



SERVICE PLAN 2020-2023

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DELIVERING THE PLAN



Ayrshire Valuation Joint Board (AVJB) and our partners fully recognise that, to improve outcomes for all our stakeholders, our strategies, planning and service delivery must be linked.

This recognition is reflected in the way in which our planning, delivery and monitoring of outcomes across our three core functions are integrated with our priorities and governance structures, including our Governance and Performance Framework and our Corporate Plan. This document needs to be read in conjunction with our Mission and Vision Statement and our Aims and Objectives, and there are firm links with detailed and specific strategies and implementation plans, for example, the Workforce Plan, Communication Strategy, Risk Register, Equalities Policy and Records Management

SERVICE MISSION AND VISION



As an independent Local Government organisation, AVJBs **mission** is to provide equitable, customer focussed, best value, high quality, professional valuation and electoral services for all its stakeholders.

Our **vision** is to provide a range of valuation and electoral services to the stakeholders of the Valuation Joint Board in accordance with statute and at levels of excellence which exceed their expectations.

Aims & Objectives



- Plan service development and delivery in accordance with the principles of Best Value and improvement
- Consult our stakeholders about their needs and expectations
- Recognise our employees as both stakeholders and our most important asset
- Take individual and collective responsibility for the services provided by AVJB
- Encourage innovation and recognise achievement within the organisation
- Monitor and report performance levels to stakeholders
- Integrate Equalities issues into all aspects of our service provision
- Build on our achievements to date

GOVERNANCE AND PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK

The Governance and Performance Framework illustrates the commitment of AVJB to the principles of sound governance and good management. It identifies the following aspects of the Joint Boards business for the purposes of corporate governance: -

- Structures & Governance
- Service Delivery Arrangements
- Internal Control & Risk Management
- Stakeholder Focus

The Framework for Governance is detailed in our Corporate Plan.



THE CORPORATE PLAN



The Corporate Plan outlines the priorities of AVJB and the key areas which will be targeted and work undertaken to deliver our Service Plan. The Corporate Plan states our aims & objectives and how we will deliver these. It highlights areas we will prioritise to provide continuous improvement and to demonstrate Best Value is at the forefront of our organisation.

Our 5 core strategic objectives are:

1. Service Delivery in accordance with statutory requirements.
2. Best value and improvement.
3. Sound Governance.
4. Consultation.
5. Supported and motivated colleagues

Our Values



THE SERVICE PLAN



The Service Plan presents more detailed information on the operational challenges faced by AVJB, the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer and is split in four parts

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PART 1: SERVICE FUNCTION

PART 2: CORE OBJECTIVES

PART3: KEY ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES

PART 4: PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Introduction

Ayrshire Valuation Joint Board was established as part of the 1996 reorganisation of local government in terms of The Valuation Joint Boards (Scotland) Order 1995 and is vested with the functions of the valuation authorities of North, South and East Ayrshire Councils. With the agreement of the three Councils, the Board also has responsibility for the Electoral Registration function for Ayrshire.

The Assessor is responsible for valuation for non-domestic rating (The Valuation Roll) and council tax banding (The Council Tax Valuation List), and in her role as Electoral Registration Officer, the compilation of the Electoral Register.

The primary service functions are the compilation and maintenance of the Valuation Roll, the compilation and maintenance of the Council Tax Valuation List and the preparation and publication of the Register of Electors.

The service currently has 46.49 full time equivalent permanent staff. Although in general terms the staff are split into task driven teams, at times of high volume of work in any particular area staff are seconded into those areas to alleviate work pressures.

The Joint Board operates a 3-year planning cycle, albeit interim updates are produced annually. A number of significant changes will take place throughout the life of this plan. These include: -

- ✚ The proposed changes to the annual canvass which will be in force for the 2020 canvass.
- ✚ Introduction and implementation of new electoral law.
- ✚ The above may give rise to residency appeals; and difficulty in sourcing information on prisoners that may be eligible to vote in Ayrshire but are held in prisons out with Scotland; length of sentence etc.
- ✚ The review of non-domestic rating and the Non-Domestic Rates (Scotland) Act 2020.
- ✚ The future of Council Tax.
- ✚ General Data Protection Regulations 2016, which came into effect in 2018, are still impacting on the Board with Data Sharing and other agreements having to be put in place.
- ✚ Dealing with the additional rating appeals as a result of Covid-19.
- ✚ Change in working practices as a result of Covid-19.

