new sections have been added, references and numberings contained within this document refer back to the original Plan.

The Annual Service Calendar for 2020-21 will reflect the changes included in this Update.

At time of writing the Joint Board is, in line with much of the world, dealing with the rapidly changing circumstances of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. This is having both direct and indirect effects on the resourcing and operations of the Joint Board and management of the challenges is flexing on a daily basis.

It is currently unclear how far these effects will reach or for how long. Notwithstanding these effects, and unless otherwise stated and/or the specific effects of the outbreak are known, this Update to the Service Plan is prepared on a 'business as usual' basis and will need to be constantly reviewed as time passes, particularly in light of the viral outbreak.

The plan will not include activities, such as extending our home working capability, which are specific to managing the outbreak.

It should be noted, however, that the Management Team have discussed the Board's reaction to COVID-19 and have assumed that there will be a significant interruption to services. Every effort will be made, however, to ensure that statutory process and, in particular, those with a direct effect on stakeholders, are maintained wherever possible.

PART ONE – SERVICE FUNCTION

1.0 Introduction

As at 1 April 2020, the staffing level stands at 47.25 FTE.

A number of issues referred to in the 2018-21 Service Plan have moved on and updates on the various topics are included below.

The Non-Domestic Rates Reform Act has progressed through the Scottish Parliament and has gained assent. This commits the government to a 3-yearly Revaluation cycle and an overhaul of the appeals system, both from 2022. The Assessors' new information gathering powers and a civil penalty regime to support these powers will be commenced from 1 April 2020. The secondary legislation relating to these changes and, in particular, the process for appeals against civil

penalties and the expected new criteria for Self-catering Accommodation to be considered non-domestic, have not been passed so a number of significant elements, including the timetables for practical implementation, are unknown.

Scottish Government provided direct funding to Assessors in 2019/20 to allow preparations to commence for reform of the Non-Domestic Rates (NDR) system and a commitment has been given to continue funding into 2020/21.

In passing its 2019/20 budget, the Scottish Government committed to a review of local government funding. Specifically a review of the Council Tax system is to be completed prior to the next Scottish Parliamentary elections in 2021. The progress of this review is unknown and any recommendations may need to be considered during the period covered by this Service Plan.

The various required elements of both UK and Scottish legislation to effect canvass reform have also come into law. These will introduce data matching as part of the annual canvass process and allow canvass activities to be better aligned with local requirement. Planning for and implementing the new regime will form a large part of our focus for 2020/21.

Since the introduction of Individual Electoral Registration in 2014/15, the Cabinet Office (CO) has provided direct grant funding to cover the increased costs of the regime. CO has indicated that the implementation of canvass reform removes the need for such funding and none will be assumed going forward.

The Scottish Elections (Franchise and Representation) Act enfranchises prisoners serving sentences of 12 months or less and non-national residents of Scotland in respect of Scottish Parliamentary and Local Government elections and allows them to hold office as elected members of the Scottish Parliament and local Councils. The enfranchisement of prisoners comes into effect on 1 April 2020 and that for non-national residents from 1 August 2020.

The Scottish Elections (Reform) Act amended the rules applying to the registration of 14 year old 'attainers' but this is likely to have minimal effect on the operations of the Joint Board.

At its meeting in March 2019, the Valuation Joint Board approved the establishment of a short-life working group to address the Board's funding gap. The group, which comprised of the Members of the Board's Finance Sub-Committee, representatives of the three constituent Councils' finance departments and the Assessor & ERO, met on two occasions during 2019 and heard reports from both the Treasurer and the Assessor & ERO. At its meeting in December 2019 the group agreed to 'flat' requisitions for 2020/21 and the estimates for the year were subsequently approved by the Joint Board in March 2020. Should the group reconvene, any recommendations or actions will need to be addressed.

Arising from an action which emerged from a Good Governance self-assessment, the Board drafted and approved a Workforce Plan during 2019/20. This identified the various resource and training requirements which, bearing in mind the ongoing budget gap, will be needed to maintain services and implement the various NDR and Electoral Registration changes which the Joint Board is confronted with.

1.1 Valuation Roll

The total rateable value of 15,141 subjects in the Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute Valuation Rolls at 1 April 2020 is £367,704,679.

As at April 2020, 422 Revaluation (2017) appeals remain outstanding and their disposal will remain a priority going forward. All outstanding appeals will require to be cited before 30 June 2020 for hearings prior to 31 December 2020. With diets for the first quarter of 2020/21 being affected by the coronavirus outbreak, there may be a need to re-cite some subjects with resultant pressures on future hearing dates. There are likely to be a number of subject types which raise, or potentially raise, fundamental or complex issues and which may be subject to requests for referrals to the Lands Tribunal so this process will need to be managed.

The Corona virus outbreak has triggered a surge of Running Roll appeals with 2,415 having been submitted during March. 2,812 running roll appeals were outstanding at 1 April 2020. Running Roll appeals will be scheduled for disposal in parallel with Revaluation appeals or in accordance with their own particular timetables. With the timetable for disposing of appeals submitted in March 2020 being March 2021 the surge in appeal numbers constitutes a major resource issue as we prepare for the 2022 Revaluation.

1 April 2020 marks the 'Tone' or valuation date for the 2020 Revaluation. Subject to the above comments regarding running roll appeals, our focus during 2020/21 will move away from disposal of appeals from the 2017 Revaluation and forward to information gathering, analysis and valuation for the 2022 Revaluation, albeit, there will be a significant overlap.

The internal NDR Reform Project Team which was established during 2019/20 will take forward the Project Plan for delivery of the 2022 Revaluation and 3-yearly Revaluations thereafter. This will include appeals system reform and all relevant Barclay recommendations.

In terms of NDR reform, the priorities for 2020/21 will be the implementation of Assessor Information Notices, the introduction of Civil Penalties and, assuming the necessary secondary legislation proceeds as planned, a review of the eligibility of self-catering properties to be included in the Valuation Roll. Preparations will also need to take place to prepare for the insertion of Business Growth Accelerator markers into the Valuation Roll from the expected date of 1 April 2021.

Direct Scottish Government funding to support the forthcoming change has been incorporated into the 2020/21 budget approved by the Board and consideration will be given to the appropriate posts to be created/filled, taking account of the available training provision for surveyors and the government's level of commitment to funding beyond the current year.

1.2 Valuation List

At 1st April 2020 there were 145,569 properties (including garages and stores) in the Council Tax Valuation List for the Joint Board area. Proposals and appeals continue to be received with 217 outstanding at 1 April 2020. These will be discussed with Council Taxpayers and disposed of as resources allow.

1.3 Electoral Register

At publication of registers on 11 November 2019, the total electorate for the Joint Board area was 219,861 and at the general election on 12 December 2019 the UK Parliamentary electorate stood at 216,355.

The annual household canvass will take a completely different form in 2020 incorporating a data matching step at the outset of the process. Data on registered electors will be matched against national Government data and locally held data sources to identify which properties are likely to have an unchanged household composition. One of two routes will then be followed for each property. Route 1, the matched properties route, will be used for properties where the data indicates no change in household composition. Route 2, the unmatched properties route, will be used for properties where data matching has highlighted that there may be a change to the information currently held for the property. This will allow the canvass process to be streamlined for those households that have not changed since the previous year and enable resources to be targeted to where changes and updates to the electoral register are believed to be required.

A further, 'Route 3', option will be used for care homes, young peoples' residences and houses in multiple occupation (HMOs), where information on residents can more effectively and efficiently be obtained from and identified 'responsible person'.

A detailed Canvass Plan will be developed during the first quarter of the year with the data matching scheduled for July and the write-out to be scheduled for August. Our approach to engagement and elector participation will also be reviewed in light of the changes.

In parallel with canvass reform, the Electoral Commission are currently developing a new Performance Standards regime and this will need to be considered when details are known.

Maintenance of the electoral register has traditionally been based on monthly updates to the register from January to September. In 2020 it is proposed that updates will also be effected in October and November.

As referred to above, The Scottish Elections (Franchise and Representation) Act will require to be practically implemented during the April to August 2020 period.

The Joint Board outsources the majority of its print and mail requirement under a contract which will expire in May 2020. Procurement activities during 2019 and early 2020 identified a preferred contractor. This arrangement will need to be formalised and operational arrangements, including volumes and timetables for the major mail-outs, will need to be established prior to the commencement of the canvass.

1.4 Other Functions

In relation to our staff resources, we will implement the recently approved Workforce Plan, albeit this is a fluid document with actions being adjusted to the ever-changing environment. This will involve several rounds of recruitment and the implementation of formal training for trainee surveyors.

A number of ICT initiatives including hardware renewal, software development, software upgrades and communications improvements are proposed for the 2020/21 financial year.

The Scottish Public Sector Ombudsman has revised the Model Complaints Handling Procedure for local government and a new Joint Board Complaints Procedure which aligns with the new Model will be developed and approved in 2020/21 for implementation in April 2021.

In relation to Records Management, the Keeper has issued an invitation to submit a Progress Update Review by the end of May 2020.

PART TWO – CORE OBJECTIVES

2.1 Valuation Roll

- 2.1.2 With the statutory date for VACs to dispose of 2017 Revaluation appeals falling within the planning year (31 December 2020) a final diet of VACs have been arranged in liaison with the VAC Secretaries and all outstanding appeals will need to be cited prior to 30 June 2020. This process is likely to lead to the need to consider applications for referrals to the Lands Tribunal for some subjects or categories of subjects.
- 2.1.3 Appeals against changes to the 2017 roll and other types of ‘running roll’ appeal will be received on an ongoing basis 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 these will need to be disposed of prior to 31 March 2021.
- 2.1.5 The VOA has engaged with ratepayers and their representatives in respect of their 2021 Revaluation of Gas Utility Subjects. Although there will be a disparity in the valuation and effective dates of Revaluations between Scotland and England, there remains a strong case for harmonisation of approach so the Assessor will ensure that he is informed of the proposed valuation approach and levels of value for the network subjects in England & Wales. This activity will, however be covered under general 2022 Revaluation activities at 2.1.8 and later at 3.1.8.
- 2.1.7 Information gathering processes will be increased in the early part of the year in preparation for the 2022 Revaluation (see below). In particular, new processes for Assessor Information Notices (AINs) and the Civil Penalties (CPs) regime will be implemented.
- 2.1.8 The implementation of the ‘Barclay Recommendations’ are now largely embedded in the Non-Domestic Rates (Scotland) Act and many of these will be implemented alongside the preparations for the 2022 Revaluation. The coming year will see the preparations for that Revaluation ‘ramped up’, with information gathering, rental analysis and valuation for 2022 taking over as the main activities in relation to NDR during the year. Additionally, new criteria for the inclusion of Self-Catering Units in the Valuation Roll are due to take

effect in 2020/21 and the process and timing of a review of existing entries will be completed following liaison with Scottish Government.

The proposed review of plant & machinery regulations remains outstanding, with no recommendations affecting valuation having arisen from the completed review of plant and machinery at hydro electricity generators.

2.2 Council Tax List

No update from previous Service Plans.

2.3 Electoral Register

- 2.3.1 See Part 1 above re the change to the form of the annual electoral canvass. A completely new canvass plan will be developed after completion and analysis of the National Data Match tests and this will be implemented in the period from mid-May through until November. The changes will also necessitate a review of the Participation Strategy and performance/reporting regimes.
- 2.3.2 It is probable that the rolling registration process of update to the electoral register will be continued into October and November from 2020, making maintenance of the register a virtually year-round process.
- 2.3.3 There are no planned electoral events in the 2020/21 year but preparations for the May 2021 Scottish Parliamentary elections will commence in the latter half of the year.
- 2.3.6 See 'Part One' and 2.3.1 above regarding canvass reform.
- 2.3.7 The 2018 review of UK Parliamentary Boundaries has not yet been effected legislatively. It is understood that the current government is reconsidering the position with regard to the review and a watching brief will be maintained.

2.4 Corporate Governance

- 2.4.2 A tight rein will be maintained in respect of the Joint Board's expenditure with every opportunity being taken to consider addressing the budget gap which remains in our core budget. Notwithstanding this general position, the government funding provided to support NDR Reform will be used to ensure that the required level of resource is in place to deliver the reform agenda.
- 2.4.3 The Joint Board's Scheme of Delegation, Financial Regulations and Standing Orders were all formally updated during 2019/20 and so no planned review need to be undertaken during 2020/21 unless new drivers for change arise.
- 2.4.8 The Reporting Framework will be revised to include the additional statistical collation for the purposes of the SAA Annual Report and to take account of the Electoral Commission's new Performance Standards.
- 2.4.10 The Joint Board's Absence Management Policy will be reviewed in light of the changes to the WDC Wellbeing Policy and the new Career Break and Secondments Policies within WDC will be considered for adoption or

adaptation for application within the Joint Board. The Recruitment Policy will also be updated.

- 2.4.12 Arising from an issue which surfaced during the renewal of insurances in 2019, it has been agreed that an open market procurement exercise with support from WDC should be completed prior to renewal in 2020

2.5 Accountability

- 2.5.1 In preparing Annual Accounts, cognisance will be taken of the Joint Board Members' request that the management commentary be shortened. Reference will also be had to Audit Scotland's Good Practice Note on Management Commentaries.
- 2.5.2 An Audit Plan for the 2019/20 external audit has been agreed with areas for investigation and enquiry identified.
- 2.5.4 Internal Audit are scheduled to complete a review of the Board's Risk Management procedures and report by the end of March 2020. Any agreed actions will be taken forward during 2020/21.
- 2.5.5 See 2.4.8 above regarding the Board's Reporting Framework.

2.6 Best Value

- 2.6.1- 2.6.3 See above re changes to the Board's Performance /Reporting Framework
- 2.6.5 The Scottish Public Sector Ombudsman has recently revised the Model Complaint's Handling Procedure. The format and content of this will need to be considered and a revised procedure implemented within the Joint Board.

2.7 Equal Opportunities

- 2.7.2/2.7.4 To strengthen our commitment to Equalities, sourcing appropriate Impact Assessment training will be investigated for all of the Management Team.

2.8 Staffing and Personnel Matters

- 2.8.1 The Joint Board's Absence Management Policy will be reviewed in light of the changes to the WDC Wellbeing Policy and the new Career Break and Secondments Policies within WDC will be considered for adoption or adaptation for application within the Joint Board. Other Policies, such as the Recruitment Policy may also require to be updated.
- 2.8.2 The Joint Board's Training and Development Policy is in the process of being revised to include aspects of Performance Management. The proposed revised draft has been approved by the Management Team and is, at time of writing, with the relevant trades union for consultation. It is intended that formal approval and implementation of the revised policy will follow on from completion of that consultation.

- 2.8.3 Staffing structures will be aligned with the Workforce Plan and the requirements of NDR Reform. In particular, recruitment of 2 Trainee Valuers is planned for summer 2020.

2.9 Finance and Budgeting

- 2.9.2 Budget processes will take account of the expected cessation of Cabinet Office IER grant funding from 2020/21 onwards and the likelihood of Scottish Government funding to support NDR reform.
- 2.9.4 The debtors account system and processes will be amended to accommodate the introduction of Civil Penalties from April 2020. This may require intermediate processes prior to development of an end-to-end IT system.

2.10 Information Technology

- 2.10.2 As well as the regular refresh of PCs and lap tops in 2020/21 there are also plans to procure and implement improved communications lines to the Clydebank office, a flexi-time recording system and new monitors for valuation staff.
- 2.10.6 The Assessor's 'Progress' system will be the main database upon which the required developments to deliver 3-yearly Revaluations and appeal system changes will be carried out. Development over the year is likely to include expansion of valuations available at the SAA portal, provision of comparisons to support revalued NAVs, the 3-yearly Revaluation cycle, the new 2-stage (valuation) appeals process, the introduction of Civil Penalties and their associated appeals procedures, the addition of Business Growth Accelerator markers to the Valuation Roll and the creation of a draft Revaluation Roll in autumn 2021. The NDR Project Plan lays out the broad timetable for these developments and, once details of secondary legislation etc are known, a more detailed development/project plan will be prepared.
- 2.10.8 The Halarose/Idox EROS system will continue to be developed to comply with canvass reform, the extension of the franchise and the requirements of the revised EC Performance Standards. Suppliers are currently working with governments in relation to these reforms and it is expected that updates to the system will largely be delivered in time for implementation.
- 2.10.10 The SAA portal will be the vehicle for delivery of several of the NDR Reform initiatives and other Barclay recommendations. See 2.10.6 above for associated back-office changes required to deliver these portal enhancements. Specific to the early part of 2020/21 the DTF will be developed to facilitate expansion of valuations available at the SAA portal.

2.11 Freedom of Information

No update from previous Service Plans.

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 2020. Thus, unless circumstances change significantly, it will not need further amendment during 2020/21.

2.12.9 The provision of print & mail services is now a key relationship for the Joint Board. The new contract with the successful bidder in the recent procurement exercise will be finalised and operational plans and timetables agreed with the supplier of these services.

2.13 Records Management

2.13.2 The Keeper has issued an invitation to submit a Process Update Review by the end of May 2020. In an ideal world a self-assessment would be supplied to the Keeper within that timescale but, given the hiatus in operations resulting from the corona virus and the already heavy workloads for the Joint Board personnel, this will be reviewed in the near future.

2.14 Miscellaneous

2.14.2 The requirement for accurate geo-referencing of NDR subjects, achieved primarily through data matching with Corporate Address Gazetteers, has been heightened by the imminent provision of a GIS interface at the SAA portal.

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	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'

Where there is no narrative in this section please see original 2018-21 Service Plan.

3.1 THE VALUATION ROLL

3.1.1 Maintenance of the Valuation Roll

No specific change to the 2018-21 Service Plan but maintenance will inevitably be affected by the corona virus outbreak in the early part of the year.

3.1.2 2017 Revaluation Appeals

Item	Description	Objective(s)	Ownership	Date/Recurrence
(b)	Liaise with VAC Secretaries re the citation of all outstanding Revaluation Appeals, in accordance with the statutory timetable	1,4,10,11,12	Divisional Assessors	Continuous (up to Dec 2020)
	Specifically, ensure that all outstanding appeals are cited prior to 30 June 2020		Divisional Assessors	30 June 2020
	Specifically, ensure that all appeals continued from April –June VAC hearing dates are re-cited/re-programmed		Divisional Assessors	30 June 2020
(c)	Prepare VAC, LT and/or LVAC cases including rental analysis, valuations, photographs, plans and other productions	1,4,10,11,12,14	Divisional Assessors	As required
	Specifically, consider all requests for referral of appeals, including joint referrals, to Lands Tribunal and respond to VAC Secretaries as appropriate		Assessor/ Depute Assessor	June 2020 and September 2020

3.1.3 Running Roll Appeals

As 3.1.2 above for appeals where the statutory timetable is 31 December 2020.

For later appeals, including potentially large volumes of corona virus appeals, submitted prior to 31 March 2020, the disposal date for appeals submitted in March 2020 is 12 months from the date they were submitted.

