# DABVJB Logo

# **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 2018-21Service 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. **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. **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. **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. **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 planed 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**

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| **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  Specifically, ensure that all outstanding appeals are cited prior to 30 June 2020  Specifically, ensure that all appeals continued from April –June VAC hearing dates are re-cited/re-programmed | 1,4,10,11,12 | Divisional Assessors  Divisional Assessors  Divisional Assessors | Continuous (up to Dec 2020)  30 June 2020  30 June 2020 |
| (c) | Prepare VAC, LT and/or LVAC cases including rental analysis, valuations, photographs, plans and other productions  Specifically, consider all requests for referral of appeals, including joint referrals, to Lands Tribunal and respond to VAC Secretaries as appropriate | 1,4,10,11,12,14 | Divisional Assessors  Assessor/  Depute Assessor | As required  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)

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| **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)**

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| **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.

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| **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 |
| (q) | 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 20202/21 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:-   1. Amend/develop systems to accommodate the above 2. Implement internal processes to accommodate above 3. Review and, where appropriate, redevelop systems for management of RQs and other AINs | 1,4,7,8,9,11,12,13 | Assessor/WDC Finance/ External Contractor  Depute Assessor/NDR Reform Project Team  Depute Assessor/ System programmer | May 2020  May 2020 |

**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 Clydebank 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,   1. Delivery of 3-yearly Revaluations 2. 2-stage Proposal and appeal system changes 3. Expansion of valuations available at the SAA portal 4. Provision of comparisons to support revalued NAVs 5. Civil penalties and appeals against these 6. 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:-**   1. Canvass Reform 2. Franchise extension (non-nationals) 3. 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 |

**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  Agree working arrangements and timetables for above | 7,9,10,11,13,14 | Assessor/WDC  PAO | By May 2020  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 |