1.1 VALUATION ROLL

- 1.1.1 The Valuation Roll is a list of all non-domestic properties, which are not excluded properties, along with the Net Annual and Rateable Values the Assessor has established for each property. These annual values form the basis for non-domestic rates charges.
- 1.1.2 The Valuation Roll is published at each Revaluation, reproduced annually and updated weekly. It is available to the public through the Assessors shared service the S.A.A. Portal www.saa.gov.uk .
- 1.1.3 The Assessor is normally required to complete a Revaluation at 5-yearly intervals. However, the 2015 Revaluation was postponed until 1st April 2017. The next Revaluation is due in 2022 it remains to be seen if the Coronavirus pandemic will affect any of the legislative dates. Thereafter, depending on the delivery of the proposed 2022 Revaluation, this may have an impact on future three yearly revaluations and the compressed valuation date of 12 months prior to delivery of the Valuation Roll. The valuation date currently stands at 24 months prior to Revaluation.
- 1.1.4 As a result of Covid-19 the Assessor has received approximately 2,000 running roll appeals which require to be dealt with by December 2021 under the revised legislative disposal date. This will be a significant challenge whilst preparing for the revaluation.

1.2 VALUATION LIST

- 1.2.1 The Valuation List is a list of all domestic properties, which are subject to Council Tax legislation and any separate storage or garage buildings used in conjunction with these domestic properties.
- 1.2.2 Each dwelling is placed in one of eight broad valuation bands according to the subject's estimated market value at 1st April 1991.
- 1.2.3 The List is printed annually and updated weekly. The full list incorporating the weekly updates is available to the public through the Assessors shared service the SAA Portal www.saa.gov.uk
- 1.2.4 A significant number of proposals/appeals are still being received and these are being dealt with as and when time and resources allow. The operational sections have been reorganised and it is hoped progress can be made of the valid proposals/appeals throughout the life of this plan. However, the Covid-19 rating appeals will have a significant impact on the Boards resources which will significantly slow any progress in proposals and appeals and the delivery of other core services.

- 1.2.5 Band changes following alterations to, and subsequent sale of, properties continues in accordance with the Joint Boards established procedure and associated performance indicators.
- 1.2.6 Again throughout the lifetime of this plan a watching brief will be required as Council Tax becomes more and more out of date.

1.3 REGISTER OF ELECTORS

- 1.3.1 The Register of Electors contains the names of all persons' resident within the area and eligible to vote at Parliamentary, Scottish Parliamentary and Local Elections and Referendums. The register is published annually, usually by the 1st December, and outside of the canvass period (see below), is updated on a monthly basis. The Register may be re-published at other times when necessary.
- 1.3.2 The revised Register is updated by a canvass of all households, which is carried out during August to November each year. Individual Electoral Registration legislation requires the Electoral Registration Officer to canvass out with this period, accordingly canvass is a year-round process and the Register produced at 1st December is only a snapshot in time. The main canvass consists of data matching with DWP, postal, door-to-door, telephone, email and internet elements, supplemented by inspection of Council and other available records.
- 1.3.3 2019 was the last canvass under the 'old' legislation. The 2020 canvass has been significantly different from previous years not only because of the change in legislation but Covid-19 restrictions and the need to keep service users and staff as safe as possible.
- 1.3.4 The major change to canvass is aligned with the stopping or providing of very limited funds from the Cabinet Office for IER.
- 1.3.5 As with the other core functions activity continues in Electoral Registration to maintain the completeness and accuracy of the Register.
- 1.3.6 Election Register and Lists of Absent/Proxy/Postal voters etc. will be produced as required by statute and by agreement with the Returning Officers.
- 1.3.7 Use of the Electoral Register is tightly restricted by statute. However, an Open Register of Electors, which can be used for any purposes, is also prepared. Electors may opt out of this Open Register.
- 1.3.8 The Personal Identifier regime introduced for Absent Voters by the Electoral Administration Act 2006 and its secondary legislation has been well established. Personal Identifiers require to be refreshed every 5 years, normally in January.
- 1.3.9 In January 2020 the electoral commission launched its consultation on the new performance standards for EROs. This will mean further change to how we operate and deliver electoral services.