3.1.4 Valuation Appeal Committee Hearings

See separate schedules of VAC Hearing dates for 2020

3.1.7 Valuation Evidence – General

Much of the activity under this heading is dealt with, as per the Service Plan, on a rolling basis but there will be a specific need to increase these activities in 2020 in preparation for the 2022 Revaluation (see 3.1.8 below)

Item	Description	Objective(s)	Ownership	Date/Recurrence
(a)	Issue rental, and other, questionnaires on an annual basis or to reflect changes in the valuation roll. Specifically, issue SAA approved Revaluation questionnaires for a variety of subject categories	1,4,7,10,11,12,13,14	Admin Supervisors Divisional Assessors/ Admin Supervisors	As required May – September 2020
(b)	Manage returns of above in accordance with the DAB VJB procedures/clerical Instructions.	1,4,7,10,11,12,13,14	Admin Supervisors	On return
(h)	Ensure that all requests for information as per the above process are compliant with new legislation/assessors information gathering powers	1,4,9,12,13	Assessor/ Depute Assessor	May 2020
(i)	Ensure that Civil Penalties processes and Notices are developed and implemented in accordance with NDR (Scotland) Act	1,4,9,12,13	Assessor/ Depute Assessor	May 2020
(k)	Ensure that billing and recovery procedures are developed in partnership with WDC and implemented to support civil penalties regime	1,4,9,12,13	Assessor/ Depute Assessor	May 2020
(l)	Develop and implement processes and procedures to record and consider all appeals against the application of Civil Penalties	1,4,9,12,13	Assessor/ Depute Assessor	Subsequent to relevant legislation
(m)	Develop and implement processes and procedures to ensure that all unresolved appeals are referred timeously to VAC	1,4,9,12,13	Assessor/ Depute Assessor	Subsequent to relevant legislation

3.1.8 Revaluation 2022 (incorporating the Barclay Review, NDR Reform and the Gas Utility Subjects)

Item	Description	Objective(s)	Ownership	Date/Recurrence
(a)	Issue rental, and other, questionnaires.	1,4,7,10,11,12,13,14	Admin Supervisors	Spring 2020 and as required
(b)	Manage returns of above in accordance with the DAB VJB procedures/clerical Instructions.	1,4,7,10,11,12,13,14	Admin Supervisors	On return
(c)	Analyse rentals of 'bulk class' subjects as agreed within established Working Groups and in accordance with SAA rental analysis guidance. Facilitate same, using Information Technology.	1,4,10,11,12,13	Divisional Assessors	Spring 2020 – Autumn 2021
(d)	Analyse local land sale information for use in contractor's valuations.	1,4,10,11,12,13	Divisional Assessors	Spring 2020 – Autumn 2021
(e)	Draft Narratives and rates to be applied in valuations, where appropriate.	1,4,10,11,12,13,14	Divisional Assessors	Sept 20 – Dec 20
(f)	Approve Narratives and rates to be applied in valuations, where appropriate	1,4,10,11,12,13,14	Assessor/Depute	Sept 20 – Dec 20

(g)	Provide information as required to SAA Practice Note authors, working groups and Category Committees.	1,4,10,11,12,13	Divisional Assessors	In line with SAA Reval Project Plan
(h)	Draft and present SAA Practice Notes for approval by Committees	1,4,10,11,12,13	SAA members	In line with SAA Reval Project Plan
(i)	Make comment on and provide input to draft/proposed Practice Notes.	1,4,10,11,12,13,14	Divisional Assessors	In line with SAA Reval Project Plan
(j)	Adopt and issue amended practice notes for use within DAB VJB (Make available through SAA on Web Portal)	1,4,7,10,11,12,13,14	Divisional Assessors	In line with SAA Reval Project Plan
(k)	Liaise with VOA and relevant stakeholders on approach to valuation of Gas Utility subjects	1,4,7,12,13	Assessor	As required
(l)	Value subjects for Revaluation purposes in accordance with local schemes of valuation, SAA Practice Notes and DAB targets for completion.	1,10,11,12,13	Divisional Assessors	Sept 20 –August 21
(m)	Authorise proposed Rateable Values (RVs)	1,10,11,12,13	Divisional Assessors	Sept 20 –August 21
(n)	Input proposed NAV/RVs to Assessor's 'Progress' Valuation system	1,10,11,12,13	Admin Supervisors	Sept 20 –August 21
(o)	Check and authorise all such amendments in accordance with DAB VJB procedures, making changes or referring back as appropriate.	1,4,10,11, 12, 13	Admin Supervisors	Weekly
(p)	Export proposed NAV/RVs (including display of valuation data where appropriate) to Assessors portal	1,4,10,11	Systems Officer	TBC
(q)	Prepare for and implement the new '70-day letting rule' for self-catering subjects in line with forthcoming legislation	4,5,9,10,12,13	Assessor/ Divisional Assessors	Possible write out to existing entries in Jan-Feb 2021
(r)	Prepare for the entry of currently exempt 'commercial' subjects situated in public parks into the valuation roll	4,5,9,10,12,13	Assessor/ Divisional Assessors	Dependent on legislation
(s)	NDR Reform Project Team meetings, including update to Project Plan and Risk Register	1,4,8,9,11,12,13	Depute Assessor	Ongoing
(t)	Develop specifications required for ICT development	1,4,8,9,11,12,13	NDR Reform Project Team	Various timescales
(u)	Develop ICT systems as required by specifications	1,4,8,9,11,12,13	Analyst/Programmer	Various timescales
(v)	Test and implement ICT system developments in accordance with relevant test plans	1,4,8,9,11,12,13	NDR Reform Project Team/all staff	Various timescales
(w)	Report progress to Management Team	1,4,8,9,11,12,13	Depute Assessor	See MTM cycle

3.2 THE COUNCIL TAX VALUATION LIST

No specific change to the 2018-21 Service Plan

3.3 THE ELECTORAL REGISTER

3.3.1 Annual Register of Electors

The publication of new registers takes place by 1st December based on an annual canvass which extends from July– November. For planning purposes, a working first form issue date of 3 August will be adopted, though this is subject to a number of external dependencies and is liable to change. A detailed Canvass Plan will be prepared prior to the start of the canvass. Note that 'Item' letters/order (column one of table below) have been amended since original Service Plan.

Item	Description	Objective(s)	Ownership	Date/Recurrence
(a)	Review canvass procedures, data match processes, extension of the franchise, door-to-door canvass, and telephone/Internet/SMS facility and create new canvass plan	3,7,9,10,11,12,13	ERO/PAO	April - July
(b)	Complete contract and agree procedures and timetable for issue of relevant forms with print & mail contractor.	3,9,10,11,12,13,14	ERO/PAO (with WDC support re contract purposes)	April/May 2020
(c)	Confirm the facilities and requirements of the electronic canvass provider	3,9,10,11,12,13,14	PAO	Annually in April
(d)	Obtain potential 'attainer' and young voter information from education authorities and populate EROS as appropriate	3,6,9,10,11,12,13,14	Admin Supervisors	Quarterly
(e)	Ensure receipt of Local Data to be used for local data matching	3,6,7,9,10,11,13	Admin Supervisors	May 2020
(f)	Ensure version of EROS as developed for Canvass Reform is tested and installed	3,6,8,9,11,13	PAO/Systems Officer	July 2020
(g)	Clear down ITR 'chase completed' potential electors	3,6,9,11,13	Admin Manager	June 2020
(h)	Set recent additions threshold to 90 days and effect any other advance settings in EROS as are required.	3,6,9,11,13	PAO/Admin Manager	June 2020
(i)	Prepare and upload file of properties to be subject to national data matching by agreement with CO	3,6,7,9,11,13	PAO/Admin Manager	July 2020
(j)	Receive match report and upload to EROS	3,6,9,11,13	Admin Manager	July 2020
(k)	Complete Local Data Matching, including empty property data, against red matches	3,6,8,9,11,13	Admin Supervisors	July 2020
(l)	Use red matches as second piece of evidence to remove electors where 1 piece of evidence is already held	3,6,8,9,11,13	Admin Supervisors	July 2020
(m)	Prepare and upload files required for creation of relevant 'canvass forms' as agreed with Print & Mail suppliers	3,6,7,9	Admin Manager	July 2020
(n)	Issue route 1 and route 2 forms and, where appropriate, reminders to all households in accordance with revised canvass plan	3,9,10,11,12,13,14	PAO/Admin Manager /Admin Supervisors	August–October
(o)	Check all initial non-returns to Council Tax and other data sources and discount empty properties from further enquiry	3,9,10,11,13	Admin Supervisors	Prior to door-to-door canvass
(p)	Recruit door-to-door canvassers and order resources	3,8,9,10,13	PAO	July/ August

(g)	Revise canvasser guidance materials and training	3,6,7,8,9,10,11,13,14	Admin Manager	July/August
(r)	Train door-to-door canvassers, and provide resources	3,8,10,11,13	Admin Manager /Admin Supervisors	Annually, September
(s)	Complete door-to-door canvass in accordance with canvass plan.	3,7,9,10,11,13	PAO/Admin Manager /Admin Supervisors	Annually, September – October
(t)	Collect and collate canvass returns, including door-to-door returns	3,7,9,10,11,13	PAO/Admin Manager /Admin Supervisors	August – November
(u)	Scan and reference canvass returns.	3,9,10,11,13	Admin Supervisors	August – November
(v)	Receive returns electronically from telephone/internet/SMS service returns	3,7,9,10,11,13	Admin Supervisors	August – November
(x)	Process changes, flags etc., including opt-outs, in EROS system and follow-up enquiries, absent vote applications etc.	3,9,10,11,13	Admin Supervisors	August – November
(y)	Provide Senior Managers with canvass progress reports, including electronic service returns	3,9,11	Admin Manager	Weekly during canvass
(z)	Produce and publish 'Full/Electoral' and 'Edited/Open' Registers, in accordance with statutory timetables.	3,7,9,10,12,14	PAO/Admin Manager	By 1 December
(aa)	Timeous provision of Registers to appropriate bodies and places, including places of public display, in accordance with statute and EC Performance Requirements	3,7,9,10,12,14	Admin Supervisors	5 days after publication December
(bb)	Answer all ad-hoc enquiries from current, past and potential electors in accordance with DAB VJB Working Practices.	3,7,10,12,14	All relevant staff	Continuous
(cc)	Maintain a record of sale and supply of registers in accordance with auditor requirements	7,10,12	Admin Supervisors	Continuous
(dd)	Production of Electoral statistics to NRS in line with statutory requirement	7,11	Admin Manager	Annually, December
(ee)	Provision of performance statistics to Electoral Commission and Cabinet Office	7,9,11,12,13	PAO/Admin Manager	TBC
(ff)	Maintain address Data Standards in EROS database	3,6,7,9,10,11,12,13	PAO	Ongoing

3.3.2 Maintenance of Register of Electors

Item	Description	Objective(s)	Ownership	Date/Recurrence
(g)	With reference to the Integrity Checking staff guidance notes, process 'determined' changes via EROS system as above.	6,10,12	Admin Supervisors	Monthly, Jan – November As per timetable
(i)	Timeous production of monthly 'Lists of Alterations' and 'Notices of Alteration' to the Register of Electors.	6,10,11,12,14	Admin Supervisors	Monthly, Jan –Nov As per timetable
(k)	Timeous supply of changes to appropriate persons and bodies in format of choice.	7,9,10,11,12,14	Admin Supervisors	Monthly, Jan –Nov As per timetable
(l)	Compile and present monthly update statistics to Management Team in accordance with Reporting Framework	11,13	Admin Manager	Monthly Jan –Nov

3.3.3 Elections/Electoral Events

There are no planned electoral events in the 2020/21 year but preparations for the May 2021 Scottish Parliamentary elections will commence in the latter half of the year in a timescale to be agreed with Returning Officers. A specific detailed election timetable will be developed and implemented in agreement with ROs and in line with EMB directions and other stakeholder requirements. See main Service Plan for general approach to election preparations.

3.3.6 Modernising Electoral Registration Programme/ Canvass Reform

The majority of previous actions under this head have now been incorporated into section 3.3.1, above

Item	Description	Objective(s)	Ownership	Date/Recurrence
(i)	Use outcomes of 2020 canvass to plan approach to 2021 canvass.	3,6,7,9,11,13	ERO/PAO	January – June 2021
(j)	Use results of 2020 canvass to estimate costs of 2021 canvass	3,6,7,9,11,13	ERO/PAO	Jan - February 2021

3.4 CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

3.4.1/3.4.2 Valuation Joint Board Meetings

Item	Description	Objective(s)	Ownership	Date/Recurrence
(a)	Agree timetable for Valuation Joint Board Meetings (which incorporates meeting to receive and approve the audited financial statements before their final certification and submission to the Accounts Commission)	7,12,13	Assessor/Board/ Clerk to DAB VJB	Provisionally 19 June 2020
(j)	Consider options to address budget gap and make recommendations to Valuation Joint Board	1-6,7,9,11,12,13	Assessor & ERO/Treasurer	Continual but concluding in February

3.4.8 Performance Management, Planning & Reporting

Item	Description	Objective(s)	Ownership	Date/Recurrence
(i)	Implement EC Performance regime for Canvass Reform, including any new actions/inputs required and any new reports to be created.	3,6,7,9,10,11,12,13	ERO/PAO	Following approval of new Standards
(n)	Collate and submit newly implemented statistics for SAA Annual Report	7,9,10,11,12,14	Assessor/ERO	April and annually
(o)	Revise Reporting Framework to reflect above changes	1-6,7,9,11,12,13	Assessor	Once requirements are known

3.4.9 Internal Working Groups

Item	Description	Objective(s)	Ownership	Date/Recurrence
(i)	Continue to plan for and deliver NDR Reform including the 2022 Revaluation and appeal reform	1,3,7,8,9,11,12,13	NDR Reform Project Team	As required

3.4.10 Personnel etc Policies and Procedures

Item	Description	Objective(s)	Ownership	Date/Recurrence
(h)	Revise Attendance Management Policy reflecting the new WDC Wellbeing Policy	7,8,9,10,11,12,14	Management Team	June Board meeting
(i)	Consider adoption/adaptation of WDC Career Break Policy	7,8,9,10,11,12,14	Management Team	June Board meeting
(j)	Consider adoption/adaptation of WDC Secondments Policy	7,8,9,10,11,12,14	Management Team	June Board meeting
(k)	Revise Recruitment Policy in line with recent WDC changes	7,8,9,10,11,12,14	Management Team	June Board meeting

3.4.12 Risk Management

Item	Description	Objective(s)	Ownership	Date/Recurrence
(f)	Market test and procure insurances with support from WDC Risk Management and Procurement resources	1-6,9,13	Assessor	Prior to August 2020

3.5 ACCOUNTABILITY

3.5.1 Annual Accounts

Item	Description	Objective(s)	Ownership	Date/Recurrence
(g)	The format of the Management Commentary within the Annual Accounts will be changed to reflect the Board's request for a more concise report and Audit Scotland's Good Practice Note on Management Commentaries	7,9,11,12	Assessor	May 2020

3.5.3/3.5.4 Audit Plan/Audit Recommendations

Item	Description	Objective(s)	Ownership	Date/Recurrence
(e)	Present Internal Audit report on their review of the Board's Risk Management regime and seek approval of Action Plan	1-6,7,9,11,12	Assessor	June Board meeting
(f)	Take forward any actions agreed following the Internal Audit review of the Board's Risk Management regime	1-6,7,9,11,12	Assessor/ Management Team	As per Action Plan.

3.5.5 Performance Management Monitoring and Reporting

See 3.4.8 above for actions required during 2020/21

3.6 BEST VALUE

3.6.1 Best Value – General Performance

Item	Description	Objective(s)	Ownership	Date/Recurrence
(c)	Finalise, agree with trades unions, approve and revised Performance, Training and Development Policy	7,8,9,11,13	Assessor/Joint Board	June Joint Board meeting
(d)	Implement above revised Performance, Training and Development Policy	7,8,9,11,13	Management Team	Following Joint Board approval

3.6.5 Customer Comments and Complaints

Item	Description	Objective(s)	Ownership	Date/Recurrence
(a)	Review procedures and systems for recording Comments and Complaints in line with revised SPSO Model Complaints Handling Procedures	7,9,10,11,12,14	Depute Assessor	Joint Board approval in March; effective April 2021

3.7 EQUALITIES

3.7.2/3.7.4 Equalities Policies/Training

Item	Description	Objective(s)	Ownership	Date/Recurrence
3.7.2(c)/ 3.7.4(a)	Source and provide training in Impact Assessment Procedures to Management Team	7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14	Depute Assessor	As available

3.8 STAFFING AND PERSONNEL MATTERS

3.8.1 Development and Review of Personnel Policies

See 3.4.10 above re planned reviews of Personnel Policies

3.8.2 Training and Development Policy

See 3.6.1 above for review to incorporate individual performance management.

3.8.3 Staffing Review

Item	Description	Objective(s)	Ownership	Date/Recurrence
(i)	Continually review staffing in line with Workforce Plan and changing external drivers. In particular:- Recruit to fill vacant Clerical Assistant post in Clydebank Recruit to fill vacant Valuer post (Clydebank) Recruit to fill 'Barclay funded' Trainee Valuer posts (both locations)	1,2,4,5,8,13	PAO Depute Assessor Depute Assessor	Commence in April 2020 Commence in April 2020 Summer 2020
(j)	Review staff complement in WDC's HR system (add new and remove obsolete and unfunded posts)	7,9,13	Depute Assessor	Annually in April

3.9 FINANCE AND BUDGETING

3.9.4 Debtor Accounts

Item	Description	Objective(s)	Ownership	Date/Recurrence
(a)	Review procedures and staff guidance to include new Civil Penalty process:- i. Amend/develop systems to accommodate the above ii. Implement internal processes to accommodate above iii. Review and, where appropriate, redevelop systems for management of	1,4,7,8,9,11,12,13	Assessor/WDC Finance/ External Contractor Depute Assessor/NDR Reform Project Team Depute Assessor/	May 2020 May 2020

	RQs and other AINs		System programmer	
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3.10 INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

3.10.2 ICT Asset Management

Item	Description	Objective(s)	Ownership	Date/Recurrence
(a)(b)(e)	Procure and install lap-tops and PCs	1-6,7,8,9,11,12,13	Depute Assessor/ WDC ICT	TBC
(e)	Procure and install new monitors for valuation staff.	1,2,4,5,7,8,9,11,13	Depute Assessor/ WDC ICT	TBC
(f)	Procure and arrange installation of upgraded Communication infrastructure to Clydebanks office	1-6,9,11,13	Depute Assessor/ WDC ICT	Q1 2020/21
(h)	Procure and install new flexi-time system including server (if latter is required)	7,9,11,12,13	Depute Assessor	During 2020/21

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 v. Civil penalties and appeals against these vi. Business Growth Accelerator markers	1,2,4,5,7,8,9,11,13	Depute, Systems Officer, Analyst/Programmer	Various target dates – see NDR Reform project plan and ICT work plans

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. Canvass Reform ii. Franchise extension (non-nationals) iii. EC Performance regime Note that franchise extension for prisoners will be accommodated within existing functionality until June 2020 upgrade.	3,6,8,9,10,11,13	All PAO/Systems Officers	ASAP on receipt June 2020 August 2020 TBC

(f)	Provide training for changes to system in line with above (d) changes	3,6,7,8,9,10,11,13	PAO	As required
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3.10.10 Assessors Portal

Item	Description	Objective(s)	Ownership	Date/Recurrence
(d)(h)	Revise DTF to accommodate the expansion of valuations available to view at the portal	1,4,7,8,9,11,13	Systems Officer/ Systems Analyst	Summer 2020

3.11 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

All as per the 2018-21 Service Plan.

3.12 KEY PARTNERSHIPS

3.12.9 External Suppliers

Item	Description	Objective(s)	Ownership	Date/Recurrence
(a)	Complete contract formalities with preferred print & mail contractor	7,9,10,11,13,14	Assessor/WDC	By May 2020
	Agree working arrangements and timetables for above		PAO	April/May 2020

3.13 RECORDS MANAGEMENT

Item	Description	Objective(s)	Ownership	Date/Recurrence
(d)	Consider Process Update Review (PUR) submission	7,9,10,11,12	Depute Assessor	May 2020

3.14 MISCELLANEOUS

3.14.2 Corporate Address Gazetteer Liaison

Item	Description	Objective(s)	Ownership	Date/Recurrence
(b)(c)	Ensure and improve accuracy of geo-referencing data to support portal GIS interface	1-6,7,9,12,13	Divisional Assessors	Ongoing

DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD

Report by Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer

Valuation Joint Board – 19 June 2020

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 2019/20.
- 1.2 To advise members of the outcomes from the Complaints Procedure during 2019/20.

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 seeking their perception of the service provided to them.

A summary of the results for 2019/20 is provided below and these show that:-

- By far the majority of our stakeholders (98%) find us professional, courteous and helpful.
- 61% of queries or transactions are completed at the first point of contact and only 3% of matters are not concluded to the satisfaction of the stakeholder.
- Most users of Joint Board services (96%) are satisfied with the information and/or advice provided to them.
- High satisfaction levels are being maintained on a year-to-year basis, as is shown in the summary below.

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Was the person with whom you communicated professional, courteous and helpful?	97%	97%	99%	94%	98%
Was the matter brought to a satisfactory conclusion immediately?	62%	68%	62%	60%	61%
Was the matter brought to a satisfactory conclusion?	96%	97%	97%	93%	97%
Are you satisfied with the quality of the information or advice given to you?	94%	97%	96%	93%	96%

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	Characteristic	Category	Percentage
Race	White	96%	Age	16-21	2%
	Non-white	4%		22-30	2%
Gender	Male	50%		31-40	5%
	Female	50%		41-50	13%
Disability	Disabled	9%		51-60	14%
	Able-bodied	91%		61-65	20%
Sexual orientation	Heterosexual	96%		66-70	12%
	Other	4%		70+	13%
Marital status	Married	61%			
	Never Married	18%			
	Other	21%			

Sample sizes within the various equalities groups were too small to draw firm conclusions about service delivery across the protected characteristics but 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

The Joint Board operates a Complaints Procedure which is in line with the Public Sector Ombudsman's Model Complaints Handling Procedure.

There were 14 Complaints received during 2019/20, (18 in 2018/19 and 15 in 2017/18) with 13 relating to Electoral Registration and one to Council Tax. Most complaints were resolved at the Frontline Resolution stage with 3 being escalated to the Investigation stage. No complaints were referred to the Ombudsman.

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.
- 4.2 The Scottish Public Sector Ombudsman has recently revised the Model Complaint's Handling Procedure and, looking to the coming year, the format and content of this will be reviewed. A revised procedure will be prepared for implementation in the Joint Board as required by April 2021.

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 Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer

Valuation Joint Board –19 June 2020

Subject: Best Value – Risk Management Update

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To seek Board approval of the Joint Board's Strategic Risk Register for 2020/21.
- 1.2 To report on the recently completed Internal Audit of the Joint Board's Risk Management arrangements.
- 1.3 To seek Members' approval of the Action Plan contained in the above Internal Audit Report.
- 1.4 To advise Members on the efforts being made to manage the risks associated with the COVID-19 outbreak.

2.0 Background

Annual Risk Review

- 2.1 Risk Management and Planning form vital parts of the Best Value and Performance Management processes 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.

Internal Audit Review of the Joint Board's Risk Management Arrangements

- 2.3 The Internal Audit process also supports the Joint Board's Governance, improvement efforts and management planning. Internal Audit Services are provided by West Dunbartonshire Council.
- 2.4 In June 2019, and as agreed in the audit planning process, WDC commenced an audit of the Valuation Joint Board's Risk Management arrangements. The review covered the following areas:
 - VJB's Risk Management Strategy;
 - Identification of risks;
 - Alignment of risks to strategic objectives;
 - Application of identified internal controls; and
 - Review and reporting process

COVID-19 Outbreak Risk

- 2.5 Since the Management Team's annual review of Risk in February, the COVID-19 outbreak has escalated to become one of the major risks to most organisations both nationally and internationally.