1.4 OTHER FUNCTIONS

- 1.4.1 Arising from legislative requirement or commitment to government policy, the Assessor & ERO also carries out a range of functions in support of the above primary services. These include, Corporate Governance procedures and practices; a Governance & Performance Framework; Risk Management; Performance Management; a range of accountability measures, prudent financial management, a range of Policies & Procedures, adherence to FOI legislation, etc, all of which are discussed later in this plan.

PART 2: CORE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

5 Core Strategic Objectives:

1. Service Delivery in accordance with statutory requirements.
2. Best Value and Improvement.
3. Sound Governance.
4. Consultation.
5. Supported and Motivated Colleagues.

1.0 SERVICE DELIVERY IN ACCORDANCE WITH STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS:

1.1 The Valuation Roll

- 1.1.1 Maintenance of the Valuation Roll, including the addition of new subjects and the amendment of existing subjects, will continue, year-on-year, in accordance with the Joint Board's established procedures for completion within the statutory timescales and annual targets. Where appropriate, Valuation Notices will be issued to all Proprietors, Tenants and Occupiers and all relevant changes will be notified to the billing authorities. Valuation Roll data will continue to be uploaded to the Scottish Assessors' Portal regularly in accordance with Scottish Assessors' Association (SAA) agreements.
- 1.1.2 In support of the revaluation and appeals process, the Assessor's staff will continually ingather and analyse rental (and other) information. Additionally, staff will actively participate in the Working Groups and Committees of the SAA to confirm or amend 'Practice Notes' and input into other valuation matters. This shared service allows production of SAA Practice Notes for the purposes of the revaluation. The Assessors staff will contribute at the SAA shared service and will, through the SAA, liaise with the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) to achieve harmonisation throughout the UK.
- 1.1.3 The Land Reform (Scotland) Act removed the exemption from rating which applied to Shooting Rights with effect from 1st April 2017 and the Assessor will continue to ingather relevant information and work with colleague Assessors to ensure the entry of appropriate subjects into the Valuation Roll.
- 1.1.4 This will also be the case for subjects within public parks for the 2022 Revaluation and this will have to be resourced. This forms one part of the NDR (S) Bill 2020.

- 1.1.5 Appeals on the 2017 Valuation Roll can be received up to 6 months from the close of the Roll and these will have to be built into the appeal disposal programme, along with those appeals that have been referred to the Lands Tribunal. A number of the latter will remain outstanding until they are cited for a hearing by the Lands Tribunal.
- 1.1.6 The Assessor has also received a large number of material change of circumstance appeals as a result of Covid-19. These will require to be dealt with by the extended appeal disposal deadline of 31st December 2021 which impacts on the planning for the 2023 Revaluation.
- 1.1.7 During the period of this Service Plan the major change to how the Assessor gathers information will be in force. This process involves the Assessor issuing Civil Penalty Notices for the non-provision of information to the Assessor. This major change will introduce a new appeals process on the issue of the penalty notice. It remains to be seen what impact this will have in the longer term.
- 1.1.8 The Scottish Government announced in August 2020 their intention to put forward legislation to move the Revaluation from 2022 to 2023 this would align with colleagues in England and Wales. The Revaluation will now take place in 2023 with a new date of 1st April 2022. The change in the new date put Scotland on a different timetable from colleagues down south.
- 1.1.9 Factors which may be out with the Assessor's control include the possibility of the appeals for a number of subjects or subject types being referred to the Lands Valuation Appeal Court or Lands Tribunal for Scotland. This effectively removes the timetabling of appeals from local control and provides a degree of uncertainty in service planning.
- 1.1.10 The review of the non-domestic rating system has resulted in major change to timescales of revaluations and other major components of the rating system. Although much of AVJBs focus has been on the disposal of the 2017 Revaluation appeals we have begun the process for the 2023 Revaluation and three yearly revaluations thereafter.
- 1.1.11 The general process for revaluation under the new legislation will be very similar to the previous system but the timescales will be much tighter, with changes in planning, processes, procedures and having the appropriately skilled workforce in order to meet the challenges we now face.
- 1.1.12 As is always the case, the Working Groups & Committees of the SAA will facilitate the production of National Practice Notes; the sharing of best practice and a general sharing of methodologies on how to deal with all the NDR changes whilst maintaining service delivery.