3.0 Progress

Annual Risk Review

- 3.1 The Management Team reviewed all risks in February 2020 and, subject to the amendments referred to below, the revised Board Risk Register is presented (See Appendix 1) for approval today.
- 3.2 Members should note that officers also utilise an Operational Risk Register and Risk Action Plan for the management of more day-to-day, operational, matters along with other process or project specific Risk Registers.
- 3.3 The Operational Risk Register and Risk Action Plan can be made available to members on request.

Internal Audit Review of the Joint Board's Risk Management Arrangements

- 3.4 In May 2020, Internal Audit completed their report on the Joint Board's Risk Management Arrangements and the report is attached at Appendix 2 for Members' consideration.
- 3.5 The report concluded that the systems examined were working effectively and highlighted the following areas of good practice:
- The VJB has a broad approach to risk management and operational planning. The Board Risk Register and Operational Risk Register are reviewed and updated annually;
 - The risk registers are monitored with changes in risks and progress of actions to mitigate risks reported to Management Team meeting and to Joint Board; and
 - The VJB has a very low risk appetite in a service which is focussed on delivery of statutory functions.
- 3.6 The report did, however, recommend that the Management Team determine the best way to document strategic and operational risks arising from COVID-19 and ensure appropriate mitigating controls are identified and assessed on an ongoing basis. A Management Action was agreed and is contained in section 3 of the attached report.

COVID-19 Outbreak Risk

- 3.7 In line with the increasing risks related to the COVID-19 outbreak, and in accordance with the action agreed in the Internal Audit report, a high level analysis of the risk was added to the Board Risk Register which is presented for approval today.
- 3.8 Separately, a more detailed COVID-19 Risk Register was developed and an Action Plan agreed by the Management Team. These are attached at Appendices 3 and 4 for Members consideration.

4.0 Next Steps

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

5.0 Recommendations

- 5.1 Members are asked to:-
- (a) Approve the Board Risk Register for 2020/21, including the actions shown therein.
 - (b) To note the conclusions of the recently completed Internal Audit of the Joint Board's Risk Management arrangements.
 - (c) Approve the Action Plan contained in the above Internal Audit Report.
 - (d) To note the creation of a COVID-19 Risk Register and Action Plan and the efforts being made to manage the risks associated with the outbreak.

Person to contact:
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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Board Risk Register 2020/21
Appendix 2 – Internal Audit Report on the Review of the Joint Board's Risk Management Arrangements
Appendix 3 – DABVJB COVID-19 Risk Register
Appendix 4 - DABVJB COVID-19 Risk Action List



*Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute
Valuation Joint Board*

BOARD RISK REGISTER 2020

Version Control

Version	Originator	Summary of Changes	Date
2020 v0.1d	David Thomson	Draft of MT Annual Review outcome	18 February 2020
2020 MT approved	David Thomson	Following approval by MT	19 March 2020
2020 v1.1d	David Thomson	COVID risk added	April 2020

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 2015 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
UK Exit from EU

This document constitutes the Board Risk Register for 2020/21 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.

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 over:-

<u>Likelihood</u> - "Probability of a risk event	<u>Impact</u> - "Severity of the consequences should such an
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occurring” 1. Unlikely but could happen (Low) 2. Likely to happen (Medium) 3. Very likely or already happening (High)	event occur” 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)
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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

Operational Area	All Functions			
<u>Risk Title/Description</u> Failure to comply with Legislation, including:- (a) Council Tax (b) Electoral Registration (c) Rating Valuation (d) Best Value, Health & Safety, Freedom of Information, Equalities, Records Management, Data Protection etc Significant change is currently proposed as a consequence of:- (a) The NDR Reform Actl, including the move to 3-yearly Revaluations (b) Electoral Canvass Reform (c) The extension of the electoral franchise to include prisoners and non-national residents of Scotland. The uncertainties that such change brings, when combined with the ongoing restrictions on local government funding, must increase the risk of failure to deliver statutory functions. 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.				
Likelihood	3	Impact	3	Risk Score
				9
<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 survey method, timetables for amendment of lists by Valuation Group. 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. (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 AEA. 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 in 2013 and 2017. (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. All relevant Revaluation appeal processes in place. NDR Reform Project Team established internally. (d) <u>Best Value, Health & Safety, Freedom of Information, Equalities, Records Management, Data Protection etc</u> 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 revised to include Open Data. 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. Trained First Aiders in place. 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 which came into effect in 2018. New 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 2018.

Likelihood	1	Impact	3	Residual Risk	4
Action		Resp Person	Target Date	Progress	
(a) Council Tax					
Ensure survey records are current		DAs	Ongoing		
(b) Electoral Registration					
Maintain links to SAA, Scottish Government, AEA, Scotland Office, Electoral Commission, EMB and CO re changes in legislation. Respond to consultations etc.		ERO/ PAO	Ongoing		
Continue to review budgetary provision, and availability of government grants.		ERO	Annually		
Implement procedures to facilitate franchise extension		ERO/PAO	April and June 2020		
Implement procedures to facilitate Canvass Reform, including Data Match testing and live runs		ERO/PAO	June 2020	Cabinet Office training 27 February	
(c) Rating Valuation					
Continue to dispose of Revaluation appeals.		Assessor/ DAs	Ongoing	Citations to be issued prior to 30 June 2020	
Prepare for NDR Reform		Assessor/NDR Reform Project Team	Ongoing (generally 2022)		
Implement Civil Penalties process and appeal procedures		Assessor/NDR Reform Project Team	April 2020	Appeals system to follow Assent of the Act – possibly in May. To be implemented in partnership with WDC.	
(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	2 nd Progress Update Review to be submitted May 2020	
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		
Update Personal Data Audit, and Review Data Retention Schedule in line with Internal Audit requirements.		Depute Assessor	Ongoing	Retained as annual reminder	

Operational Area		All Functions			
Risk Title/Description					
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 or maintain service/performance levels , particularly in light of the changes to the NDR and Electoral Registration functions referred to in the risk above.					
NDR Reform (See more detail in following risk) will bring significant additional resource requirements, albeit Scottish Government provided funding for 2019/20 and has projected funding for 2020/21.					
Whilst some of the additional costs of Individual Electoral Registration will be removed by canvass reform, others will remain. The UK Government has not committed to continued funding for these residual IER costs. The excess space at 235 Dumbarton Road remains vacant resulting in non-remunerative overhead costs.					
An annual budget gap remains in estimates projected for 2020/21 and beyond.					
Likelihood	3	Impact	3	Risk Score	9
Controls					
Financial Regulations and Standing Orders in place and updated.					
Liaison with Treasurer and constituent councils, Statutory requirement to fund Assessor and ERO.					
Joint Board has established a funding Working Group to ensure scrutiny of proposed expenditure and management of resources.					
Budget monitoring reports to MTM in line with audit recommendations.					
Procurement processes aligned with WDCs. Scottish Government (draft) budget commitment to provide NDR Reform funding to Assessors in 2019/20.					
Joint procurement of IS systems and services through WDC. Using 'We-Buy' procurement system and other approved procurement frameworks.					
Inflation considered in 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.					
Retirements and resignations used as opportunities to restructure/reduce costs.					
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 under this scheme with significant year-on-year savings.					
Complete review of budgetary need undertaken in preparation for 2020/21 budget.					
Door-to-door canvass reduced to one visit per household. Canvass reform should reduce the extent of the door-to-door canvass requirement in 2020.					
Scottish Government funding provided to assist with NDR Reform.					
Likelihood	3	Impact	3	Residual Risk	9
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		
Implement further structural changes as required.	Assessor/ Man Team		As required		
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 drafting the proposed 2020/21 budget along with indicative budgets for	

			following years. Accrued surplus to be used to offset expenditure in forthcoming years.
Joint Board working group to review options to address the budget gaps	Joint Board/ Assessor & ERO	Ongoing	
Planned delays in recruitment and retention of vacancies where necessary.	Assessor/ Man Team	As required	Various vacancies vs complement already exist.
Continue to review and plan processes in advance	Man Team	Ongoing	
Meet with Finance Officers of constituent Councils	Assessor/ERO	As required	See funding working group, above.
Take actions arising from any such meeting	Assessor/ERO	As required	
Seek new tenants for vacant part of 235 Dumbarton Road, Clydebank	Assessor/ERO	Ongoing	
Consider options for further sweep for VER/S	Assessor/ERO	Ongoing	
Continue to monitor effect on service provision/performance arising from VER/S 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

Operational Area		Non-Domestic Rating Valuation			
<u>Risk Title/Description</u>					
<p>The Non-Domestic Rating (NDR) Reform Act introduces a number of very significant changes to the NDR system. Two of the main changes are:-</p> <p>(a) the move to a 3 yearly Revaluation cycle, with a valuation date 1 year in advance, and</p> <p>(b) significant change to the appeals system including the introduction of a 2-stage proposals and appeals process.</p> <p>The Barclay Report also noted a number of areas where Assessors across Scotland should act to provide more transparency and consistency of approach. If Assessors fail to do so the proposed action is that their statutory powers be transferred from local independent Assessors to the Scottish Assessors Association.</p> <p>Separate risks specific to NDR Reform and the implementation of 3-yearly Revaluations are now included in the Operational Risk Register and, as detailed proposals continue to emerge from secondary legislation, additional, specific risks will be added to that Register. Board Members should, however, remain aware of the far-reaching implications, including financial implications, of the change to 3-yearly Revaluations.</p> <p>See also the specific addition of a risk related to the introduction of Civil Penalties (later)</p> <p>Any major change to the role of the Assessor is likely to have implications for the post of ERO.</p>					
Likelihood	3	Impact	3	Risk Score	9
<u>Controls</u>					
<p>Statutory functions met continually, in line with statutory requirements and established methodologies.</p> <p>Expected Performance Standards are regularly met or surpassed.</p> <p>Customer satisfaction is at high levels.</p> <p>SAA and Assessor input to consultative groups and draft legislative proposals. SAA meetings with Government officials in respect of development of policy and both primary and secondary legislation.</p> <p>SAA Issues Log and Action Plan in place and being actively considered/monitored at regular meetings of the Association.</p> <p>Internal NDR Reform Project Team established to deliver reforms Project Plan and Risk Register in place. Additional funding received in 2019/20 and expected for 2020/21.</p> <p>Government committed to council tax for the life of this Parliament.</p>					
Likelihood	3	Impact	3	Residual Risk	9
Action	Resp Person		Target Date	Progress	
Input to consultations, comment on draft legislation, formally and/or informally, via SAA. Maintain high profile and ongoing liaison with Government and officials, through SAA, IRRV and RICS. Lobby government etc as required.	Assessor		Ongoing		
React to any legislation and government policy requirements arising from any of the above.	Assessor/ Joint Board		As req'd		
Continue to promote professionalism, performance levels (including KPI areas of function) and customer satisfaction.	All Staff		Ongoing		
Maintain good relationships with constituent	Assessor/		Ongoing		

councils.	ERO		
Deal with 2017 Revaluation appeals in a professional, open and transparent way.	All valuation staff	Ongoing	~80% disposed of at January 2020
Implement change required arising from SAA Issues Log and Action Plan to improve consistency and transparency	Assessor	As/when identified	
Ensure that funding is made available for the additional requirements of NDR Reform	Joint Board/ Assessor/ Constituent Councils	Ongoing	.
Continue to provide resources, including personnel and ICT, required to deliver reform.	Assessor/ NDR Reform Project Team	Ongoing	Significant progress has been made in updating NDR systems to date. Work ongoing
Implement Civil Penalties regime (including appeals procedures)	Assessor/ NDR Reform Project Team	April 2020	
Ensure local NDR Reform Project Plan is updated and adhered to	NDR Reform Project Team	Ongoing	
Improve geo-referencing of subjects contained in the Valuation Roll	Assessor	March 2020	Data capture completed February 2020
Update all statutory Notices and letters to refer to new statutory authority	NDR Reform Project Team	Various deadlines from April 2020	
Implement processes to facilitate the display of comparable subject data at the SAA web site.	NDR Reform Project Team	Autumn 2021	
Ingather information and physical attribute data on relevant buildings within, and parts of, public parks.	Divisional Assessors	Autumn 2021	

Operational Area		All Functions			
<u>Risk Title/Description</u>					
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.					
The various NDR and Electoral Registration Reforms referred to in various places in the Risk Register will increase the need for ICT development and system change. Other specific ICT-related risks in the immediate future relate to migration to a new server/network structure.					
Likelihood	3	Impact	3	Risk Score	9
<u>Controls</u>					
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. Back-ups stored off-site.					
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.					
Contract in place covering supply and maintenance of EMS software – updates being provided and implemented as required.					
Maintenance and support arrangements are in place and a rolling programme of hardware replacement.					
ESCROW agreement covers Electoral Management System					
Paper/alternate procedures could be implemented for several functions					
Current versions of software in use – specifically, upgrade to Windows 10 operating system completed.					
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					
IT team members and WDC support staff are made aware of critical timetables etc.					
High speed fibre communications installed to Campbeltown office, with appropriate maintenance.					
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		
Implement the move to new server structure. Specifically, ensure that the migration of data is managed in a formal planned fashion		Depute Assessor	Spring 2020	Timetable will be dependent upon WDC migration plan and resource availability	
Implement upgrade to communications network in Clydebanks office		Depute Assessor	Summer 2020		
Ensure all EROS/Idox upgrades are applied to allow Canvass reform		Systems Officer	Ongoing		
Continue development of NDR systems to facilitate NDR Reform and Barclay requirements		Depute Assessor	To Autumn 2021		

***Note:** Residual Risk score of 7 reflects the short periods during which the server migration will take place. Generally the risk would be lower.

Operational Area		Electoral Registration			
Risk Title/Description					
<p>Planned changes to the Electoral Registration system currently include:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">(a) Reform of the Annual Electoral Canvass (UK Government/Cabinet Office)(b) Extension of overseas residents electoral registration rights (UK Government/Cabinet Office) – now a medium term expectation rather than short term(c) Introduction of voting and registration rights to certain prisoners (Scottish Government)(d) The extension of the franchise for certain elections/electoral events to all residents of Scotland, including non-nationals <p>As can be seen above, the devolution of legislation governing Electoral Registration for Scottish Parliamentary and Local Government elections could result in divergence in legislative provision from the UK, operational complexity, EMS/GDS development requirement, additional cost, and elector confusion.</p> <p>As issues crystallise they will be added to relevant Risk Registers, if necessary.</p> <p>Despite Scottish Government and CO recognising the risk arising from legislative divergence and having committed to working together to minimise divergence, the differing Parliamentary and Governmental priorities have resulted in divergence in legislation and timing of that.</p>					
Likelihood	3	Impact	2	Risk Score	8
Controls					
<p>Input into consultations.</p> <p>Electoral Management System (EMS) suppliers have a commercial requirement to provide systems which are compliant with legislation. EMS suppliers are engaging with both governments in relation to developing requirements and draft legislation.</p> <p>Cabinet Office has provided guidance on revised Canvass procedures.</p> <p>Governments providing funding for EMS upgrades/changes (SG for franchise changes and UK for canvass reform). Local data matching tests completed.</p>					
Likelihood	3	Impact	2	Residual Risk	8
Action		Resp Person	Target Date	Progress	
Monitor draft legislation and make comments as appropriate		ERO	Ongoing		
Maintain liaison with EMS suppliers to inform development		ERO/PAO	As required	EMS training expected in May 2020	
Continue to attend SAA, AEA meetings, workshops etc		ERO/PAO	As required		
Complete National Canvass Reform data match testing in accordance with Cabinet Office requirement		ERO/PAO	March 2020		
Ensure appropriate attendance at CO training		ERO/PAO	February 2020	4 delegates booked on course	
Implement procedures to allow prisoner registration		ERO/PAO	April 2020	There is a reliance on the Electoral Commission for form design and on SPS for information provision.	
Implement procedures to allow non-national residents to register		ERO/PAO	June 2020	There is a reliance on the Electoral Commission for form design.	
Implement new canvass procedures, train staff and amend guidance		ERO/PAO	June 2020	Reliance on EMS for system changes	
Amend (joint/shared) messaging and publicity relating to canvass process		ERO/SAA	Summer 2020		

Operational Area		Non-Domestic Rating Valuation			
<u>Risk Title/Description</u>					
There is a real, medium term, risk that the combined effect of NDR reform and reduced training provision by Universities, will be to make it increasingly difficult to attract enough professional staff to carry out our statutory duties.					
Likelihood	3	Impact	3	Risk Score	9
<u>Controls</u>					
Existing staff have knowledge and experience. Trainee Surveyors are in place and progressing. Staff Guidance and SAA Practice Notes in place. Funding made available for NDR Reforms. Ongoing and recent liaison with relevant universities. Attractive Terms & Conditions of employment Capability to automate valuations in contingency/emergency situations					
Likelihood	2	Impact	3	Residual Risk	8
Action		Resp Person	Target Date	Progress	
Continue liaison with educational bodies and maintain awareness of different routes to qualification		Assessor/ Depute Assessor	Ongoing	Expression of interest in taking an apprenticeship route in 20/21 academic year registered with Napier University	
Lobby Scottish Government, academic bodies and RICS for active promotion of relevant courses and the profession as a career.		Assessor	Ongoing	Probably through SAA and RICS	
Ensure that employment terms and conditions remain attractive		Assessor/ Joint Board	Ongoing	In partnership with WDC.	
Ensure budget provision is made for vacant professional posts and traineeships.		Assessor	Annually		
Ensure recruitment takes place for the (soon to be) vacant Divisional Valuer post		Depute Assessor	April 2020		

Operational Area		All Functions			
<u>Risk Title/Description</u>					
<p>The pandemic COVID-19 viral outbreak and the government restrictions to combat its effects represent significant risks to the delivery of the Assessor and ERO’s statutory functions, to Joint Board employees’ health and to various aspects of our interactions with service users and stakeholders. It may also affect the Joint Board’s oversight of the Assessor & ERO’s functions.</p> <p>The effects on the Board are many and varied and so, although a summary is provided below, a separate risk register, focussed on the effects of the outbreak, will be developed and actions managed.</p> <p>The situation regarding COVID-19 is very fluid with risks, effects, mitigations and actions changing constantly. The Management Team have adopted a very flexible approach to managing the outbreak and its effects on the Board’s functions, and will continue to do so for some time to come. It is to be noted that some actions to mitigate the risks of the outbreak, such as actions to protect individuals, actually constitute separate risks to the Board’s functions. Other actions, such as possible changes to legislation, NDR timetables, etc. are likely to be beyond the scope and control of the Board or the Management Team.</p>					
Likelihood	3	Impact	3	Risk Score	9
<p>Offices, in effect, closed to protect staff health. Home working implemented, initially for a minority of employees. Expansion of home working to majority of employees Many existing processes are administered digitally/electronically. Manual processes changed to facilitate home/digital methods of working Management retaining an awareness of wider issues and government/government agencies' advice and guidance. Occasional office visits to ensure administration of mail etc DAB and SAA Websites, Out of Office notification, answer phone messages and notices in place directing users on how to contact us. Contact made with key stakeholders to advise of position – Board Members, SAA, VAC Secretaries, appellants Regular contact with staff In contact with Convenor / Clerk / Treasurer</p>					
Likelihood	3	Impact	2	Residual Risk	8
Action		Resp Person	Target Date	Progress	
Continue to expand home working capability		Depute Assessor	Current	Significant steps forward taken 27-30 April	
Provide updates of effect and progress to Members		Assessor	June 2020	Assessor has verbally reported to Convenor	
Continue to review processes		Management Team / All	Ongoing		
Look to review processes to replace survey work with desktop procedures.		Technical staff	Ongoing		
Look to implement ‘safe’ working practices on return to having a presence in offices		Management Team		Will be dependent on government and other advice.	
Continue to review the situation and react accordingly		Management Team / all-staff	Ongoing		
Complete detailed COVID Risk Register and implement the agreed actions		Management Team	May 2020	Draft considered at 5 May MT meeting.	
Consider options for remote/virtual Joint		Assessor/ERO	June 2020		

Board meetings to take place	and Clerk		
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INTERNAL AUDIT SERVICES
REPORT REF No S/013/20 (May 2020)

**Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute
Valuation Joint Board – Review of Risk
Management Arrangements**



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Personnel referred to in this report :

David Thomson: Assessor & ERO

Auditor: Lutfun Rahman

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

General

An audit was conducted on Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute Valuation Joint Board (VJB) – Review of Risk Register and risk management arrangements. We are pleased to report that the systems examined are working effectively.

The review covered:

- VJB's Risk Management (RM) Strategy;
- Identification of risks;
- Alignment of risks to strategic objectives;
- Application of identified internal controls; and
- Review and reporting process.

The review highlighted the following areas of good practice:

- VJB has a broad approach to the overall RM and operational planning. VJB maintains a total of ten risk registers, the strategic risks are documented in the Board Risk Register which highlight the main areas of risks. Other risks are contained in an Operational Risk Register and a number of additional registers. These risk registers are reviewed and updated annually ;
- The risk registers are monitored with changes in risks and progress of actions to mitigate risks reported to Management Team (MT) meeting and to Joint Board meeting for the Board Risk Register; and
- VJB has a very low risk appetite in a service which is focussed on delivery of statutory functions which have to be delivered.

However, the review also highlighted one medium rated issue as follows:

- **Timely Update of Emerging Risks**
COVID -19 is an unprecedented critical issue and has escalated, causing severe disruptions. However, the Management Team has already drafted the new Board Risk Register 2020 and Operational Risk Register 2020 in February. The detailed risks arising from COVID-19 needs to be considered as soon as practically possible at a strategic and operational level.

Full details of this issue is included in the Action Plan, which forms Section 3 of this report.

Managers should communicate the outcome of the Audit with the staff involved in the audit process, particularly those staff who are responsible for implementing the agreed actions.

2. MAIN REPORT

2.1 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1.1 An audit was carried out on VJB – Review of Risk Register and risk management arrangements as part of Internal Audit's Planned Programme of audits. The audit was conducted in conformance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS).
- 2.1.2 The audit forms part of the 2019- 20 Audit Plan which was approved by the West Dunbartonshire Council Audit Committee in March 2019.

2.2 SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES

- 2.2.1 The auditor used the CIPFA Systems Based Auditing Control Matrix to confirm the systems in place, with particular emphasis on the following:
- Risk Management Strategy;
 - Identification of risks;
 - Alignment of risks to strategic objectives;
 - Application of identified controls;
 - Review Process; and
 - Reporting process.
- 2.2.2 The control objectives tested for the above in relation to transaction recording and processing were: occurrence and timeliness.
- 2.2.3 An audit launch meeting was held by the Auditor with David Thomson (DT) and Audit Manager to agree the scope and objective of the audit.
- 2.2.4 The following testing was performed: review of the RM policy and procedures; review of RM Strategy document; review of the risk registers; carry out sample testing for identification of risks; review of Management meeting minutes; meetings were held with DT; and audit enquiries & emails for various audit work steps.
- 2.2.5 Internal Control Questionnaires (ICQs) were completed to ascertain the systems in place by independently questioning DT.
- 2.2.6 Compliance testing was carried out to confirm the responses given in the ICQs and that the control objectives were being met.

2.3 FINDINGS

- 2.3.1 The findings are based upon evidence obtained from available documentations and discussion with senior Management.
- 2.3.2 This report details all points arising during the audit review, full details of which are included in the Action plan contained within Section 3 of this report. We stress that these are the points arising via the planned programme of work and are not necessarily all of the issues that may exist.
- 2.3.3 The RM Strategy and RM Procedures documentation provides guidance in terms of the risk management approach, methodology, roles & responsibilities, identification & evaluation of risks, implementation & review, commitment for continuous improvement across the Joint Board's areas of function and financing risks.
- 2.3.4 Timely Update of Emerging Risks
- VJB has a broad approach to the overall RM and operational planning. VJB maintains a total of ten risk registers, the strategic risks are documented in the Board Risk Register which highlight the main areas of risks. Other risks are contained in the Operational Risk Register. Further a number of additional registers are maintained for specific functional areas such as: Annual Canvass Risk Register, Rolling Registration Risk Register, Electoral Integrity Risk Register, Electoral Awareness Risk Register, and NDR Reform Risk Register. These risk registers are reviewed and updated annually.
- 2.3.5. Annual review of risk registers are carried out in February where each risk is reviewed, controls and actions related to each risk are assessed and the results of the review are reported to the Management Team Meeting for approval. The Board Risk Register is submitted to the Joint Board for approval in June each year. There is also a Risk Action List that includes all action to be taken from the Board and Operation Risk Registers. COVID -19 is an unprecedented critical issue and has escalated, causing severe disruptions. However, the Management Team has already drafted the new Board Risk Register 2020 and Operational Risk Register 2020 in February. The detailed risks arising from COVID-19 needs to be considered as soon as practically possible at a strategic and operational level. A recommendation has been raised in the section 3 of this Report.
- 2.3.6 There is no formal training provided to the Managers and Officers who are responsible for managing the risk registers. However they receive on the job training for RM procedures to be followed and are experienced and competent in their own respective positions of employment with VJB. It was confirmed that risks are identified largely through experience, knowledge of the business both current and future, knowledge of developing legislation, and budgetary position. This is by generally having an awareness of the internal and external factors which are affecting VJB now or will affect in the future.

- 2.3.7 A sample of high, medium and low risk entries of 18 risks from five risk registers were selected for testing for the identification of risks. The audit test shows for the sample selected - risk subjects are clearly identified for the risks on the registers; The likelihood and the impact of the risk occur are clearly scored using the Risk Matrix. The mitigating controls for the risks have been identified, the proposed action, responsible officer and time frame are also identified. It is to be noted that Management no longer apply any 'tolerance' rules.
- 2.3.8 The factual accuracy of this report has been verified by the officers involved in the audit.
- 2.3.9 The Auditor would like to thank all staff involved in the audit process for their time and assistance.

3. Action Plan: VJB - Review of Risk Management ArrangementsS.013.20						
Ref. No.	Finding	Recommendation	Priority	Management Comment	Manager Responsible	Date to be Completed
1.	<u>Risks arising from COVID-19</u> COVID -19 is an unprecedented critical issue and has escalated, causing severe disruptions, however Management Team has already drafted the new Board Risk Register 2020 and the Operational Risk Register 2020 in February.	It is recommended that the Management Team determine the best way to document strategic and operational risks arising from COVID-19 and ensure appropriate mitigating controls are identified and assessed on an ongoing basis.	Medium Risk	A new risk was added to the Operational Risk Register prior to the Management Team Meeting on 17 March 2020 but, as the situation has since escalated, the Management Team will further discuss the implications of the outbreak at its (virtual) meeting on 5 May and draft a COVID-19 Risk Register thereafter.	Assessor & ERO	May 2020



*Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute
Valuation Joint Board*

COVID-19 RISK REGISTER

Version Control

Version	Originator	Summary of Changes	Date
2020 v0.1d	David Thomson	First draft	29 April 2020
2020 v0.2d	David Thomson	Reflecting MT feedback	01 May 2020
2020 v0.3d	David Thomson	Post MTM on 5 May	07 May 2020

Introduction

This Risk Register is prepared to address the rapidly changing effects of the pandemic COVID-19 viral outbreak and the advice, guidance and instruction of governments arising from it. It will also address the recommended action included in the Internal Audit Report on the Board's Risk Management regime.

A 'Strategic' risk has been included in the Board Risk Register which will be presented to the Joint Board at its meeting in June 2020. This register includes a more detailed analysis of the effects and provides more information on the mitigations and actions.

Methodology

The approach to compiling this risk register and planning actions will be in line with the Joint Board's Risk Strategy and Risk Management Procedures documents.

Although this Risk Register was drafted during a period when government advice was to not attend workplaces (unless essential) or travel unnecessarily, the reasonable assumption made is that restrictions on mobility will be eased to some extent in the medium term. Thus, the risk scores reflect some element of an expectation of a return to more normal practices in a matter of weeks. If restrictions are extended beyond this timeframe, new risks might arise and existing risk scores will require revision.

COVID-19 RISK REGISTER

Section 1 – General, Staff and Resources

Risk No	Risk Description	Risk Score	Controls	Resid Risk	Actions
1	Immediate risk of ill health <u>to</u> employees	8	(Virtual) Office closures Occasional visits only in small numbers and recognising distancing guidance Guidance provided to staff on isolation/distancing Recording of absence amended to facilitate isolation Remote teleconferencing implemented (internally and externally) WDC H&S guidance	6	Implement safe working procedures and need for personal protective equipment (PPE) on attendance at or on general return to the workplace. Revise survey/public interface procedures. Consider alternatives to survey/current public interfaces Adopt or where appropriate adapt WDC H&S guidance
2	Loss of employees through illness, isolation/shielding guidance or self-isolation - i.e. loss of service provision functionality See, also, Operational Risk Register for Controls and Actions relating to general risk of loss of staff	9	Home working implemented, initially for a minority of employees. Expansion of home working to majority of employees. Many existing processes are administered digitally/electronically. Manual processes changed to facilitate home/digital methods of working Skills transfers Temporary variation of duties Occasional office visits to ensure administration of mail etc Remote videoconferencing implemented (internally and externally) WDC HR guidance	6	<u>Following government guidance</u> , implement a return to office, adopting new practices and work from home where appropriate. Liaise with staff during this planning process Continue to review processes Look to expand office presence Cease some functions on a temporary basis
3	No interaction with public	8	Interaction available via e-mail, VJB web site and SAA portal. Answer phones activated and regularly checked. Incoming mail regularly collected and actioned Public notices displayed in offices Generic/public facing e-mail addresses have re-direction messages. Outgoing telephone calls can be made from home/mobile telephones Electronic return facility in use for canvass functions Print & mail contract in place for various outgoing	6	Pro-active contacting of NDR and CT appellants

			mailings		
4	Loss/restriction of (Physical) mail handling capability	6	Print & mail contract implemented for various outgoing mailings Revised procedures implemented to facilitate mail to be issued from Campbelltown office. Significant amounts of incoming correspondence are received by e-mail Incoming mail regularly collected and actioned	5	Consider use and cost of implementing a scanning bureau arrangement for incoming mail, for e.g. canvass returns. Consider increasing attendance at Clydebank office.
5	Interruption to holding meetings	8	Remote video conferencing implemented (internally and externally)	6	Extend video conferencing capability WDC roll out of Microsoft 365 due late summer Consider alternative vehicles for remote meetings
6	Uncertainty in service planning	9	(Draft) Service Plan in place Awareness of flexibility and contingency within several functions and timetables.	5	Remain aware of both internal and external change and react accordingly. Input to consultations and considerations of (e.g. legislative) change
7	The long-term effects are likely to result in further financial restrictions in the public sector See, also, Board Risk Register for Controls and Actions relating to general risk of budget gaps and financial restraint	7	All relevant financial management and budgetary processes are in place. Joint Board holds reserves	5	Continue to show financial restraint Continue to look for efficiency opportunities.
8	Reduced performance including SAA KPIs	6	Development activity is currently reduced	6	Review working practices Consider 'risk based' valuations
9	Mental health of home workers or 'dormant' employees is adversely affected	3	Counselling services available via WDC and AEA	3	Maintain contact with colleagues/teams. Ensure information flows get to all staff.
10	Increase in HR and industrial relations issues arising from the shut-down and partial dormancy of staff	3	Support and guidance available from government and WDC HR&OD.	3	Maintain contact with colleagues/teams. Ensure information flows get to all staff. Show flexibility over application of Policies Consult / discuss / inform the trades union
11	Inability to hold Joint Board meetings with the resultant loss of Members' oversight and decision making capability (Standing Orders require attendance to provide a quorum)	8	Officers could 'attend' remotely	6	Seek advice from Clerk to VJB Seek Amendment to Standing Orders Allow variation to Standing Orders Effect distancing practices at future meetings.

					Consider options for videoconferencing, probably using facilities provided by Clerk.
12	Inability to complete recruitment interviews	8	Web-based videoconferencing likely to be available	6	Look at videoconferencing options or interview by telephone. Implement interviews with =distancing measures in place. Delay recruitment processes in short term
13	Information Management / Security Remote working roll out has increased risk of unauthorised access to or loss of Assessor/ERO information (paper files etc) See also ICT/Data risk below.	5	Staff trained in security and data protection Staff guidance re use of information and access to ICT provided	2	Review hard copy information held out with the office Reminder to teams on security of hard copy information including Data Protection requirements
14	WDC or other partners unable to provide level of service expected?	5	SLA In place Regular contact with support departments WDC have extended work at home facilities extensively	3	Continue to liaise with relevant stakeholders

Section 2 - Electoral Registration

Risk No	Risk Description	Risk Score	Controls	Resid Risk	Actions
1	Specific risk of ill health to employees acting as door-to-door canvassers *Current risk reflects the future nature of the risk and the potential option to not proceed with the task	5	No door-to-door canvassing ongoing at time of initial outbreak.	0* current	Follow government guidelines on PPE and travel Consider not proceeding with d-2-d canvass – mail out second reminder as alternative. Provide PPE in line with government guidelines. Contact via phone/e-mail where contact information is available.
2	Unable to publish registers as per statutory requirement	9	Home working implemented and processes reviewed. On-line applications and other electronic information provision readily handled. Copy documents for verifying identity accepted	0* current	Review processes regarding enquiries, special electors etc. Consider use and cost of implementing a

	*Current risk reflects the future nature of the risk and the time available to ensure that it proceeds		Canvass and other mail-outs delivered through print & mail contract. Canvass returns available by web, txt or telephone Occasional visits to office to facilitate scanning of paper applications and other correspondence		scanning bureau arrangement for incoming mail for canvass returns.
3	Unable to maintain and update registers as per statutory requirement	9	Home working implemented and processes reviewed. On-line applications and other electronic information provision readily handled. Copy documents for verifying identity accepted Various mail-outs delivered through print & mail contract. Occasional visits to office to facilitate scanning of paper applications and other correspondence	3	Review processes regarding enquiries, special electors etc. Expand in-office capability to deal with these. Consider widening the usage of print & mail contract.
4	Inability to distribute Electoral Registers, including updates	9	Majority of distribution is electronic/digital. Recipients of hard copy versions written to offer digital options	6-8	Continue to encourage uptake of digital options to recipient of hard copy registers/updates

Section 3 – Non-Domestic Rating

Risk No	Risk Description	Risk Score	Controls	Resid Risk	Actions
1	Specific risk of ill health to employees on survey work/site inspections *Current risk reflects the fact that no survey is being carried out. Review when return to survey work is envisaged.	8	Survey and site inspections temporarily ceased in line with government guidance	0* current	Follow Government guidelines on PPE, distancing and travel Provide PPE and information regarding distancing in line with government guidelines on cessation of 'lock-down' Review processes for alternative to on-site survey
2	Cancellation of Valuation Appeal Committees hinders progress in disposal of appeals, particularly those with imminent disposal timetables. This risk is exacerbated by the loss/diminution of communication	9	It is understood that government is considering alteration of statutory timetables. VAC diets in place for autumn. Majority of Valuation Staff have home working Proactive contacting of appellants	5	Issue relevant citations prior to June 2020 – ensure in advance that processes are in place. Treat appeal disposal as an absolute priority Consider implementation of overtime or otherwise increasing capacity.

	channels with ratepayers agents some of whom have temporarily reduced/ceased operation or are in 'furlough'.				In liaison with VAC Secretaries, consider increasing number of planned hearings in Sept – Dec 2020 period
3	Increase in workload arising from COVID/mcc appeals submitted in March 2020 and subsequently – along with potential failure to achieve disposal dates for these.	9	It is understood that government is considering alteration of statutory timetables. VAC diets in place for autumn Engagement with SAA	5	As above
4	Increase workload arising from queries relating to COVID business grant scheme	6	Home working implemented.	6	Prioritise such queries on a short-term basis.
5	Interruption to service restricts time and resources available to properly prepare for and deliver 2022 Revaluation	9	Project Plan in place and process well understood Staff resource in place or planned (see Workforce Plan) Recruitment ongoing Funding available for the above Use evidence currently available/held	6	Vary plan accordingly Consider effecting the Revaluation by automated processes. Consider implementing overtime or otherwise increasing resource.
6	'Tone' levels of value are not sustainable for 2022 Revaluation	5	Use evidence available at Tone Date. Valuers judgement can be applied	1	Postpone any specific actions at this stage and focus on more immediate risks. Accept the risk for now - The real risk here is in the appeals disposals phase (post 2022) Consider lobbying for change to Tone Date.
7	Inability to maintain Valuation Roll including ratepayers being unwilling to permit access.	9	Some change is possible from desk top Running roll process allows change to be made up to 31 March 2021. Current shut/slow down of construction is likely to minimise the number of changes to the valuation roll	1	Review processes for alternative to on-site survey Consider use of provisional/estimated Rateable Values

Section 4 – Council Tax

Risk No	Risk Description	Risk Score	Controls	Resid Risk	Actions
1	Specific risk of ill health to employees on survey work/site inspections. *Current risk reflects the fact that no survey is being carried out. Review when return to survey work is envisaged.	5	Survey and site inspections temporarily ceased in line with government guidance.	0* current	Provide PPE and information regarding distancing and travel in line with government guidelines on cessation of 'lock-down'

2	In ability to update the CT List, deal with proposals/appeals etc, including CT payers being unwilling to permit access.	9	<p>Site inspections have taken place in advance of occupations.</p> <p>Home working and revised internal processes allow CT List changes to be made where the above has been completed</p> <p>CT List additions/alterations can be back-dated as required.</p> <p>Current shut down of construction is likely to minimise the number of changes to the Council Tax list</p> <p>Registers of Scotland only processing limited House sales</p>	8	<p>Review processes for alternative to on-site survey</p> <p>Consider use of provisional Bands</p>
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Section 5 – ICT and Communications

Risk No	Risk Description	Risk Score	Controls	Resid Risk	Actions
1	Increased security risk due to home working	9	<p>Tried and tested secure log-on procedures with two-factor authentication in place.</p> <p>Staff trained in security and data protection</p> <p>Servers remain in secure environment</p> <p>Staff guidance re use of information and access to ICT provided</p> <p>Password protected screen shut-down in place</p> <p>Regular security updates pushed out remotely</p>	4	<p>Continue with current actions</p> <p>Ensure that remote application of upgrades continue</p>
2	Re-direction of ICT staff and managers to facilitate home working and amended processes diverts resource from planned ICT/development activities	6	Regular liaison with WDC IT contacts	6	<p>Accept the risk as continuity of service and compliance with statutory duty in short term must be prioritised over longer term aims.</p> <p>Consider overtime or other additional resource to help make up lost time.</p>

COVID-19 RISK MANAGEMENT - ACTION LIST – 2020

Version Control

Version	Originator	Summary of Changes	Date
2020 0.1d	David Thomson	MT review of COVID-19 Risk	11 May 2020

Note that many of the actions have 'vague' Target Dates. This arises partly from the fact that the VJB will have to react to influences out with its control and partly due to the continual/ongoing nature of dealing with the outbreak.

Section 1 – General, Staff and Resources

Risk No	Risk Description	Resid Risk	Actions	Resp Person	Target Date	Progress
1	Immediate risk of ill health to employees	6	<p>Implement safe working procedures and need for personal protective equipment (PPE) on attendance at or on general return to the workplace.</p> <p>Revise survey/public interface procedures.</p> <p>Consider alternatives to survey/current public interfaces</p> <p>Adopt or where appropriate adapt WDC H&S guidance</p>	<p>Assessor & ERO/ H&S Coms</p> <p>Managemt Team</p> <p>Managemt Team</p> <p>Assessor/ All Managers</p>	<p>As required</p> <p>As permitted</p> <p>As required</p> <p>As required</p>	<p>Doc Hub being used where possible</p> <p>As above</p> <p>Various H&S Flashes circulated</p>
2	Loss of employees through illness, isolation/shielding guidance or self-isolation - i.e. loss of service provision functionality	6	<p>Following government guidance, implement a return to office, adopting new practices and work from home where appropriate.</p> <p>Liaise with staff during this planning</p>	<p>Managemt Team</p>	<p>As permitted</p> <p>As</p>	

	See, also, Operational Risk Register for Controls and Actions relating to general risk of loss of staff		process Continue to review processes Look to expand office presence Cease some functions on a temporary basis	Assessor All managers Assessor Assessor/ MT	required Ongoing As permitted Ongoing	Presence exits daily in Campbeltown. At least weekly visits to Clydebank
3	No interaction with public	6	Pro-active contacting of NDR and CT appellants	DAs/ Valuation staff	Ongoing	
4	Loss/restriction of (Physical) mail handling capability	5	Consider use and cost of implementing a scanning bureau arrangement for incoming mail, for e.g. canvass returns. Consider increasing attendance at Clydebank office.	Assessor & ERO	Ongoing	Lead-times for contracted P&M provider can prove restrictive to rapid change.
5	Interruption to holding meetings	6	Extend video conferencing capability WDC roll out of Microsoft 365 due late summer Consider alternative vehicles for remote meetings	Depute Assessor/ WDC As above Depute Assessor	May 2020 Late summer Ongoing	Use of MS Teams in advance of MS 365 roll-out External dependency Clerk to Board has advised that Zoom options may be available again (soon)
6	Uncertainty in service planning	5	Remain aware of both internal and external change and react accordingly. Input to consultations and considerations of (e.g. legislative) change	Managemt Team	Ongoing	FM has announced expectation is 3 more weeks of 'lock-down' w.e.f 07.05.2020
7	The long-term effects are likely to result in further financial restrictions in the public sector See, also, Board Risk Register for Controls and Actions relating to general risk of budget gaps and financial restraint	5	Continue to show financial restraint Continue to look for efficiency opportunities.	} } Assessor & ERO }	Ongoing/ Continual	Saving likely to accrue from delay in filling vacant Valuer post.
8	Reduced performance including SAA KPIs	6	Review working practices Consider 'risk based' valuations	Managemt Team	Ongoing	

9	Mental health of home workers or 'dormant' employees is adversely affected	3	Maintain contact with colleagues/teams. Ensure information flows get to all staff.	} All }Man'gers }	Regularly	
10	Increase in HR and industrial relations issues arising from the shut-down and partial dormancy of staff	3	Maintain contact with colleagues/teams. Ensure information flows get to all staff. Show flexibility over application of Policies Consult / discuss / inform the trades union	} All }Man'gers } Assessor & ERO	Regularly As required	
11	Inability to hold Joint Board meetings with the resultant loss of Members' oversight and decision making capability	6	Seek advice from Clerk to VJB Seek Amendment to Standing Orders/Allow variation to Standing Orders Effect distancing practices at future meetings. Consider options for video conferencing, probably using facilities provided by Clerk.	}Assessor & ERO } }Clerk/ }Assessor & ERO }	May 2020 June 2020 or thereafter	Advice received to date is that the wording of Standing Orders is sufficiently open to permit 'virtual' meetings. Convenor happy to proceed on those terms WDC reviewing best ICT options for delivery of virtual meetings.
12	Inability to complete recruitment interviews	6	Look at video conferencing options or interview by telephone. Implement interviews with distancing measures in place. Delay recruitment processes in short term	See above Recruiting managers Assessor & ERO	June 2020 June 2020 Ongoing	Grade 3 Clerical Assistant recruitment proceeding as at May 2020
13	Information Management / Security Remote working roll out has increased risk of unauthorised access to or loss of Assessor/ERO information (paper files etc)	2	Review hard copy information held out with the office Reminder to teams on security of hard copy information including Data Protection requirements	DAs Assessor & ERO	Ongoing May 2020	Completed 11 May 2020
14	WDC or other partners unable to provide level of service expected	3	Continue to liaise with relevant stakeholders	Assessor & Managemt Team	Continual	Assurances of continuity obtained from print & mail partners, 7 May 2020. WDC providing the vast majority of its support services through home working