- 1.1.13 The other major change will be the introduction of a 2 stage appeal process. Where rate payers have a reduced timescale to lodge, what will now be called a proposal to the Assessor. I will then allocate these a proposal disposal date and the team will engage with ratepayers and their agents in an attempt to resolve these. If the proposal is not resolved the ratepayer or their agent will then request the local Valuation Appeal Committee or Tribunal Service to hear an appeal. At time of writing I await Regulations to define the process further.
- 1.1.14 The review of the Scottish Tribunals System has indicated that the functions of the local Valuation Appeals Panels will transfer to the Scottish Tribunals structure, probably in 2022, and it is likely Assessors will be involved in the planning for and transfer of these services during the currency of this Service Plan.
- 1.1.15 These two changes will mean major changes to our IT systems/s and how we operate. Fortunately, we began to plan for the changes in 2019. The Board had already embarked on a replacement core system which would not only take the place of the current system but a number of satellite systems. The proposed go-live will be after the end of year cut off. The system will require further development when secondary legislation is introduced.
- 1.1.16 It is hoped by government that the new NDR Bill will reduce the number of proposals and then appeals. However, this will only be known in 2021/22 when the new values are published and proposals are received.
- 1.1.17 In order to prepare for the major changes in NDR, funding has been provided by the Scottish Government for implementation. A recruitment drive began in 2019 and continued into 2020 in order that we have appropriate staff numbers to deal with the changes.
- 1.1.18 Recruitment success has been mixed and the Assessor continues to amend the structure in order that the challenges are met.

1.2 THE VALUATION LIST (COUNCIL TAX)

- 1.2.1 Maintenance of the Valuation List, in particular the addition of new subjects, will continue year-on-year, in accordance with the Joint Board's established procedures for completion within annual targets. Banding Notices will be issued to all interested parties and all relevant changes will be notified to the billing authorities.
- 1.2.2 Band changes following alteration to and subsequent sale of properties will continue in accordance with the Joint Board's established procedures. In particular, care should be taken to avoid a backlog in relation to this task, in addition to regular maintenance. In order to demonstrate the Assessors

commitment to continual improvement in this area internal Key Performance Indicators have been introduced and are proving successful.





- 1.2.3 A large number of Proposals (appeals) against bandings continue to be received. Discussions in relation to these are on-going and, where necessary, the Assessor will refer such appeals within six months of receipt, to the Secretary to the Local Valuation Appeal Committee for inclusion in their schedules of VAC Hearings. It was thought that during the life time of this plan that the backlog would be cleared and KPIs introduced for appeal disposal. However due to the Covid-19 lockdown this will not be possible and it may take around 12-24 months for AVJB to return to our position prior to lockdown. This position will be reviewed over the lifetime of this plan if ground is made up on the backlog of work the lockdown has created.
- 1.2.4 There is a possibility that a Council Tax Revaluation; major change or abolition may be ordered at some stage over the coming years. However, a watching brief will be retained and any major change will be initiated as required but will be required to be resourced. In the meantime, records of alterations to domestic properties will be maintained and updated at point of sale, **with others updated as and when time and resources allow, currently the resources are not available to facilitate this type of survey work.**

1.3 REGISTER OF ELECTORS

- 1.3.1 The “Full” Annual (or “Electoral”) Register and “Open” Register is usually published annually by the 1st December, following the canvass. The objective of the canvass is to ensure the maximum return of satisfactory completed Household Enquiry Forms (HEFs) and Invitations to Register (ITRs) Forms and that the register accuracy reflects the information contained on them. This process is supported by provision of telephone, internet and SMS return services as well as the Government Digital (on-line) Service. A door-to-door canvass to follow up on non-return of postal canvass forms will be carried out annually, although this may change with the new Performance Standards.
- 1.3.2 The publication in 2019 took place on the 5th November due the calling of the snap General Election.
- 1.3.3 Outwith the canvass period each year, the Electoral Register and the Open Register will be updated on a monthly basis. Full Register updates take the form of Lists of Additions, Deletions and alterations but the Open Register will be republished each month. All Statutory Notices and Lists will be timeously provided to relevant parties. The ERO will continue to use change information from housing bodies, Registrars, other EROs, education authorities and council tax records to be pro-active in pursuing new/changes elector information. An Electoral Participation Strategy is in place and will be reviewed annually.