Section 2 - Electoral Registration

Risk No	Risk Description	Resid Risk	Actions	Resp Person	Target Date	Progress
1	Specific risk of ill health to employees acting as door-to-door canvassers *Current risk reflects the future nature of the risk and the potential option to not proceed with the task	0* current	Follow government guidelines on PPE and travel and provide PPE as required Consider not proceeding with d-2-d canvass – mail out second reminder as alternative. Contact the public and stakeholders via phone/e-mail where contact information is available.	ERO/ H&S Coms ERO ERO/PAO	As permitted/ advised July 2020 October 2020	
2	Unable to publish registers as per statutory requirement *Current risk reflects the future nature of the risk and the time available to ensure that it proceeds	0* current	Review processes regarding enquiries, special electors etc. Consider use and cost of implementing a scanning bureau arrangement for incoming mail for canvass returns. Seek assistance of EMS supplier or other contractor such as AEA in publishing register	ERO/PAO ERO ERO	May/June 2020 Ongoing By 1 Dec 2020	It should be possible to publish a register, though the completeness and accuracy may be affected
3	Unable to maintain and update registers as per statutory requirement	3	Review processes regarding enquiries, special electors etc. Expand in-office capability to deal with these. Consider widening the usage of print & mail contract.	ERO/PAO ERO/PAO ERO/PAO	May/June 2020 May/June 2020 Ongoing	In line with government guidance
4	Inability to distribute Electoral Registers, including updates	6-8	Continue to encourage uptake of digital options to recipient of hard copy registers/updates	PAO	April 2020 and ongoing	E-mail/Letter sent to recipients of paper versions in April

Section 3 – Non-Domestic Rating

Risk No	Risk Description	Resid Risk	Actions	Resp Person	Target Date	Progress
1	Specific risk of ill health to employees on survey work/site inspections *Current risk reflects the fact that no survey is being carried out. Review when return to survey work is envisaged.	0* current	Follow Government guidelines on PPE, distancing and travel Provide PPE and information regarding distancing in line with government guidelines on cessation of 'lock-down' Review processes for alternative to on-site survey	} }Assessor } / H&S }Coms } Assessor/ DAs	As permitted/ advised Ongoing	
2	Cancellation of Valuation Appeal Committees hinders progress in disposal of appeals, particularly those with imminent disposal timetables. This risk is exacerbated by the loss/diminution of communication channels with ratepayers agents some of whom have temporarily reduced/ceased operation or are in 'furlough'.	5	Issue relevant citations prior to June 2020 – ensure in advance that processes are in place. Treat appeal disposal as an absolute priority Consider implementation of overtime or otherwise increasing capacity. In liaison with VAC Secretaries, consider increasing number of planned hearings in Sept – Dec 2020 period	DAs/ Supervisors DAs Assessor DAs	w/b 25 May 2020 Ongoing As need arises Mid May 2020	No budget allocation for this
3	Increase in workload arising from COVID/mcc appeals submitted in March 2020 and subsequently – along with potential failure to achieve disposal dates for these.	5	As above	As above	As above	
4	Increase workload arising from queries relating to COVID business grant scheme	6	Prioritise such queries on a short-term basis.	Assessor/ DAs	As required by demand	
5	Interruption to service restricts time and resources available to properly prepare for and deliver 2022 Revaluation	6	Vary plan accordingly Consider effecting the Revaluation by automated processes. Consider implementing overtime or otherwise increasing resource.	} }Assess'r/ }Project }Team/ }DAs	From May 2020 forward	A Revaluation should be deliverable, through automated processes, but quality of Valuation Roll would be affected.
6	'Tone' levels of value are not sustainable for 2022 Revaluation	1	Postpone any specific actions at this stage and focus on more immediate risks. Accept the risk for now - The real risk here is in the appeals disposals phase	See above		

			(post 2022) Consider lobbying for change to Tone Date.			Other factors may affect Assessor/SAA lobbying position
7	Inability to maintain Valuation Roll including ratepayers being unwilling to permit access.	1	Review processes for alternative to on-site survey Consider use of provisional/estimated Rateable Values	Assessor/ DAs Assessor/ DAs	Ongoing Ongoing	Photos/ ratepayer provided information being considered. Doc Hub being used where possible

Section 4 – Council Tax

Risk No	Risk Description	Resid Risk	Actions	Resp Person	Target Date	Progress
1	Specific risk of ill health to employees on survey work/site inspections. *Current risk reflects the fact that no survey is being carried out. Review when return to survey work is envisaged.	0* current	Provide PPE and information regarding distancing and travel in line with government guidelines on cessation of 'lock-down'	}Assessor } / H&S }Coms	As permitted/ advised	
2	In ability to update the CT List, deal with proposals/appeals etc, including CT payers being unwilling to permit access.	8	Review processes for alternative to on-site survey Consider use of provisional Bands	Assessor/ DAs Assessor/ DAs	Ongoing Ongoing	Existing development files being used. Consider Planning and BW plans.

Section 5 – ICT and Communications

Risk No	Risk Description	Resid Risk	Actions	Resp Person	Target Date	Progress
1	Increased security risk due to home working	4	Continue with current actions Ensure that remote application of upgrades continue	}Depute }Assessor }WDC ICT	Ongoing	There is a dependency on WDC for all aspects of network security. WDC security advice and security upgrade advice circulated.
2	Re-direction of ICT staff and managers to facilitate home working and amended processes diverts resource from planned ICT/development activities	6	Accept the risk as continuity of service and compliance with statutory duty in short term must be prioritised over longer term aims. Consider overtime or other additional resource to help make up lost time.	Assessor & ERO	Ongoing	

DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD

Report by Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer

Valuation Joint Board –19 June 2020

Subject: Personnel Policies – Career Break Policy**1.0 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To seek Members approval of a 'Career Break Policy' for application within the Joint Board.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 As Members will be aware, the Valuation Joint Board generally aligns its Personnel Policies with West Dunbartonshire Council (WDC).
- 2.2 In March 2020 WDC introduced a Career Break Policy to support career breaks across the Council, providing clear guidelines as to when this is appropriate and the terms of such agreements.

3.0 Progress

- 3.1 The Valuation Joint Board's Management Team has adapted a similar Career Break Policy for application within the Joint Board and it is attached at Appendix 1 for Members consideration.
- 3.2 The Policy provides a beneficial addition to the Joint Board's suite of flexible working supports. It also provides an opportunity to retain an employee's skills and knowledge when their personal circumstances require consideration of a break from work.
- 3.3 The relevant Trades Union has confirmed that it has no issues to raise in respect of the proposed policy.

4.0 Recommendations

- 4.1 Members are asked to approve the Career Break Policy for implementation within the Joint Board.
-

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Appendix 1: DABVJB Career Break Policy (inc Appendix – Application form)



*Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute
Valuation Joint Board*

Career Break Policy

Version	Originator	Summary of Changes	Date
0.1d	David Thomson	New Draft Policy	6 April 2020
0.2d	David Thomson	Post MTM, 5 May 2020	19 May 2020
0.3d	David Thomson	MT approval	20 May 2020

VERSION CONTROL

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute Valuation Joint Board (“the Joint Board”) is committed to providing the opportunity for employees to achieve a positive work life balance through effective and productive ways of working that meet both business and employee needs.
- 1.2. This Career Break Policy has been developed as a beneficial addition to the Joint Board’s suite of flexible working supports. This Policy provides an opportunity to retain an employee’s skills and knowledge, when their personal circumstances require consideration of a break from work.

2. Scope

- 2.1. The Policy applies to all employees with at least 2 years continuous service with the Joint Board at the time of application.
- 2.2. The Joint Board will ensure that good equal opportunities practice underpins the operation of this policy irrespective of age, disability, sex, gender re-assignment, race, religion and belief, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership or sexual orientation.

3. Aims of the Policy

- 3.1 This Policy defines what a career break is and outlines the principles and process to be followed when considering an application for a career break, including the appeals process. It concludes by detailing the terms and conditions associated with a career break agreement to ensure that all parties are clear as to the terms of the agreement.

4. Career Breaks

Definition of Career Break

- 4.1. A career break is a period of approved unpaid leave, which provides an opportunity for employees to obtain an extended break to allow them to:
 - Undertake educational activities, a relevant course of study or other skills development activity;
 - Extend periods of travel;
 - Undertake voluntary work;
 - Undertake personal development activity;
 - Care for or support family members*; and/or
 - Manage their own wellbeing and health.

*Note, however, that the terms of the Board’s ‘Carer’s Leave Policy’ might also be relevant.

- 4.2. While the list above is not exhaustive, a career break should **not** be used for seeking alternative work with another employer. Should an applicant wish to undertake work while on a career break this must be fully discussed with their line manager and have approval from the Depute Assessor & ERO, prior to commencement. West Dunbartonshire Council (WDC) HR will provide support and guidance in this matter.

Management Considerations

- 4.3. All applications for career breaks will be considered on their own merits taking into consideration the exigencies of the service. Line Managers will be required to discuss what impact the career break will have on service provision and the need for any resulting replacement arrangements with the Depute Assessor & ERO. How the resultant vacancy is filled/covered will depend on each individual case, e.g. such as the length of the break, type of vacancy and whether it could be filled by one of the following:-
- Employees temporarily acting up
 - Responsibility payments
 - Advertised internally as a temporary post with the successful applicant, if currently employed on a permanent basis, having the right to return to their original post
 - Advertised externally as a temporary contract.
 - Advertised internally/externally and filled on a permanent basis, in certain circumstances where staffing levels and future workforce planning allows.
- 4.4. In some circumstances e.g. business critical roles or specialisms, it may be appropriate to test the recruitment market to inform whether a career break can indeed be supported.
- 4.5. In most circumstances the employee will return to the post they held prior to the career break. However, to support a career break it may be appropriate to discuss returning to an alternative post. In this circumstance the terms of role on return must be agreed and confirmed in writing prior to the commencement of the career break.
- 4.6. All career breaks must be agreed by both parties and approved prior to the career break commencing.

Duration

- 4.7. In line with the needs of the service a career break will normally last for a minimum of six months, and a maximum of 2 years. The length of the intended career break should be identified at the point of application.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

5.1. Employee's Responsibilities

- To discuss the terms of the career break requirement with their line manager at the earliest opportunity.
- To complete the relevant application forms and obtain the relevant approval prior to commencement of career break
- To sign and return the career break agreement prior to commencement of the career break
- To remain in contact with their line manager through the course of the career break, and notify of any changes to contact details
- To consider, and seek advice as appropriate on, the contractual implications of the career break
- To contact their line manager to confirm their return date 3 months prior to the agreed return date.

5.2 Line Manager's Responsibilities

- To consider all career break requests, and make recommendation to the Depute Assessor & ERO. A recommendation to refuse a request should only be made where there are clear, demonstrable business reasons why this cannot be supported.
- Discuss all the implications of the career break, including the financial considerations, with the Depute Assessor & ERO.
- If a career break for the duration requested cannot be recommended, consider alternative durations.
- Ensure that the career break agreement is signed prior to commencement of the career break
- To keep in touch with the employee while they are on career break as appropriate and agreed.

5.3 Depute Assessor & EROs Responsibilities

- To consider the line manager's recommendations for all career break requests, only refusing a request where there are clear, demonstrable business reasons why this cannot be supported.
- Consider all the implications of the career break, including the financial considerations, e.g. the potential for APCs (see section 9.7) which may affect back fill budgeting.
- If a career break cannot be approved for the duration requested, consider alternative durations.
- Follow the application process and provide reasons for an application being supported or rejected in writing

5.4 WDC Human Resources

- To support the application of the career break process
- Support managers and employees to make informed decisions regarding the process and the potential considerations
- Support the application and appeals process.

6. Application and Appeals Procedure

Application Procedure

- 6.1. Employees who wish to apply for a career break should discuss the matter initially with their line manager in accordance with the principles of the career break policy.
- 6.2. Applications for a career break should be submitted in writing on the Career Break request form (Appendix 1) at least three months prior to the proposed date of commencement (unless there are exceptional circumstances why this period cannot be met). The application should be submitted to the employee's line manager stating the anticipated length of the career break as well as providing full details of the reason for requesting the career break.
- 6.3. When considering a career break application, the managers involved must balance the request with the operational needs of the Service and how the resultant vacancy could be filled/covered. Both managers and employees will have to ensure that it will be possible to meet the operational needs of the Service.
- 6.4. All career breaks must be approved by the Depute Assessor & ERO. Line managers must complete the line managers section of Appendix 1 and forward it to the Depute Assessor & ERO for final consideration and approval/rejection as appropriate. Employees will normally be given a written response within four weeks from receipt of the application. In situations where the line manager is the Depute, the Depute will consider the application in its entirety.
- 6.5. When considering an application for career break Depute Assessor & ERO will discuss the details of the career break with WDC's Human Resources and HR Business Partners must be aware of all career break agreements before approval.
- 6.6. The Depute's decision will be confirmed to the employee in writing (Template letter 1 provides a template for approval and Template letter 2 provides a letter declining the request and the rationale for this must be provided).
- 6.7. Should the application be approved, the Line Manager should notify HR Connect of this outcome through the Notification of Change to Current Role form, to ensure Payroll are notified and records updated.
- 6.8. If the application has been refused, the employee will be advised as to the grounds for refusal and there will be the opportunity to appeal against this decision.

The Appeals Procedure

- 6.9. Should the employee wish to appeal, they must exercise the right of appeal in writing to the Assessor & ERO no later than 10 working days from the decision being confirmed to them in writing.
- 6.10. The Assessor & ERO will chair the appeal hearing, the outcome of which will be final.
- 6.11. The appeal should take place within 28 days of the employee's appeal submission.
- 6.12. Should the appeal be upheld, HR Connect should be informed of the outcome, to ensure Payroll are notified and records updated.
- 6.13. If the career break is refused, either after an appeal or not, an employee can make another request for a career break 12 months after the original application. Further applications will be subject to the same application and appeal procedures.

7. Contact during Career Break

- 7.1. Prior to the commencement of a career break the employee is obliged to provide their line manager with appropriate contact details e.g. telephone number and email. The arrangements for keeping in touch should be discussed and agreed so that both parties have a clear understanding of nature and frequency of contact. This is essential to ensure that employees are kept up to date with changes and business developments within the workplace, to help maintain an employee's confidence, skills and knowledge and to ease the return to work process.
- 7.2. The information an employee needs while on a career break will vary according to the size of the service, the type and level of job and the length of the career break. It is therefore essential to strike a balance between too much and too little information. This should be discussed and agreed with the employee.
- 7.3. Should there be any service redesign while an employee is on a career break, the employee will be kept informed and treated no less favourably than their colleagues. Any discussions/procedures relating to redeployment/redundancy will take place in the same way as if the employee were not on a career break.
- 7.4. It may be appropriate for an employee to attend training courses aimed at updating their skills in response to changes and developments in work and to maintain knowledge and skills in their work area during the career break. If this is not possible, line managers should be vigilant that employees may

require training immediately before or on returning to work from the career break.

- 7.5. If requested by the employee, the line manager can advise an employee on a career break of vacancies and, in the later stages of a career break, any acting up arrangements or development opportunities. This contact is considered as informal contact and does not constitute a work commitment.
- 7.6. For the purposes of preparation for a return to work, it shall be open for the line manager and employee to agree a more formal engagement such as training / induction. In this circumstance this engagement would be paid or subject to time off in lieu on return to work.

8. Returning to Work

- 8.1. Within the terms of the career break the employee will be required to contact their line manager to confirm their return date 3 months prior to the agreed return date.
- 8.2. It is acknowledged that individual's circumstances can change during a career break and there may be a requirement for some flexibility to support extensions or early return.
- 8.3. Should an employee wish to extend their career break or return early, this request must be made in writing and a minimum of 3 months notice should be given. The Joint Board is not obliged to grant the extension or contraction but should consider the merits of the application in line with the exigencies of the service. In these circumstances the impact on the cover arrangements must also be considered, which may also include contractual or employment rights.
- 8.4. Employees on a career break who wish to resign from their post must give as much notice as possible, and contractual notice as a minimum.
- 8.5. As previously highlighted, employees may require training immediately before returning to work from the career break. Employees should arrange to attend a meeting with their line manager in advance of their return to work to discuss the post they are returning to and to agree any appropriate programme of training.

9. Conditions of Service while on Career Break

- 9.1. A career break is a period of leave without pay and will not count towards continuous service. Pay and benefits will be suspended during the period of the career break and resume on the employee's return to work. Employees will not be entitled to any incremental progression for the duration of the break.

- 9.2. On return from a career break the separate periods of employment (i.e. before the career break and after the career break) will be treated as reckonable for statutory and contractual purposes. While career breaks do not count towards service, neither do they break it.

Leave/Statutory Entitlement

- 9.3. During the career break employees will not accrue any annual leave or be entitled to statutory payments such as occupational sick pay, maternity, paternity or adoption pay from the Joint Board.
- 9.4. The entitlement to annual leave during the leave years in which the career break commences and ends will be calculated pro rata to the part year period of service. In normal circumstances any outstanding annual leave should be taken prior to the start of the career break.

National Insurance Implications

- 9.5. Employees considering a career break must be aware of the implications in respect of National Insurance Benefits. It is therefore the responsibility of employees to consult with the local Department of Work and Pensions office about potential implications based on their individual circumstances at the time of applying and during the career break.

Pension Policy

- 9.6. Employees are also required to consider the implications regarding pension. Employees who are members of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) will continue to pay their pension contributions for the first 30 days of unpaid leave, but otherwise contributions to the occupational pension policy will cease while an employee is on a career break and the period will not count as pensionable service unless the employee decides (and is eligible) to buy back lost pensionable service. During the career break, no employer contributions will be payable by the Joint Board.
- 9.7. On return to work an employee may arrange to buy back the lost pensionable service using the Additional Pension Contributions provisions. A request to do so must be submitted in writing to the Payroll section of WDC within 30 days of return from career break, after which an S4 form will be completed for submission to Strathclyde Pension Fund. If buy back is permitted, the Joint Board is also required to pay the employers contribution of 2/3rds for the career break period.
- 9.8. While contributions cease during the career break period, an employee will remain an active member of the LGPS and, as such, will still be eligible for death in service benefits. In the event of death during a career break the lump sum payment will be paid to the employee's estate.

Salary Sacrifice Employee Benefits Policy

- 9.9. Where an employee participates in a salary sacrifice policy then they must repay any outstanding balance before commencing their career break.
Membership or Registrations

- 9.10. Employees who are members of the RICS or other accredited organisations related to their job are responsible for maintaining their membership or registration, as appropriate, during the period of their career break and must ensure that it is in place for their return to work. Failure to maintain registration could impact on return date.

Allowances

- 9.11. Allowances such as first aid etc. will not be payable during the period of a career break.

10. Monitoring and Measuring Success

- 10.1 The Joint Board will monitor applications for, and use of, career breaks with a view to ensuring the fair and consistent application of this.

11. Review of Policy

- 11.1. This policy will be updated to incorporate any relevant change to legislation or best practice as required.

CAREER BREAK REQUEST FORM



*Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute
Valuation Joint Board*

Section 1: To be completed by Applicant

Name of Applicant:

Current Post:

Service / Team:

Reason for Career Break:

Proposed Start Date of Career Break:

Proposed End Date of Career Break:

Have you been granted a career break before? YES/NO

If yes, please provide details with dates.

I confirm that I have at least 2 years' continuous employment with DABVJB. ☐

I have read and understood the Career Break Scheme. ☐

Signature of Applicant:

Date:

(request must be submitted and agreed at least 3 months before proposed start date)

Section 2: To be completed by Line Manager

Comments from Manager on their support of the career break and any operational impact or concern associated with this request:

I have read and understood the Career Break Scheme and my management obligations. ☐

Recommendation - Approve ☐ Decline ☐

Comments:

Signature of Manager:

Date:

Section 3: To be completed by Depute Assessor & ERO

Approved ☐

Declined ☐

Comments:

Signature of Depute:

Date of Decision:

DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD

Report by Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer

Valuation Joint Board – 19 June 2020

Subject: Salary of post of Depute Assessor & ERO

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To advise the Joint Board on the outcome of investigations into the salary applicable to the post of Depute Assessor & ERO and to provide options for consideration.
- 1.2 To seek Joint Board agreement on the preferred option for the salary grade of the post of Depute Assessor & ERO.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 In November 2009, the Joint Board set the Depute Assessor & ERO's salary grade at a fixed 80% of the Assessor's salary.
- 2.2 The salaries of staff within the employment of the Joint Board are reviewed annually in accordance with the national agreements of the Scottish Joint Council for Local Government Employees.
- 2.3 In March 2019, a 3-year pay agreement was reached by the Scottish Joint Council for Local Government Employees which resulted in an anomalous outcome for the salary of the Depute Assessor & ERO for the year 2018/19.
- 2.4 In June 2019 the Board agreed to address this anomaly by approving an increase in the Depute Assessor & ERO's salary in line with the above SJC agreement. This resulted in the 80% relationship with the Assessor's salary being broken.
- 2.5 At that meeting the Joint Board also agreed that the Assessor & ERO should liaise with West Dunbartonshire Council's Human Resources section to check whether it may be feasible for the Assessor & ERO and Depute Assessor & ERO posts to be aligned with existing pay scales and, if so, bring a report to a future meeting of the Joint Board outlining a proposal in this regard.