- 1.3.4 Election Registers and Lists of Absent/Postal/Proxy voters etc will be produced as required by statute and by agreement with Returning Officers. The Personal Identifiers (PIs) regime introduced for Absent Votes by the Electoral Administration Act 2006 and its secondary legislation has been well established. PIs require to be refreshed every 5 years, normally in January.
- 1.3.5 Additionally, the quality of signatures and completeness of date of birth data will be checked, and where necessary, refreshed in advance of any election. Where mismatches with Postal Voting Statements occur, requests for refresh PIs will be issued.
- 1.3.6 Modernising Electoral Registration Programme (MERP) and its effects will have to be considered and implemented, along with system developments, process change and training. A product of the changes is the drastically reduced funding for 2020/ 21 and the complete stopping of funding thereafter.
- 1.3.7 The canvass will take quite a different form where the first step in the process will be to match the Electoral Register with the Department of Work and Pensions details of households. A further match will take place with local data sets e.g. Council Tax lists. The results will then inform the number of Household Enquiry and Invitations to Register Forms to be issued, chased and then the final reminder and the door knock.
- 1.3.8 The data matching has been successful with around 79% of households matched. These 'go green' households will require no further action by the household if the details on our register match the eligible occupants. These 'green' households will be contacted initially by email, which will require a response, then those where no email is held, or fail to respond to the email will receive a confirmation letter from the ERO of those registered to vote.
- 1.3.9 Those not matched will be processed via route 2 which will involve chasing the household to confirm the electors within the household which will be a costly exercise.
- 1.3.10 The final Route is number 3 and this will largely deal with institutions like homes. Currently the ERO has processes in place to deal with these types of subjects and it is proving successful.
- 1.3.11 The 2020 canvass under the new legislation, has been impacted upon by the lockdown as a result of the Coronavirus. Government are aware of this and have extended the publication date to anytime between December 2020 to February 2021. However, I expect to publish on the 1st December as usual.
- 1.3.12 The ERO takes a full part in the Electoral Commission's Performance Standards regime and will take full account of any advice or guidance from the Commission to allow continuous improvement in the standards achieved. The new Performance Standards consultation was launched on the 22nd January 2020. The ultimate aim of the new standards are to ensure the Electoral Registers are as accurate and complete as possible and that everyone who is eligible to vote and wants to vote

is able to do so.

- 1.3.13 The proposed new standards are focussed on the outcomes that should be delivered, rather than the processes that are followed, with the objective of helping EROs and their teams to understand the impact of their electoral registration activities. It should help EROs to make informed decisions on what activities are undertaken, how these activities are carried out and how their limited resources can be deployed efficiently and effectively.
- 1.3.14 The ERO is subject to direction by a Secretary of State under the terms of the Representation of the People Act 1983. Such directions are out with the control of the ERO and may result in changes to the Service Plan if any significant direction is made.
- 1.3.15 The ERO has (since mid-2011) been subject to direction by the Convener of the Elections Management Board for Scotland in respect of local government elections in Scotland. It is expected this role will be extended to Scottish Parliamentary and other elections.
- 1.3.16 Other changes in statute include, from a UK point of view are:
-  Repealing the Fixed Term Parliament Act
 -  Ensuring updated and equal Parliamentary boundaries
 -  Protecting the integrity of democracy, by introducing identification to vote at polling stations, stopping postal vote harvesting and measures to prevent any foreign interference in elections.
 -  Making it easier for British expats to vote in Parliamentary elections, and removal of the 15-year limit on expat voting rights.

The above are likely to take place during the life of this plan.

The Scottish Government has introduced 2 new Electoral Bills into the Scottish Parliament which have had a direct implication to the annual canvass.