3.0 Issue

- 3.1 It was confirmed following the Board Meeting that the Assessor & ERO's salary is aligned with the existing pay scales, being at fixed point 42 on the nationally agreed scale.
- 3.2 The Depute Assessor & ERO's salary at 1 April 2020 is £84,353.
- 3.3 The closest grades in the current Chief Official national pay grade tables are spinal column point (scp) 31 which has a current salary of £83,515 and scp 32 which has a salary level of £85,511.
- 3.4 Moving the Depute Assessor & ERO's salary onto scp 31 would result in detriment to the current situation and is not recommended.

4.0 Options

- 4.1 In light of the above, Members have two realistic options:

Option 1

- 4.2 Permanently move the post of Depute Assessor & ERO onto scp 32 (£85,511) with effect from 1 April 2020, at a cost to the Joint Board in the current year of ~£1,500 (£1,158 salary plus on costs of circa 30%). This would result in the Depute's salary equating to 82.6% of the Assessor & ERO's pay grade.

Option 2

- 4.3 The salary of the Depute Assessor & ERO continues to be reviewed annually in line with the percentage increases included in agreements of Scottish Joint Council for Local Government Employees.
- 4.4 That the 80% relationship to the Assessor & ERO's salary be reinstated, or a fixed scp applied, at any future new appointment to the post of Depute Assessor & ERO.

5.0 Recommendations

- 5.1 Members are asked to indicate their preferred option for the salary grade of the Depute Assessor & ERO.

Person to contact:

David Thomson (Assessor and ERO)

Tel: 0141 562 1260

E-mail: david.thomson@dab-vjb.gov.uk

DUNBARTONSHIRE and ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD

Report by Treasurer

Valuation Joint Board - 19 June 2020

Subject: Draft Annual Accounts for Year Ending 31 March 2020.

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 2020.

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.

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, the Coronavirus Act 2020 allows for annual account submission, public inspection period and audit dates to be varied in agreement with the external auditors, however the original, normal, timetables will be followed at this time. Should this change due to unforeseen delays this will be advised to the Board.

- 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 (£54,703) or £100,000 whichever is higher.

3. Main Issues

- 3.1** The draft Annual Report and Final Accounts for year ended 31 March 2020 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** The Annual Governance Statement is included on pages 26 to 29. 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.

3.4 Members' attention is drawn to the Statement of Responsibilities on pages 23 and 24.

3.5 The Management Commentary summarises the financial position of the Board. The Board's 2019/20 budget was constructed to break even using £0.162m of balances. However the Board completed the year with a further contribution to the funds brought forward of £0.032m and did not need to access reserves. This contribution, together with the unused planned use of £0.162m, results in an overall underspend against budget in-year of £0.194m. The main variances are shown in the table below:

Spend Area	Variance £000	Comments
Employee	86	This underspend is mainly due to non-filling of vacancies.
Supplies & Services	39	This underspend is across a number of headings (such as machine lease, computer licences, telephones, printing & stationery).
Income	42	During the financial year the Board received additional grant income from the Cabinet Office to cover the costs of IER. Also income from Fees & Charges was higher than anticipated.

3.6 As at 31 March 2020, the Board held usable reserves as noted below:

	£000
Opening Balance at 1 April 2019	552
Revenue Gains/(Losses) on the fund	32
Closing Balance at 31 March 2020	584
Earmarked Balances:	
2020/21 Budget	(153)
ICT Consultancy (Civil Penalties)	(5)
Total Earmarked Balance	(158)
Total General Reserves (incl. £0.100m prudential reserve)	426

3.7 The ongoing coronavirus situation is one which will have impacts at all levels on both the Joint Board and the wider world. As well as having a direct effect on the immediate delivery of the Board's statutory functions, the outbreak is likely to have both direct and indirect effects in medium and long term. All future projections contained within the 2019/20 Draft Annual Accounts are based on current timetables and assumptions but these could be affected as the situation progresses and the effects become clearer. The Board, will at the appropriate time, carry out a post-incident review and highlight any lessons learned.

3.8 The current coronavirus situation has resulted in significant disruption for public bodies and their capacity for financial reporting, and to auditors of the public

sector. Due to this, the Auditor General for Scotland and the Accounts Commission for Scotland intend to extend the current audit appointments by one year.

- 3.9** The Joint Board recognises the financial climate facing public services and has continued to seek efficiencies when possible. The requisition by the Board for 2019/20 remained at 2018/19 level. The board received £0.125m from constituent authorities for implementation of the Barclay Review. Given the forecast reduction in funding for local government into the future it is anticipated that levels of funding may be challenging going forward into 2021/22 and beyond and management continues to plan for this to ensure ongoing service delivery reflecting the increasing workload to the Board.
- 3.10** The Finance Strategy Group held their second meeting on 6 December 2019 and discussed the draft 2020/21 budget, requisitions and Barclay Review Implementation. Due to the General Election in December 2019 and no finance settlement to Local Authorities from the Scottish Government, Finance Officers agreed that a standstill position on the level of core requisition provided for 2020/21. Finance Officers also agreed to increase their level of contributions for the Barclay Review Implementation from £0.124m in 2019/20 to £0.193m for 2020/21.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

- 4.1** The finances of the Board have been closely managed during 2019/20 allowing a better financial position to be achieved than had been planned. This will assist, along with ongoing consideration of further efficiencies, to allow a planned approach to any future funding restrictions on the Board.
- 4.2** Members are requested to note:
- (i) the contents of the report and the financial position of the Board as at 31 March 2020;
 - (ii) the Draft Management Commentary and Financial Statements for the year to 31 March 2020; and
 - (iii) the audited accounts will be reported to a future meeting for approval.



Stephen West
Treasurer

Date: 19 June 2020

Person(s) to Contact: Joanne Thomson, Accountant
West Dunbartonshire Council
Telephone (01389) 737875

Appendix: Draft Annual Accounts for year ended 31 March 2020

**DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2020**



*Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute
Valuation Joint Board*

DRAFT

ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2020

DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2020

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**DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2020**

JOINT BOARD MEMBERS AND OFFICIALS AS AT 31 MARCH 2020

ARGYLL & BUTE COUNCIL

Councillor Richard Trail (Convenor)
Councillor Graham Archibald Hardie
Councillor Alastair Redman
Councillor Iain Paterson
Councillor Donald MacMillan, BEM

EAST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Councillor Vaughan Moody (Vice Convenor)
Councillor John Jamieson
Councillor Jim Gibbons
Councillor Sandra Thornton
Councillor Stewart MacDonald
Councillor Denis Johnston

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Councillor John Millar
Councillor Jonathan McColl
Councillor Jim Brown
Councillor Marie McNair
Bailie Denis Agnew

OFFICIALS

David Thomson (Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer)
Robert Nicol (Depute Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer)
Peter Hesselseth (Clerk)
Stephen West (Treasurer)

**DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2020**

MANAGEMENT COMMENTARY

GENERAL SERVICE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute Valuation Joint 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 and in accordance with our Equalities requirements;
- 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; and
- 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 2020

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report comprises the Joint Board's Management Commentary and Annual Accounts in relation to the 2019/20 financial year.

The main purpose of this Management Commentary is to inform all users of the accounts and to help them assess how the Joint Board perform their duty to promote the success of the Valuation Joint 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").

For much of the financial year the main focus of our Non-Domestic Rating efforts was the disposal of 2017 Revaluation appeals, a process which was carried out in parallel with general maintenance of the Valuation Roll.

The Barclay Review, which reported in 2018, culminated in the publication of the Non-Domestic Rates (Scotland) Bill in March 2019. The Bill was amended through its various stages in the Scottish Parliament and the resultant Non-Domestic Rates (Scotland) Act received assent on 11 March 2020. The Act will bring about substantial change in the Non-Domestic Rating (NDR) system, more detail of which is provided below.

Maintenance of the Council Tax List is relatively stable but still requires application of significant resource.

The annual Electoral Register was published on 11 November 2019, this being accelerated from the normal 1 December publication date because of the 'snap' UK Parliamentary General Election. An unexpected European Parliamentary election in May of 2019 merely added to the workload in a year when no elections had been planned or budgeted for.

Both the UK and the Scottish Parliaments legislated for reform of the annual electoral canvass to take effect in 2020 and the franchise for Scottish Parliamentary and Local Government elections (including voting rights for some prisoners) will be extended during 2020.

The Management Team continues to be the main forum for decision making within the organisation. It met regularly throughout 2019/20 to manage statutory functions and operations, and develop, implement and monitor policies and strategies. Additionally, the Joint Board established a Funding Working Group that met to address the ongoing budget gap.

As a consequence of the worldwide Coronavirus /COVID-19 outbreak, and following the guidance issued by the First Minister, our offices were closed in mid-March. A number of employees have the capability to work from home and, within the constraints of the restrictions, reduced services have been maintained. As well as having a direct effect on the immediate delivery of our statutory functions, the outbreak is likely to have both direct and indirect effects in medium and long term. All future projections contained within this Commentary are based on current timetables and assumptions but these could be affected as the situation progresses and the effects become clearer.

DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2020

2.0 GENERAL PROGRESS IN RELATION TO STATUTORY FUNCTIONS

2.1 NON-DOMESTIC RATING

Aims

- To carry out a general revaluation, currently every 5 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; and
- To deal with appeals by discussion with ratepayers or their agents, or by hearing of appeals before the appropriate valuation appeal bodies.

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 is 31 December 2020.

During the 2019/20, 1,012 appeals were disposed of taking the cumulative disposals to 3,147. In total 958 (30%) have resulted in a rateable value adjustment and 2,189 (70%) have resulted in no adjustment.

Maintenance of the Valuation Roll

The Valuation Roll was updated to take account of additions, alterations and deletions. 928 amendments were made during the year. The reduction in RV during the year arises primarily from appeal adjustments.

Total No of entries @ 1st April 2019	14,972
Total Rateable Value @ 1st April 2019	£368.7million
Total Number of entries @ 31st March 2020	15,141
Total Rateable Value @ 31st March 2020	£367.7million

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 2019/20:

Period	Actual 2018/19	Target 2019/20	Actual 2019/20				Scotland 2018/19*
			Argyll & Bute	West D'shire	East D'shire	VJB Area	
0-3 months	85%	86%	90%	81%	86%	88%	67%
3-6 months	10%	9%	6%	9%	7%	7%	16%
>6 months	5%	5%	4%	10%	7%	5%	17%

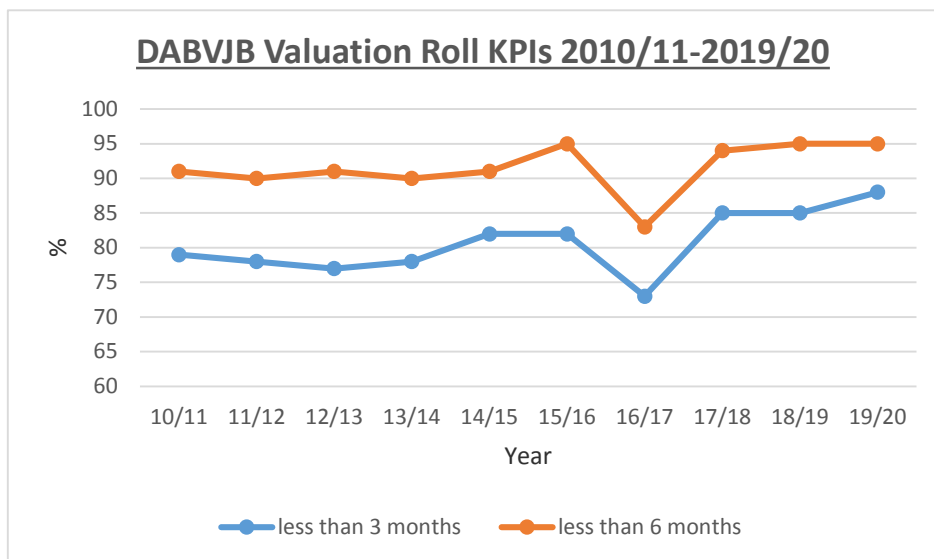
*Collation of 2019/20 all-Scotland figures delayed by COVID-19 interruptions

**DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2020**

2.0 GENERAL PROGRESS IN RELATION TO STATUTORY FUNCTIONS

2.1 NON-DOMESTIC RATING (Cont'd)

Thus our target was marginally surpassed at 'less than 3 months' and met at 'less than 6 months'. Our performance over the period since 20010/11 is shown below and this illustrates that our performance in 2019/20 was as high as it has ever been.



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. 2019/20 saw some progress in relation to disposal of these and, at 31 March 2020, 7 appeals remain outstanding from the 2005 cycle (9 at March 2019) and 29 appeals from the 2010 cycle (48 at March 2019).

With the date for disposal of 2017 Revaluation appeals approaching, it is expected that a significant number of applications for referrals to Lands Tribunal will be received during 2020.

2017 Running Roll Appeals

During the year 2,510 new running roll appeals (i.e. not related to the Revaluation) were received, compared to 192 in 2019/20. During the year, 161 were disposed of leaving 2,815 outstanding.

In March, 2,418 appeals (included in the above) were received, the majority of which claim that the COVID-19 outbreak constituted a material change of circumstances. The disposal dates for these appeals are in March 2021 and dealing with these appeals constitutes a very significant additional and unexpected burden on the service.

DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2020

2.1 NON-DOMESTIC RATING (Cont'd)

Non-Domestic Rating Reform

The main changes affecting the Assessor in the Non-Domestic Rates (Scotland) Act are:-

- (a) Revaluations are to be effective every 3 years from 2022;
- (b) The Valuation Roll will be required to mark new and improved properties to assist in the application of the "Business Growth Accelerator";
- (c) Certain parts of public parks, and properties located in public parks will be entered into the valuation roll for the first time;
- (d) The current appeals system will be replaced by a 2-stage proposals and appeals process;
- (e) New civil penalties are to be introduced for non-provision of information;
- (f) Recipients of Civil Penalty notices will have the right to appeal the application of a penalty; and
- (g) Assessors will be required to provide ratepayers with certain information on how their Rateable Values have been arrived at.

A tranche of secondary legislation, including a requirement for the Assessor to check that Self-Catering Units are actually let for 70 days in any year, will be required to support the Act. Detail in relation to secondary legislation and policy intention has, however, been slow to come forward, thus impacting on the ability to plan for the changes. Notwithstanding the above, progress has been made in respect of recruitment and ICT system development.

The Scottish Government has supported the implementation of NDR reform through the provision of funding via the constituent councils. For 2019/20, £124,000 was provided to offset additional costs of reform, which were incurred across a number of budget lines, and £197,000 has been provided for 2020/21.

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 valuation appeal courts; and
- To keep property records up to date to take account of alterations.

Maintenance of Valuation List

The year to 31 March 2020 saw 1,061 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 2019	145,266
Total Number of entries @ 31st March 2020	145,569

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

**DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2020**

2.2 COUNCIL TAX (Cont'd)

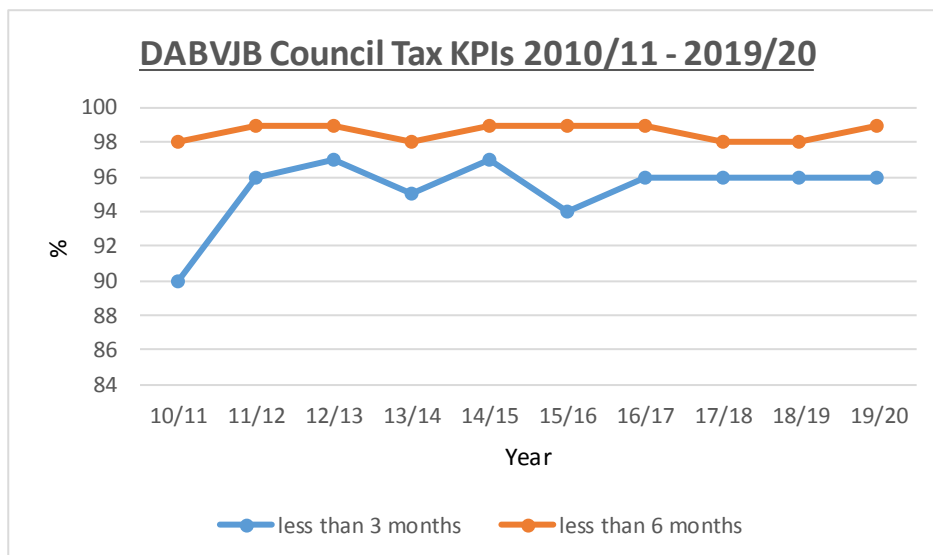
Maintenance of Valuation List (Cont'd)

Notice in respect of each new entry is issued. The table (below) sets out the target and actual performance information for 2019/20 compared with the actual figures for 2018/19 and shows that our targets were achieved or surpassed.

Period	Actual 2018/19	Target 2019/20	Actual 2019/20				Scotland 2018/19*
			Argyll & Bute	West D'shire	East D'shire	Whole VJB Area	
0-3 months	96%	96%	96%	99%	94%	96%	92%
3-6 months	2%	2%	2%	1%	6%	3%	5%
>6 months	2%	2%	2%	0%	0%	1%	3%

*Collation of 2019/20 all-Scotland figures delayed by COVID-19 interruptions

The pattern of performance over a longer period is shown below.



Proposals and Appeals

During the year, 327 (327 in 2018/19) new proposals to change property Bands were received and 302 (300 in 2018/19) were disposed of, leaving 217 outstanding at the end of the year.

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, 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 Joint Board area.

DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2020

2.3 ELECTORAL REGISTRATION (Cont'd)

Electoral Registration and Publication of the Register

Individual Electoral Registration (IER), which was introduced in 2014, continued to result in additional costs over the previous regime. To support this cost we received a grant of £62,721 from the Cabinet Office and, subsequently, a further £14,659 following a 'Justification Led Bid' application process. The 2019/20 budget estimates had forecast grant income of £40,000.

Our annual canvass commenced on 1 July with the issue of Household Enquiry Forms (HEFs). Changes notified on returned HEFs are used to initiate the issue of an Invitation to Register (ITR) or other relevant documentation. There is a duty on EROS to follow-up on non-returned HEFs resulting in the following numbers being issued.

Council Area	Initial issue	1st Reminder	2nd Reminder	%age Return
Argyll & Bute	48,664	17,503	11,436	85%
East Dunbartonshire	47,068	17,894	11,281	85%
West Dunbartonshire	45,301	22,372	16,480	72%
VJB Total	141,033	57,769	39,197	81%

The total response rate of 81% is similar to previous canvass returns despite the canvass being brought to a halt early to allow for the UK Parliamentary election.

Year	Canvass return
2019	81%
2018	82%
2017	80%
2016	81%
2015	75%

The persistently low return rates for West Dunbartonshire, compared to the other two council areas, are a source of ongoing concern.

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

Method of Response	2018 Canvass		2019 Canvass	
	No of Returns	% age return	No of Returns	% age return
Post	54,347	38.66%	46,848	33.22%
Electronic (web/phone/SMS)	45,432	32.32%	52,525	37.24%
Phone/Email contact	2,935	2.09%	2,605	1.85%
Door-to-door canvass	6,075	4.32%	5,829	4.13%
Verified as second home/long term empty	5,231	3.72%	5,070	3.59%
Returned/Empty/ Other	1,308	0.93%	1,317	0.93%
Total	115,328	82.04%	114,194	80.96%

Notably, the use of electronic returns (web/phone/SMS) outstripped postal returns for the first time.

**DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2020**

2.3 ELECTORAL REGISTRATION (Cont'd)

Electoral Registration and Publication of the Register (Cont'd)

During the canvass period there were 10,794 electors added to the registers for the Joint Board area and 11,885 deletions. This resulted in a total electorate of 219,861 at publication on 11 November split as shown over:

Local Authority	Electorate
Argyll & Bute	67,703
East Dunbartonshire	84,925
West Dunbartonshire	67,233

The total electorate figure is marginally up on the total at publication in December 2018, though the year-to-year total electorate is quite varied (below).

Year	No of Electors
2019	219,861
2018	219,637
2017	222,507
2016	221,078
2015	218,668
2014	223,594

Absent Voters

Generally, the trend in Absent Voter numbers since IER was introduced has been downward and this continued in 2019.

Year	No of Absent Voters
2019	33,916
2018	34,110
2017	35,918
2016	37,764
December 2015	38,376
February 2015	34,525

Rolling Registration

Rolling Registration is the process of dealing with changes which take place outwith the canvass period. During 2019/20 there were 9,451 additions to the register and 6,759 deletions made through the rolling registration process.

DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD

DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2020

2.3 ELECTORAL REGISTRATION (Cont'd)

Electoral Performance

Based on their own assessment of risk, the Electoral Commission (EC) did not request evidence of compliance with their published performance standards during 2019/20. A meeting did, however, take place with the Electoral Commission in relation to performance and no adverse report has resulted.