-  The Scottish Elections (Franchise and Representation) Bill has extend the franchise to all foreign nationals legally resident in Scotland who have leave to remain and to prisoners serving sentences of 12 months or less.
-  The Scottish Elections (Reform) Bill will enable attainders to register from the date of their 14th birthday.

These are now in force and have been reflected in the 2020 annual canvass.

The policy proposals only relate to the local government register used for Scottish Parliament and local government elections. They have no impact on the Westminster register.

- 1.3.17 Any constituency or ward boundary changes will require to be processed timeously.

Local Government boundary changes came into effect for the Local Government Elections held in May 2017. Any future local authority boundary or electoral constituency changes will require resource allocation and project planning.

- 1.3.18 The Islands (Scotland) Act has brought in 1 or 2 member wards. This is due to be implemented in 2022, reducing NAC from 10 to 9 wards including the new Ward for the Isle of Arran.
- 1.3.19 For the duration of the Modernising Electoral Registration Programme, the Cabinet Office will be a significant stakeholder in terms of direction, operation and finance.
- 1.3.20 Democratic Engagement will form part of the performance standards of EROs. The ERO will endeavour to resource and deliver as complete and accurate register as is possible.

2.0 BEST VALUE AND IMPROVEMENT

- 2.1 AVJB recognises its duty, under Section 1 of The Local Government in Scotland Act 2003, to make arrangements to secure Best Value. The Valuation Joint Board is committed to the principles and practices of Best Value and to the integration of this theme into all areas of service provision. The Annual Performance Report is published on our website and presented to the Board's Elected Members.
- 2.2 Best Value is statutorily defined as 'continuous improvement in the authority's performance'. The Valuation Joint Board is committed to the principle of continuous improvement. In support of this, performance will be planned and monitored (see 2.5.4 above). KPIs have been implemented in conjunction with the Scottish Government and the SAA and reported to the Government and other key stakeholders annually. A range of internal Key Performance Indicators will be further developed as required.
- 2.3 Performance Indicators will be used for year-on-year comparisons as well as comparisons with other Assessors' offices, Local Authorities and other bodies. However, where there is strict budgetary and other constraints the review of KPI's may well be downward.
- 2.4 In accordance with Section 13 of The Local Government in Scotland Act 2003, the performance of Ayrshire Valuation Joint Board in relation to its functions will be reported to all stakeholders of the Valuation Joint Board, including staff, in the most appropriate manner.
- 2.5 Stakeholder Consultations will be continually developed and implemented, and taken account of in-Service Planning. There is a Customer Comments and Complaints procedure that is regularly reviewed.
- 2.6 The Customer Comments and Complaints procedure in place has been revised in line with the Scottish Public Sector Ombudsman's Model Complaints Handling Procedure. All comments/complaints will be considered by the Corporate

Governance Forum and the Management Team for improvement action and reported as is required by the procedure.

- 2.7 Over the lifetime of this plan a relevant set of, Customer Service Standards will be implemented, along with systems for the monitoring of, and reporting on, these.
- 2.8 AVJB will give consideration to any guidance issued, under the terms of Section 2(1)(b) of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003. This is an external factor over which the Board has no control and which may result in variation to the Service Plan.
- 2.9 As part of the Communication Strategy an in-house Valuation Forum has been established and will be a crucial forum for the discussion and review of all valuation matters. It will also contribute to developing and reviewing performance and implementing best practice. The remit of this Forum has developed and it will be the main driver for the implementation of the NDR Bill changes.

2.1 BEST VALUE & IMPROVEMENT: INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

- 2.1.1 The provision and maintenance of Information Technology assets, systems and services are carried out “in house” and in partnership with South Ayrshire Council’s Finance and ICT, Resources, Governance and Organisation. The Management Team will continually monitor service provision.
- 2.1.2 The services of AVJB will continue to be supported and improved through the application and development of Information Technology systems in accordance with the Assessor’s IT Strategy, which will be updated in 2021, to reflect the proposed expansion of home working.
- 2.1.3 The assets of AVJB will be refreshed in line with the IT Strategy. The Boards IT service are supplied by South Ayrshire Council under the Service Level Agreement and this includes PSN compliance.
- 2.1.4 AVJB adheres to the principles of Data Protection and reviews its Notification to the Information Commissioner annually.
- 2.1.5 The electoral registration function is supported by Elector8, supplied by Democracy Counts. The system will be developed to comply with legislative change, government policy and user group requirements.
- 2.1.6 The Assessor’s core information technology system is in the process of being replaced with a modern fit for purpose system and in line with SACs IT rationalisation Programme. The new system will be partially in place by February 2021 and by April 2022 the full system will be live and the old server made redundant 6 months after full go-live.
- 2.1.7 The outbreak of Coronavirus has brought home that I need to do more to promote home working. Once the core system is up and running there will be various pilots run

to establish a blended model of home and office working. This will aid with business continuity over a longer period than was envisaged by our Disaster Recovery Plan.

- 2.1.8 AVJB will commit resources to the SAAs shared service, the “Assessors Portal” project. This will be a key driver of the NDR Bill and will have to be adequately resourced.
- 2.1.9 The form and content of the AVJB web pages within the Portal will be reviewed on an on-going basis.
- 2.1.10 The updating and review of AVJBs website is carried out by South Ayrshire Council under the Service Level Agreement. However, the actual content has been allocated to a number of members of staff with expertise in the field, which the content covers.
- 2.1.11 Ayrshire Valuation Joint Board has implemented and continues to develop an in-house intranet site which allows the sharing of documents at appropriate levels whilst adhering to our retention schedule and records management plan. Again, the merits of the SP site has been brought into sharp focus by recent events and this will be extended to facilitate greater access to required information for home worker

2.2 BEST VALUE & IMPROVEMENT: KEY PARTNERSHIPS & SHARED SERVICES

- 2.2.1 The support services provided by South Ayrshire Council are essential to the operations of AVJB. These services will continue to be managed by regular contact with relevant persons in each of the supporting resources. A Service Level Agreement is in place and will be reviewed as and when required.
- 2.2.2 Ayrshire Valuation Joint Board recognises its constituent Councils as key stakeholders, and the Assessor and ERO will consult with these bodies in all areas relating to the outputs of Valuation Rolls, Council Tax Valuation Lists and Electoral Registers.
- 2.2.3 AVJB is committed to the maintenance of the Corporate Address Gazetteers of its constituent Councils, and through these initiatives to the ‘One Scotland Gazetteer’ and use of National Unique Property Reference Numbers (UPRNs). To that end we provide such assistance, information and data as and when requested. Going forward the UPRNs will be crucial to data management and to realise efficiencies within AVJB.
- 2.2.4 The Joint Board will continue to commit resources to the workings of the SAA. In this respect, it will participate in Plenary, Committee and Working Group meetings and fully engage in the exchange of information, ideas and knowledge provided by this Association.
- 2.2.5 Through the SAA, the Assessor for AVJB will maintain liaison with bodies such as the Scottish Government, Cabinet Office, Scotland Office, Valuation Office Agency (England and Wales), the Valuation and Land Agency (Northern Ireland), the Valuation Office in Ireland, The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors and The

Institute of Revenues, Rating and Valuation (IRRV).

- 2.2.6 Similarly, Joint Board staff will continue to participate in the workings and proceedings of the Association of Electoral Administrators (AEA).
- 2.2.7 AVJB recognises the role of, and support provided by, The Electoral Commission and the Electoral Management Board for Scotland in respect of Electoral Registration matters.
- 2.2.8 Ayrshire Equalities Partnership is detailed in the equalities area under governance.
- 2.2.9 RICS and education establishments are major players in the supply of Chartered Surveyors to meet NDR challenges. The Assessor represents the SAA on a number of Boards and Groups within the RICS.
- 2.2.10 Relationships with external suppliers of systems and services are subject to contract and/or Service Level Agreement and are managed through liaison with the relevant account manager or similar representative. Such services are, however, subject to continuous review regarding effectiveness, quality and price.
- 2.2.11 AVJB recognises the important relationship it has with the Returning Officers of the three Ayrshire Councils and will continue regular liaison.
- 2.2.12 For the duration of Canvass Reform and the Modernising Electoral Registration Programme, the Cabinet Office will be a significant stakeholder in terms of the implementation of the changes.
- 2.2.13 The Barclay review also made a recommendation to Assessors to engage more with stakeholders and we are fulfilling the brief in a number of ways through the setting up of a number of Forums. These include the Scottish Ratepayers Forum; the Scottish Rating Surveyors Forum and various consultations with service users and their agents. It is hoped that these along with the SAA Issues Log, where consistency points can be raised by agents or ratepayers and will resolve any perceived problems.