The EC are currently consulting on a new performance regime that will take account of the reformed canvass. We will retain an awareness of the emerging requirements and react as appropriate.

Originally, there were no electoral events scheduled to take place during 2019/20 and no budget provision had been made for such events, but the extension to the UK's membership of the European Union resulted in a European Parliamentary Election being held in May, which was planned and implemented at short notice. To accommodate the timetable for the 'snap' UK Parliamentary (UKPGE) election in December, the annual canvass was terminated and the revised Electoral Register was published early. There was a very significant level of public engagement in the registration process with almost 12,000 applications to be added to the register being received in the period leading up to the last date for registrations.

These elections reiterated just how much the registration process is now being driven by electoral events and the accompanying social media activity arising from them. Both events required the application of overtime for staff which was not originally budgeted for and really tested the capability of our current staffing levels and other resources. The Electoral Commission subsequently acknowledged that "the UK Government needs to identify improvements to....the funding model for elections, to help EROs effectively manage large numbers of registration applications...ahead of major electoral events".

Canvass Reform

The Representation of the People (Annual Canvass) (Amendment) Regulations 2019 make provision for canvass reforms as they apply to the UK Parliamentary Registers. The Representation of the People (Annual Canvass) (Miscellaneous Amendments) (Scotland) Regulations 2020 made similar provision for the Scottish Parliamentary and Local Government register.

The new canvass process will commence with registers being matched to government information sources and a number of canvass options will be available to EROs depending on the match/non-match status of each household. The aim is to reduce the overall administration of the canvass and to allow EROs to focus resources on areas where they are most required.

Planning is well under way and it is expected that the 2020 canvass will commence on Monday 3 August following rounds of national and local data matching. Electoral Management System changes are being driven by central government and training in the new processes will be provided to all relevant employees.

Franchise Extension

The Scottish Elections (Franchise and Representation) Act received assent on 1 April 2020 and provides for the extension of the franchise for Scottish Parliamentary and Local Government elections to include certain Prisoners and non-national residents of Scotland. Again plans are being made and systems being updated to accommodate these changes.

**DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
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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 Joint Board's IT Strategy and the recommendations from West Dunbartonshire Council's ICT Service.

A main focus for our ICT staff has been the redevelopment of NDR systems to accommodate the forthcoming reforms (see above) and good progress has been made.

Our Electoral Management System was upgraded several times throughout the year to provide functionality improvements and ensure continued compliance with requirements.

We have continued to participate in the Scottish Assessors' web portal's Project Management Committee, Project Team and Working Group to enhance the site (www.saa.gov.uk).

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 2018/19 Public Performance Report was published during 2019/20 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 2019/20 which are detailed in the Annual Governance Statement on pages 25 to 29.

Audit

During the year Internal Audit carried out a review of our Risk Management regime. The Audit Report concluded that the risk management systems examined are working well and highlighted several areas of good practice. The report also highlighted the need to record our management of emerging risks relating to the COVID-19 outbreak.

The finances of the Joint Board for 2018/19 were audited by Audit Scotland and the report concluded that the financial statements of the Joint Board were properly prepared and give a true and fair view. Expenditure and income were presented in accordance with applicable enactments and guidance. An unqualified independent auditor's report was issued.

An Audit Plan was agreed which identified the main areas where auditors will direct scrutiny for the audit of 2019/20, as follows:

- Ensure that controls are in place to ensure that management cannot override financial controls;
- Ensure that systems are in place to prevent and detect fraud in relation to expenditure;
- Investigate and evaluate the risk of material misstatement in the financial statements;
- Review the estimation and judgement in the measurement and valuation of the Joint Board's pension liability;

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3.2 BEST VALUE (Cont'd)

Audit (Cont'd)

- Review the financial sustainability of the Joint Board;
- Evaluate the risk that the financial position of the Joint Board is not sustainable in the longer term, and
- Consider the risk that the DABVJB will be unable to meet the increased operational needs arising from the Non-Domestic Rates (Scotland) Act, due to insufficient resources.

Customer Satisfaction

Users of the Joint Board's services are randomly sampled and issued with questionnaires to seek their perception of the service provided to them. A summary of the results for the year is provided below.

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Was the person with whom you communicated professional, courteous and helpful?	97%	97%	99%	94%	98%
Was the matter brought to a satisfactory conclusion immediately?	62%	68%	62%	60%	61%
Was the matter brought to a satisfactory conclusion?	96%	97%	97%	93%	97%
Are you satisfied with the quality of the information or advice given to you?	94%	97%	96%	93%	96%

No Customer Satisfaction forms were requested in alternative languages, Braille or other formats. Sample sizes within the various equalities groups were too small to draw firm conclusions but 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 Joint Board operates a Complaints Procedure which is in line with the Public Sector Ombudsman's Model Complaints Handling Procedure.

There were 14 Complaints received during 2019/20, compared to 18 in 2018/19 and 15 in 2017/18, with 13 relating to Electoral Registration and one to Council Tax. Most complaints were resolved at the Frontline Resolution stage with 3 being escalated to the Investigation stage. No complaints were referred to the Ombudsman.

The Scottish Public Sector Ombudsman has recently revised the Model Complaint's Handling Procedure and, looking to the coming year, the format and content of this will be reviewed. A revised procedure will be prepared for implementation in the Joint Board as required by April 2021.

DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
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3.2 BEST VALUE (Cont'd)

Financial Performance

General

In June 2019, the Joint Board established a Funding Working Group to address the ongoing budget gap and consider the additional pressures being introduced by NDR Reform. The Group met twice during the year and provided a valuable contribution to the overall financial governance of the Board. The Group were able to recommend standstill contributions from the Councils at an early stage of the budget preparation process.

Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement

This account covers the day-to-day operational expenditure of the Joint Board and is shown on page 31 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 £0.466m. However this takes account of adjustments between the accounting and funding basis of (£0.498m) resulting in the in-year surplus of £0.032m as shown in the table on page 44.

	Comprehensive Income & Expenditure Statement £000	Statutory Adjustments £000	Actual £000	Budget £000	Variance £000
Employee Costs	2,617	(384)	2,233	2,319	86
Property Costs	111	0	111	122	11
Transport Costs	44	0	44	45	1
Supplies & Services	250	0	250	289	39
Payments to Other Bodies	30	0	30	45	15
Support Services	123	0	123	123	0
Depreciation	14	(14)	0	0	0
Other Costs: (Pensions)	129	(129)	0	0	0
Total Expenditure	3,318	(527)	2,791	2,943	152
Requisition Income	(2,735)	0	(2,735)	(2,736)	(1)
Capital Income	(29)	29	0	0	0
Grant Income	(77)	0	(77)	(40)	37
Rental Income	(2)	0	(2)	(2)	0
Sales, Fees & Charges	(9)	0	(9)	(3)	6
Total Income	(2,852)	29	(2,823)	(2,781)	42
(Surplus)/Deficit for the year	466	(498)	(32)	162	194

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3.2 BEST VALUE (Cont'd)

Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (Cont'd)

The main budget variances are shown below:

Spend Area	Variance £000	Comments
Employee	86	This underspend is mainly due to non-filling of vacancies.
Supplies & Services	39	This underspend is across a number of headings (such as machine lease, computer licences, telephones, printing & stationery).
Payments to Other Bodies	15	This underspend is mainly due to expenditure relating to the Valuation Appeals Committee being lower than anticipated.
Income	42	During the financial year the Board received additional grant income from the Cabinet Office to cover the costs of IER. Also income from Fees & Charges was higher than anticipated.

Balance Sheet

Assets Valuations - Material valuation uncertainty due to Novel Coronavirus (COVID – 19)

The outbreak of the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19), declared by the World Health Organisation as a “Global Pandemic” on the 11th March 2020, has impacted global financial markets. Travel restrictions have been implemented by many countries. Market activity is being impacted in many sectors. As at the valuation date, the Board’s professional valuers considered that less weight could be attached to previous market evidence for comparison purposes, to inform opinions of value. Indeed, the current response to COVID-19 means that the valuers are faced with an unprecedented set of circumstances on which to base a judgement. The valuations are therefore reported as being subject to ‘material valuation uncertainty’ as set out in VPS 3 and VPGA 10 of the RICS Valuation – Global Standards. Consequently, less certainty – and a higher degree of caution – should be attached to the valuation than would normally be the case.

For the avoidance of doubt, the inclusion of the ‘material valuation uncertainty’ declaration above does not mean that the valuation cannot be relied upon. Rather, the declaration has been included to ensure transparency of the fact that – in the current extraordinary circumstances – less certainty can be attached to the valuation than would otherwise be the case. The material uncertainty clause is to serve as a precaution and does not invalidate the valuation.

The Board’s assets were last formally valued as at 31 March 2017 and are due for formal revaluation as at 31 March 2022 (following the policy to revalue within a minimum of every 5 years). The decision was taken to leave the valuations unchanged in 2020 following consideration of the inputs and the information that was available as at 31 March 2020. The valuers reviewed the information published by BCIS in terms of build cost information and noted that there had only been a nominal adjustment, less than 1%, between the information relied upon and that which was available on 31 March 2020 and concluded that this was not sufficient to merit amendment of the valuations provided.

DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2020

3.2 BEST VALUE (Cont'd)

Balance Sheet (Cont'd)

The balance sheet shown on page 34 features an assessed pension fund liability of £3.361m based on the valuation of the fund at 31 March 2020. This results in the Board's Balance Sheet showing a net liabilities position. Further information on the pension fund is provided in note 4 on pages 46 to 49 and the valuation states that assets held at the valuation date were sufficient to cover only 86% 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.

The pension scheme net liability has decreased by £1.856m as advised by the appointed actuaries, and this is mainly as a result of the movement in the discount rate. 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.

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 i.e. constituent authority requisition level (19/20 £54,703) or £100,000, 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 2020 the Board held total usable reserves of £0.622m (of which £0.038m relates to unapplied capital reserves) with the remaining balance comprising revenue reserves of £0.584m. A proportion of this is identified as an earmarked balance (£0.153m) to balance the 2020/21 budget and (£0.005m) for ICT Consultancy Fee -Civil Penalties. Once the earmarked balances are accounted for this leaves £0.426m of general reserves available for future use (including £100,000 prudential reserve above).

The Joint 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 2019/20 remained the same as 2018/19. The board also received £0.125m from constituent authorities for the implementation of the Barclay Review. Given the forecast reduction in funding for local government into the future it is anticipated that levels of funding may be challenging going forward into 2020/21 and beyond and management have commenced planning for this to ensure ongoing service delivery reflecting the increasing workload to the Board.

Provisions and Contingencies

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

Group Annual Accounts

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

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3.2 BEST VALUE (Cont'd)

Risk Management

Risk Registers and Action Plan are revised annually. Inclusions in the Board Risk Register during the year were:

- The potential for the Joint Board or its statutory officials to fail to meet their respective statutory duties. This risk increased in the coming year by the amount of legislative change referred to below, particularly where secondary or supporting legislation has been slow to come forward.
- 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 referred to in the risk above.
- Specific risks arise from the introduction of a 3-yearly NDR Revaluation cycle and a 2-stage appeals process.
- The dependency of the Joint Board on ICT for delivery of its statutory functions and service delivery.
- Planned changes to the Electoral Registration system including canvass reform and the introduction of voting rights for (some) prisoners and all residents of Scotland for some polls.
- There is a real, medium term, risk that the combined effect of NDR reform and the reduced availability of relevant training provision by Universities, will be to make it increasingly difficult to attract, train and retain enough professional staff to carry out our statutory duties.

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

Since the 2020 Risk Register was agreed by the Management Team, the effects of the COVID-19 outbreak have escalated and this had become the most immediate risk facing the Joint Board by the end of the financial year. As a result, the following risk has been added to the Board Risk Register:

- The pandemic COVID-19 viral outbreak and the government restrictions to combat its effects represent significant risks to the delivery of the Assessor and ERO's statutory functions, to Joint Board employees' health and to various aspects of our interactions with service users and stakeholders. It may also affect the Joint Board's oversight of the Assessor & ERO's functions.

A new COVID-19 Risk Register focussed on all the varying effects of the outbreak has been developed and actions have been identified.

3.3 EQUALITIES

The Joint Board's stated Equality 'Outcomes' are as follows:

- We are seen as an inclusive equal opportunities employer where all staff feel valued and respected; and
- 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.

An Equality Report was published in April 2019 that contains updates on our progress in achieving these Outcomes, Workforce Monitoring and our Pay Gap. The Report can be viewed in full at <https://www.saa.gov.uk/dab-vjb/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2019/08/DAB-VJB-Public-Sector-Equality-Duty-April-2019.pdf>.

DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2020

3.4 STAFFING MATTERS

Development and Training

Currently, employees review their training needs with their line manager on an annual basis and the resultant Training and Development Plan informs the provision of training throughout the year. In line with an action from a Governance self-assessment, the current process was revised during 2019/20 to include elements of performance management. A revised Policy is currently subject to consultation with the relevant trades union and it is expected that it will be presented to the Joint Board for approval during 2020/21.

In addition to staff's Core Training programme, training across a range of subjects was provided in 2019/20 through externally sourced courses, in-house training events and e-learning facilities.

The last year proved to be one of significant turnaround in employees. Between 31 March 2019 and 31 March 2020, 5 members of staff retired and 3 resigned from the Joint Board. In the same period, 3 employees were recruited. When taken with various other changes to working patterns, the Full Time Equivalent workforce fell from 51.02 to 47.25. This reduction in staffing forms part of our efforts to address the budget gap but it is clear from the pressures felt in preparing for elections, in dealing with NDR appeals and at key points throughout the year, that staffing levels have been reduced a point where service delivery is notably affected. A Workforce Plan has been approved and recruitment is planned for 2020/21, partly supported by the NDR Reform funding. The Management Team will continue to use performance information to keep the situation under review.

Personnel Policies

During the year, the Board approved a number of personnel and related policies largely in line with the approach in West Dunbartonshire Council.

3.5 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

The Joint Board's 'Guide to Information' was updated and maintained as required with relevant documents available from <https://www.saa.gov.uk/dab-vjb/download/2239/>

A 'business as usual' approach has been taken to the majority of requests for information received, but in the calendar year to December 2019, 15 requests which specifically referred to the Freedom of Information Act were received. This compares to 58 in 2018 and 21 requests in 2017.

Seven requests received related to Electoral Registration, three requests related to Non-Domestic Rating, and five related to Council Tax. Nine requests were answered in full and three in part. The information requested was not held for two requests and clarification of the request was not provided in one instance. All requests were answered within the statutory timescales.

3.6 RECORDS MANAGEMENT

In late January 2020, the Keeper invited the Joint Board to make a submission under the Progress Update Review process and that is under consideration.

DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD

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3.7 PARTNERSHIPS

The Valuation Joint 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/>.

Valuation Joint 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 2019/20, the Association was active as a consultative body as the NDR Reform Bill made its way through the Parliamentary Committee. A project manager has been established to lead on the role the SAA might take in successful delivery of NDR reform and the 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 of Scotland and by representation within the Association of Electoral Administrators. The Cabinet Office has also become an important stakeholder in respect of canvass reform and modernisation of Electoral Registration services.

The Valuation Joint 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 which was revised in early 2020. Thanks are due to all of the West Dunbartonshire Council officials who support the Joint Board.

3.8 CONCLUSION

2019/20 was seen as a year in which general maintenance of our services would proceed in parallel with a focus on planning for the NDR and Electoral Registration changes that are scheduled to take effect in subsequent years. Progress was made with disposal of Revaluation appeals and our maintenance obligations were met across all services. However, the lack of secondary NDR legislation and the additional workload caused by two late notice electoral events did impede our planning objectives.

Reducing staffing levels are, in the context of a persistent budget gap, a fact of life but it is clear that the reduction in staff numbers is affecting our capabilities.

The ongoing Corona virus situation is one which will have impacts at all levels on both the Joint Board and the wider world, now and in the future, and that will almost certainly result in the 'best laid schemes' being subject to constant review and revision.

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

Councillor Richard Trail
Convenor of the Board

Date: 19 June 2020

David Thomson
Assessor & Electrical Registration
Officer

Date: 19 June 2020

Stephen West
Treasurer

Date: 19 June 2020

**DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
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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 Audit Scotland. The other sections have also been reviewed by Audit Scotland 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 31/03/20	Year ended 31 March 2020		2018/19
		Salary, Fees & Allowances £000	Total Remuneration £000	Total Remuneration £000
David Thomson	Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer	101	101	99
Robert Nicol	Depute Assessor & ERO	84	84	79

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.

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REMUNERATION REPORT (Cont'd)

Remuneration of Employees receiving more than £50,000

The Board's employees receiving more than £50,000 remuneration for the year were paid the following amounts. 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 in the tables above.

Table 2: Remuneration

Bands £	Number of Employees	
	2018/2019	2019/2020
55,000 to 59,999	2	2
75,000 to 79,999	1	0
80,000 to 89,999	0	1
95,000 to 99,999	1	0
100,000 to 104,000	0	1
Total	4	4

Pension Benefits

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 60 but are reduced if taken earlier than Normal pension Age (State Pension Age). 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 2019/20 whole time pay	Contribution rate 2019/20
On earnings up to and including £21,800	5.50%
On earnings above £21,801 and up to £26,700	7.25%
On earnings above £26,701 and up to £36,600	8.25%
On earnings above £36,601 and up to £48,800	9.50%
On earnings above £48,801	12.00%

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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REMUNERATION REPORT (Cont'd)

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.

Pension Benefits of Senior Employees

Table 4: In-year contributions and accrued benefits

Name	For year to 31 March 2020			For year to 31 March 2019		
	In-year	Accrued pension		In-year	Accrued pension	
	Contribution	Pension	Lump Sum	contribution	Pension	Lump Sum
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
David Thomson	20	50	88	21	46	86
Robert Nicol	17	32	47	17	29	45

1. The LGPS is a career average pension scheme. This means that pension benefits from 1 April 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 60 but are reduced if taken earlier than Normal Pension Age (State Pension Age). Pension benefits accrued before 1 April 2015 are protected and are based on final pay on retiring.
2. The lump sum, which is automatically paid when the person retires for service up to 31 March 2009, is three times his or her annual pension and is tax-free. There is no automatic lump sum for service after 31 March 2009. Members may opt to give up (commute) pension for lump sum up to the limit set by the Finance Act 2004.
3. The value of the accrued benefits in the above tables has been calculated on the basis of the age at which the person will first become entitled to receive a full 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. The pension age for members of the LGPS is 65.
4. 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.
5. 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 2019/20 and 2018/19.

**DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
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REMUNERATION REPORT (Cont'd)

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 Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute Valuation Joint Board during the year to 31 March 2020 are shown in the table below.

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	
£225	
Total pay bill	
£2,215,784	
Percentage of Pay Bill Spent on Facility Time	
0.01%	
Paid TU Activities	
100%	

Councillor Richard Trail
Convenor of the Board
Date: 19 June 2020

David Thomson
Assessor and Electrical Registration Officer
Date: 19 June 2020

**DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
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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 Annual Accounts for signature.

I confirm that the Draft Annual Accounts were approved for signature by the Board at its meeting on 19 June 2020.

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

Councillor Richard Trail
Convenor of the Board
Date: 19 June 2020

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 Draft 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.

***DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2020***

STATEMENT OF RESPONSIBILITIES (Cont'd)

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 Board for the year ended 31 March 2020.

Stephen West
Treasurer
Date: 19 June 2020

DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD

DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2020

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

Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute Valuation Joint 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 Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute Valuation Joint 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 update 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 Joint Board, and on the recommendation of our external auditors, the Joint 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 Joint 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/>

**DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2020**

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT (Cont'd)

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.

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 Joint Board has a responsibility for ensuring the continuing effectiveness of its governance framework and its system of internal financial control. Shared Services Audit and Fraud Manager produces an annual audit plan based on a risk assessment of the Council's and Valuation Joint 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 Audit & Fraud Manager. The Joint Board's external auditors also attend. The Audit and Risk Manager 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 Audit Manager 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 Joint 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 2020;
- the assessment of risk completed during reviews of the strategic audit plan;
- reports issued by the Valuation Joint Board's External Auditors and other review bodies; and
- knowledge of the Valuation Joint Board's governance, risk management and performance monitoring arrangements.

**DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2020**

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT (Cont'd)

Review of Effectiveness (Cont'd)

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 Valuation Joint 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 Audit Manager stating that reasonable assurance can be placed upon the adequacy and effectiveness of the Joint Board's internal control system in the year to 31 March 2020.

COVID – 19

The significant incident in late March 2020 tested how well the risk management, governance and internal control framework is operating within the Board. It will be important for the Board, at the appropriate time, to carry out a post-incident review and highlight any lessons learned.

Annual Performance

Examples of developments which have led to significant improvement in arrangements for control, governance or risk management within the Joint Board during 2019/20 include:

- To improve compliance with best practice in relation to Data Protection and Records Management, the Joint Board's 'Data Information Asset Register' and 'Business Classification & Retention of Documents' were reviewed and updated.
- Induction and other training in financial, budgetary and procurement procedures was provided to the newly appointed Principal Administrative Officer to ensure that proper procedures, including Financial Regulations, are followed.
- An annual self-assessment against the CIPFA/Solace "Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework" was carried out and an Action Plan approved by the Management Team.
- The Joint Board's Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Scheme of Delegation were reviewed and updated to ensure alignment with current best practice, partner Council procedures and emerging procurement methods.
- The Joint Board's Service Level Agreement with West Dunbartonshire Council in respect of support services provided by the Council was reviewed and updated.
- A Joint Board Funding Working Group was convened to identify possible options to address the projected budget gaps. The group ensured a shared Member/officer focus on the delivery of efficiencies, options for future savings and service delivery and allowed each constituent Council to agree its contributions to the Board for 2020/21 early in the budget setting process.
- A Workforce Plan, which formalises and records the internal and external factors affecting the required employee numbers, skill sets and training, necessary to deliver current and future service objectives was developed and approved.

**DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2020**

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT (Cont'd)

Annual Performance (Cont'd)

- Several Personnel/HR-related Policies, including a Wellbeing Charter and the Pensions Discretions Policy were introduced or updated during 2019/20, ensuring alignment with current best practice and the support structures of West Dunbartonshire Council.
- The Financial Strategy, which covers a 10 year period and presents a number of scenarios, was updated and presented to the Board.
- The Joint Board's Induction Procedures were completely reviewed and updated to provide a clear consistent process to, and ensure clarity of responsibilities for, managers. The procedures also provide new employees with a sound introductory knowledge of the organisation and ensure adherence to key policies.

The following areas were identified by the Assessor for further improvements in 2020/21:

- To comply with the sections of the Non-Domestic Rates (Scotland) Act 2020, which were commenced with effect from April 2020, new processes and procedures around Assessor Information Notices, Civil Penalties and appeals against civil penalties will require to be implemented. To take advantage of an existing process and avoid duplication of effort, the collection and recovery of Civil Penalties will be facilitated through development of West Dunbartonshire Council's debtors systems.
- To comply with legislative reform to the annual electoral canvass and the extension of the franchise for certain elections, new processes and procedures, including upgraded ICT systems, for both the annual electoral canvass and the extension of the franchise will be implemented. A new Canvass Plan will be devised, the Electoral Participation Strategy will be reviewed and the Electoral Commission's Performance Reporting procedures implemented. In-house staff and canvasser Guidance and Training will also be reviewed.
- An Action Plan as agreed with the Auditor in respect of the 2019/20 Audit of the Joint Board's Risk Management regime and any improvements will be implemented, as appropriate.
- A revised training and development procedure, which includes management and appraisal of individual performance will be finalised, agreed and approved.
- Further consideration will be given to the Non-Domestic Rates (Scotland) Act 2020 and the 2022 Revaluation, particularly in light of the Act's commencement dates and the secondary legislation which will follow. As these become clearer the Management Team and internal NDR Reform Project Team will devise and amend procedures and systems accordingly. Recruitment to support reform will be completed in line with the approved Workforce Plan.
- A new Joint Board Comments and Complaint Procedure will be developed in line with the new Scottish Public Sector Ombudsman's revised Model Complaints Handling Procedure. Board approval sought for a revised procedure prior to implementation in April 2021.

**DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2020**

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT (Cont'd)

Assurance

On the basis of the assurance provided, we consider the governance and internal control environment operating during 2020/21 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 Richard Trail
Convenor of the Board

Date: 19 June 2020

David Thomson
Assessor & Electrical Registration
Officer

Date: 19 June 2020

Stephen West
Treasurer

Date: 19 June 2020

DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD

DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2020

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
DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2020

COMPREHENSIVE INCOME AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT

2018/19			2019/20
Net			Net
Expenditure		Notes	Expenditure
£000			£000
	Income		
(9)	Customer Receipts		(11)
	Expenditure		
2,792	Employee Costs	2	2,617
100	Property Costs		111
41	Transport Costs		44
242	Supplies & Services		250
35	Payment to Other Bodies		30
125	Support Services		123
13	Depreciation, Amortisation & Impairment	2/6/7	14
3,339	Net Cost of Service		3,178
(2,611)	Revenue Contributions	15	(2,735)
(66)	Government Grants	16	(77)
0	Capital Contributions	12	(29)
(2,677)	Other Operating Income		(2,841)
662	Net Operating Expenditure		337
1	Interest Payable		0
93	Net Interest on the net defined benefit liability/(assets)	4	129
94	Finance and Investment Income and Expenditure		129
756	(Surplus)/Deficit on provision of services		466
1,332	Remeasurement of the net defined benefit liability/(assets)	4	(2,362)
1,332	Other Comprehensive (Income) & Expenditure		(2,362)
2,088	Total Comprehensive (Income) & Expenditure		1,896

**DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2020**

MOVEMENT IN RESERVES STATEMENT

2019/20

	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	Statutory Mitigation Account £000	
Opening Balance as at 1 April 2019	552	25	598	35	(5,217)	(16)	(4,023)
Movements in Reserves							
Surplus or (Deficit) on provision of Services	(466)	0	0	0	0	0	(466)
Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure	0	0	0	0	2,362	0	2,362
Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure	(466)	0	0	0	2,362	0	1,896
Adjustments between accounting basis & Funding Basis							
Depreciation	14	0	(14)	0	0	0	0
Pension Scheme Adjustment	506	0	0	0	(506)	0	0
Net Transfer to or from earmarked reserves required by legislation	7	0	0	0	0	(7)	0
Capital requisitions applied to fund capital expenditure	(29)	29	0	0	0	0	0
Capital requisitions unapplied adjustments between accounting basis and funding basis under regulations	0	(16)	16	0	0	0	0
Total Statutory Adjustments	498	13	2	0	(506)	(7)	0
Increase/Decrease in Year	32	13	2	0	1,856	(7)	1,896
Balance at 31 March 2020	584	38	600	35	(3,361)	(23)	(2,127)
Total Usable		622	Total Unusable			2,749	

DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2020

MOVEMENT IN RESERVES STATEMENT

2018/19

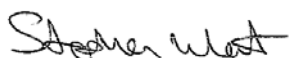
	Usable Reserves		Unusable Reserves				Total Reserves £000
	Fund Balance £000	Capital Requisition Unapplied Account £000	Capital Adjustment Account £000	Revaluation Reserve £000	Pension Reserve £000	Statutory Mitigation Account £000	
Opening Balance as at 1 April 2018	551	29	607	35	(3,140)	(17)	(1,935)
Movements in Reserves							
Surplus or (Deficit) on provision of Services	(756)	0	0	0	0	0	(756)
Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure	0	0	0	0	(1,332)	0	(1,332)
Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure	(756)	0	0	0	(1,332)	0	(2,088)
Adjustments between accounting basis & funding basis							
Depreciation/Impairment	13	0	(13)	0	0	0	0
Pension Scheme Adjustment	745	0	0	0	(745)	0	0
Net Transfer to or from earmarked reserves required by legislation	(1)	0	0	0	0	1	0
Capital requisitions applied to fund capital expenditure	0	(4)	4	0	0	0	0
Total Statutory Adjustments	757	(4)	(9)	0	(745)	1	0
Increase/Decrease in Year	1	(4)	(9)	0	(2,077)	1	(2,088)
Balance at 31 March 2019	552	25	598	35	(5,217)	(16)	(4,023)
Total Usable		577	Total Unusable				(4,600)

DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2020

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 MARCH 2020

31 March 2019 £000	Notes		31 March 2020 £000
633	6	Property, plant and equipment	636
0	7	Intangible Assets	0
633		Total Long Term Assets	636
682	8	Short Term Debtors	711
682		Current Assets	711
(121)	10	Short Term Creditors	(113)
(121)		Current Liabilities	(113)
(5,217)	4	Net Pensions Liability	(3,361)
(5,217)		Long Term Liabilities	(3,361)
(4,023)		Net Assets/(Liabilities)	(2,127)
Represented by:			
577	11/12	Usable Reserves	622
(4,600)	13	Unusable Reserves	(2,749)
(4,023)		Total Reserves	(2,127)

The unaudited Financial Statements were issued on 19 June 2020.



Stephen West
Treasurer
19 June 2020

DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2020

CASH FLOW STATEMENT

2018/19 £000		2019/20 £000
	Operating Activities	
(2,677)	Grants	(2,812)
(9)	Sale of goods and rendering of services	(11)
<u>(2,686)</u>	Cash Inflows from Operating Activities	<u>(2,823)</u>
2,141	Cash paid to and on behalf of employees	2,249
540	Other payments for operating activities	587
<u>2,681</u>	Cash Outflows from Operating Activities	<u>2,836</u>
<u>(5)</u>	Net Cash Flows from Operating Activities	<u>13</u>
	Investing Activities	
4	Purchase of Assets	16
0	Other receipts from investing activities	(29)
<u>4</u>	Net Cash Flows from Investing Activities	<u>13</u>
	Financing Activities	
1	Interest Payable	0
<u>1</u>	Net Cash Flows from Financing Activities	<u>0</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 2020

NOTES TO THE ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

Note 1 - Accounting Policies

1. General Principles

The Annual Accounts summarise the Board's transactions for the 2018/19 financial year and its position at the year end of 31 March 2020. 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 2018/19 ("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.

**DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2020**

NOTES TO THE ANNUAL ACCOUNTS (Cont'd)

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.

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.

**DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2020**

Note 1 - Accounting Policies (Cont'd)

5. Charges to Revenue for non-current assets (Cont'd)

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.

DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2020

Note 1 - Accounting Policies (Cont'd)

7. Property, Plant and Equipment (Cont'd)

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.

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.

DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2020

8. Employee 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 4.3% (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 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;
 - 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;

DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2020

Note 1 - Accounting Policies (Cont'd)

Post-Employment Benefits

- 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. The negative balance that arises on the Pension Reserve measures the beneficial impact on the Fund of being required to account for retirement benefits on the basis of cash flows rather than as benefits earned by employees.

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.

DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2020

Note 1 - Accounting Policies (Cont'd)

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.

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.

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.

11. 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.

12. 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.

DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2020

Note 1 - Accounting Policies (Cont'd)

13. 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. 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.

2019/20

	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	2,233	384	2,617
Depreciation	0	14	14
Capital Income	0	(29)	(29)
Net Interest on the net defined benefit liability/(assets)	0	129	129
Total	2,233	498	2,731

DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2020

Note 2 – Expenditure and Funding Analysis (Cont'd)

2018/19			Net Expenditure in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement £000
	Net Chargeable to the General Fund £000	Adjustments between Funding and Accounting Basis £000	
Employee Costs	2,141	651	2,792
Depreciation	0	13	13
Net Interest on the net defined benefit liability/(assets)	0	93	93
Total	2,141	757	2,898

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 2019 £000		31 March 2020 £000
2	Not later than one year	2
0	Later than one year and not later than five years	3
0	Later than five years	0
2		5

Board as Lessee

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

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

31 March 2019 £000		31 March 2020 £000
5	Not later than one year	4
4	Later than one year and not later than five years	4
0	Later than five years	0
9		8

DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2020

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 2019/20 is set at 23.3% and 2018/19 was 23.3%. In 2019/20, the Board paid an employer's contribution of £0.301m (2018/19 £0.361m).

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 retirements. There was no Severance or Strain on the Fund Payments during financial year 2019/20 (2018/19: £0).

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

DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2020

Note 4 – Defined Benefit Pension Schemes (Cont'd)

2018/19 £000		2019/20 £000
	Net cost of services	
977	Current service cost	687
0	Past service cost (including curtailments)	0
977		687
	Financing and investment Income and Expenditure	
93	Net Interest	129
93		129
1,070	Total post-employment benefit charged to the Surplus or Deficit on the provision of Services	816
(687)	Return on plan assets	(1,485)
	Actuarial gains and losses arising on changes in financial	
2,018	Assumptions	(2,763)
0	Changes in demographic assumptions	(967)
1	Actuarial gains and losses arising on experience assumptions	(117)
2,402	Total post-employment benefit charged to the comprehensive income and expenditure statement	(4,516)
	Movement in Reserves Statement	
(1,070)	Reversal of net charges made to surplus of deficit for post-employment benefits	(816)
	Actual amount charged against the General Fund balance in the year	
325	Employer contributions payable to Scheme	310

The underlying assets and liabilities for retirement benefits attributable to the Board as at 31 March 2020 are as follows:

	2018/19 £000	2019/20 £000
Fair value of plan assets	22,409	21,366
Present Value of defined benefit obligations	(27,382)	(24,516)
Net (liabilities)/assets in the Strathclyde Pension Fund	(4,973)	(3,150)
<u>Present Value of Unfunded Liabilities</u>	<u>(244)</u>	<u>(211)</u>
Pre Local Government Reorganisation		
Net pension asset/(liability)	(5,217)	(3,361)

For the Strathclyde Local Government Pension Scheme at 31 March 2020 the Board has a net liability £3.150m and for the unfunded liabilities a net liability of £0.211m. The Board's net liability of £3.361m at 31 March 2020 reflects the future obligations to fund retirement benefits. This represents a decrease in the net liability of £1.856m compared to the position at 31 March 2019.

The expected return on assets is based on long term future expected investment return for each asset class as at the beginning of the period. The expected rate of return is (4.2%) as at 31/03/20, this is a decrease from 5.9% as at 31/03/19.

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.

DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2020

Note 4 – Defined Benefit Pension Schemes (Cont'd)

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

2018/19		2019/20
£000		£000
24,361	Opening balance	27,626
586	Current service cost	687
391	Past service cost (including curtailments)	0
665	Interest cost	666
97	Contributions by Members	102
2,018	Actuarial gains/losses in financial assumptions	(2,763)
1	Other Experience	(117)
(9)	Estimated unfunded benefits paid	(9)
(484)	Estimated benefits paid	(498)
0	Changes in demographic assumptions	(967)
27,626		24,727

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

2018/19		2019/20
£000		£000
21,221	Opening balance	22,409
687	Expected return on assets	(1,485)
572	Interest Income	537
97	Contributions by Members	102
316	Contributions by employer	301
9	Contributions in respect of unfunded benefits	9
(9)	Estimated unfunded benefits paid	(9)
(484)	Estimated benefit paid	(498)
22,409		21,366

The Valuation Joint Board's share of the pension funds asset at 31 March 2020 comprised:

Asset Category	31 March 2020			31 March 2019		
	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	4,929	13	4,942	5,169	14	5,183
Debt Securities	670	0	670	703	0	703
Private Equity	0	2,553	2,553	0	2,678	2,678
Real Estate	0	1,934	1,934	0	2,029	2,029
Investment funds and unit trusts	7,014	2,093	9,107	7,356	2,194	9,550
Derivatives	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cash and Cash Equivalent	1,100	1,060	2,160	1,154	1,112	2,266
Totals	13,713	7,653	21,366	14,382	8,027	22,409

DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2020

Note 4 – Defined Benefit Pension Schemes (Cont'd)

Asset and Liability Matching Strategy (ALM)

The main fund (Fund 1) of Strathclyde Pension Fund does not have an asset and liability matching strategy (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 2020
Expected rate of return	(4.2%)
Inflation/pension increase rate	1.2%
Salary increase rate	3.0%
Discount rate	2.3%

Mortality

Life expectancy is based on the Funds VitaCurves with improvements in line with the CMI 2018 model with an allowance for smoothing of recent mortality experience and long term rates of 1.5% p.a. for males and 1.25% for females. Based on these assumptions, the average future life expectancies at age 65 are summarised below:

	Males	Females
Current pensioners	20.7 years	22.9 years
Future Pensioners	22.2 years	24.6 years

Sensitivity Analysis

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

	Approximate % increase to Employer Liability	Approximate monetary Amount (£000)
Rate for discounting fund liabilities (0.5% decrease)	10%	2,532
Rate of salary increase (0.5% increase)	2%	558
Rate of pension increase (0.5% increase)	8%	1,924

The total employer contributions expected to be made to the Local Government Pension Scheme for 2020/21 is £352,000.

DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2020

Note 5 – External Audit Costs

In 2019/20 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:

2018/19		2019/20
£000		£000
<u>7</u>	Fees payable for external audit services	<u>7</u>
7		7

Note 6 – Property, Plant and Equipment

	Land & Buildings £000	Plant & Equipment £000	Total £000
Movements in costs or values			
1 April 2018	621	142	763
Additions	0	4	4
31 March 2019	621	146	767
Additions	0	16	16
31 March 2020	621	162	783
Movements in depreciation and impairment			
1 April 2018	(8)	(118)	(126)
Depreciation charge	(3)	(5)	(8)
31 March 2019	(11)	(123)	(134)
Depreciation charge	(3)	(10)	(13)
31 March 2020	(14)	(133)	(147)
Net Book Value			
At 31 March 2019	610	23	633
At 31 March 2020	607	29	636

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.

Note 7 – Intangible Assets

The Board accounts for its software as intangible assets, to the extent that the software is not an integral part of a particular IT system and accounted for as part of the hardware item of property, plant and equipment. The intangible assets include purchased licences.

All software is given a finite useful life, based on assessments of the period that the software is expected to be of use to the Board. The useful lives assigned to software licences are: 5-10 years. The carrying amount of intangible assets is amortised on a straight-line basis

DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2020

Note 7 – Intangible Assets (Cont'd)

The movement on Intangible Asset balances during the year is as follows:-

2018/19		2019/20
£000		£000
	Balance at start of year:	
9	Gross carrying amount	9
(5)	Accumulated amortisation	(9)
4	Net carrying amount at start of year	0
(2)	Amortisation for the period	0
2	Amortisation Written Out	0
0	Net carrying amount at end of year	0
	Comprising:	
9	Gross carrying amounts	0
(9)	Accumulated amortisation	0
0		0

Note 8 – Debtors

2018/19		2019/20
£000		£000
9	Other Entities and Individuals	8
673	Other Local Authorities	703
682		711

Note 9 – Cash and Cash Equivalents

The balance of cash and cash equivalents is made up of the following elements:

2018/19		2019/20
£000		£000
0	Imprest	0
0		0

Note 10 – Creditors

2018/19		2019/20
£000		£000
6	Central Government Bodies	18
100	Other Entities and Individuals	80
15	Other Local Authorities	15
121		113

DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2020

Note 11 – 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 2019	552
Revenue Gains/(Losses) on the fund	32
Closing Balance at 31 March 2020	584
Earmarked Balances:-	
2020/21 Budget	(153)
ICT Consultancy (Civil Penalties)	(5)
Total Earmarked Balance	(158)
Total General Reserves (incl. £0.100m prudential reserve)	426

Note 12 – 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.

2018/19	2019/20
£000	£000
0 Contributions from Authorities	29
29 Unapplied Capital contributions b/forward	25
Capital expenditure incurred during the year:	
(4) Upgrade PC's	(6)
0 Servers	(10)
25 Unapplied Capital contributions c/forward	38

Note 13 – Unusable Reserves

2018/19	2019/20
£000	£000
598 Capital Adjustment Account	600
35 Revaluation Reserve	35
(5,217) Pension Reserve	(3,361)
(16) Statutory Mitigation Account	(23)
(4,600) Total Unusable Reserves	(2,749)

DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2020

Note 13 – Unusable Reserves (Cont'd)

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. The debit balance on the pensions reserve therefore shows a substantial shortfall in the benefits earned by past and current employees and the resources the Board has set aside to meet them. The statutory arrangements will ensure that funding will have been set aside by the time the benefits come to be paid.

Statutory Mitigation Account

The 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 2020**

Note 13 – Unusable Reserves (Cont'd)

Capital Requisition Unapplied Account

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

Note 14 – Contingent Assets & Liabilities

The Board has not identified any Contingent Assets and Liabilities.

Note 15 – Contributions from Authorities

Revenue 2018/19		Revenue 2019/20
£000		£000
1,281	Argyll & Bute Council	1,363
642	East Dunbartonshire Council	663
688	West Dunbartonshire Council	709
2,611		2,735

Note 16 – Government Grants

The Board received a total of £77,380 of government grants in 19/20 to continue with the delivery of Individual Electoral Registration.

2018/19		2019/20
£000		£000
66	Cabinet Office	77
66		77

Note 17 – 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 15.

DUNBARTONSHIRE and ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD

Report by Treasurer

Valuation Joint Board - 19 June 2020

Subject: Assurance Statement for the year ended 31 March 2020 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 A.

3. Main Issues

- 3.1 The Shared Service Manager – Audit & Fraud is pleased to report good progress across the Council and the VJB on audit recommendations and is of the opinion 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 2020.

- 3.2** The annual Assurance Statement for the year ended 31 March 2020 at Appendix A 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 2020 provided at Appendix A.

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Stephen West
Treasurer
Date: 19 June 2020

Person(s) to Contact: Andi Priestman, Shared Service Manager - Audit & Fraud
West Dunbartonshire Council
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Appendix: Assurance Statement for the year ended 31 March 2020 from the Shared Service Manager – Audit & Fraud

Assurance Statement for the year ended 31 March 2020
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 2020.

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 the Internal Audit service each 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). This process identified South Lanarkshire Council as the Authority to undertake the independent review of WDC's Internal Audit function's level of compliance with PSIAS and the external review was carried out during 2015/16. The next external review is due to be carried by 31 March 2021.

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. It is management's responsibility to ensure that proper consideration is given to Internal Audit reports and that appropriate action is taken on audit recommendations. The internal auditor is required to ensure that appropriate arrangements are made to determine whether action has been taken on internal audit recommendations or that management has understood and assumed the risk of not taking action. A programme of follow-up on assignment findings and

recommendations provides assurance on the complete and timeous implementation of both internal Audit and External Audit recommendations.

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 2020;
- The assessment of risk completed during reviews of the annual audit plan;
- The assurance statement for the year ended 31 March 2020 from West Dunbartonshire Council;
- 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 2020;
- 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, in the year to 31 March 2020.

Andi Priestman

Title: Shared Service Manager – Audit & Fraud

Date: 21 May 2020