3.0 SOUND GOVERNANCE

- 3.1 The Valuation Joint Board must ensure that the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer is adequately resourced to perform her statutory functions. It will meet to discuss and approve Budgets, Policies and Practices as necessary and the members will act in accordance with the Code of Conduct for Councillors which is approved by the Scottish Government.
- 3.2 The Officers of the Valuation Joint Board will act in accordance with the relevant Joint Boards Governance & Performance Framework, Corporate Plan, Scheme of Delegation, Financial Regulations, and Codes of Conduct. These will be reviewed as required.
- 3.3 Governance of the organisation is achieved through a number of policies, procedures; reporting tools and supporting document, detailed in Diagram 1 below.

- 3.4 Policies covering Defalcation Procedures and Fraud Prevention have been implemented and will be reviewed on a three-yearly basis in line with the Boards lead authority. The Joint Boards Governance & Performance Framework is an overarching document which broadly refers to the mechanisms and processes by which the organisation is controlled and directed. The framework of rules ensures transparency, integrity, accountability and fairness all of which is underpinned by clear leadership.
- 3.5 Proper financial procedures and practices, including 2-3 year budgeting and monthly monitoring and public reporting, are also in place.
- 3.6 Corporate Governance procedures and practices have been implemented and are adhered to at Elected Member and Officer level. These include the Governance & Performance Framework and the Corporate Plan. They are continually reviewed and improved with particular reference made to such good practice and good governance guidance as is provided by Audit Scotland. Risk Management forms an integral part of the corporate governance framework and the Strategic Risk Register identifies and analysis business risks and how we intend to mitigate these.
- 3.7 Accountability is achieved through a combination of internal audit, external audit, performance monitoring and reporting.
- 3.8 The Corporate Governance Forum and Management Team Meetings will continue to be the primary forums for the development and implementation of Strategy and Policy and will oversee all operational matters. Actions will be communicated to staff by various methods all detailed within the Ayrshire Valuation Joint Board Communication Strategy.
- 3.9 Effective performance management systems continue to be developed, with the Assessor's Management Team also forming the principle forum for matters relating to Performance Management, Planning and Reporting. A reporting framework has been implemented and will be subject to continual review.
- 3.10 In order to maximise the benefits of HR support, the Valuation Joint Board will continue to align its HR and other related policies, generally, and where possible, with those of South Ayrshire Council, but will where necessary produce a policy reflecting the needs of the Board, the Assessor and staff. The independence of the statutory functions of the Assessor and ERO will be a high priority in the design of policies. Relevant policies will be published on the website as well as on the Board's Intranet site – SharePoint.
- 3.11 Specific operational matters will be within the remit of the various internal forums and working groups. These groups, whose format, remit and membership will be reviewed regularly, will report to the Assessor's Management Team.

- 3.12 The Valuation Joint Board recognises its staff as valuable assets and key stakeholders. The Joint Board will continue to align its personnel and other related matters, as appropriate with those of South Ayrshire Council, as the Boards lead authority.
- 3.13 AVJB operates in an ever more complex and financially challenging environment and continues to develop a range of key partnerships, shared services and stakeholder relationships.
- 3.14 As an organisation we are committed to various initiatives, not covered above but which have significant implication for service planning. Initiatives such as responding to consultations.
- 3.15 We are also committed to the maintenance of the Corporate Address Gazetteer of our constituent authorities. Our systems are reliant on the National Unique Reference Numbers and to that end we assist the authorities with this task.
- 3.16 All required survey work/ canvass will be carried out in such a way as to ensure the safety of staff and service users. Risk Assessments will be carried out by the staff member in line with support by their line manager.

Diagram 1

