

Report

Report to:	Lanarkshire Valuation Joint Board
Date of Meeting:	1 March 2021
Report by:	Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer

Subject:	Lanarkshire Valuation Joint Board - Service Plan 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2022 – Update
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ♦ provide members with an update on Lanarkshire Valuation Joint Board's (LVJB) Service Plan covering the period 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2022

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Board is asked to approve the following recommendation(s):-

- (1) that the content of the report be noted.

3. Background

3.1. LVJB's current Service Plan, which covers the period from 1 April 2019 through to 31 March 2022, was approved at the Board meeting of 4 March 2019. This is the second update to that Service Plan.

4. Key Business Areas

4.1. The Service Plan sets out the key business areas identified for LVJB over a three year period. The plan assists in ensuring that LVJB's services are delivered as effectively and efficiently as possible to service users.

4.2. LVJB's Core Purpose and Vision statement reaffirms that we seek to achieve completeness and accuracy in all work undertaken. This includes producing:-

- complete Electoral Registers which include all eligible electors in Lanarkshire accurately named at their qualifying address
- a complete Valuation Roll which includes all relevant lands and heritages with accurate rateable values
- a complete Valuation (Council Tax) List which includes all dwellings with accurate bands

4.3. This report provides updates on key business areas and details progress on specific projects within the three key business areas of the Board, namely Electoral Registration, Non-Domestic Rating and Council Tax.

5. Key Challenges

- 5.1. The key challenges faced by LVJB over the period of the new Service Plan within its three main business areas have been identified as follows:-

Within Electoral Registration:- to plan for and ensure that individual electoral registration continues to be managed successfully; to respond to, and implement changes which result from the electoral reform review process; to plan for and ensure service delivery for each election arising over the period of the Service Plan; to ensure the completeness and accuracy of the Electoral Registers.

Within Non-Domestic Valuation:- to ensure the maintenance of the Valuation Roll between revaluations and that values accurately reflect changes to Valuation Roll entries; to ensure the disposal of all appeals received in accordance with statutory timescales; to plan for and ensure the completion of, in accordance with statutory timescales, the 2023 Revaluation and the future challenges as a result of the Barclay Review of Non-Domestic Rating.

Within Council Tax:- to ensure that new houses are entered in the Valuation List as soon after completion as possible; to ensure that band changes relating to a material change of value of a dwelling, followed by its subsequent sale, are effected as soon as possible; to continue to deal with proposals to alter Council Tax bands as efficiently as possible.

6. Employee Implications

- 6.1. None.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1. Financial issues in relation to the Service Plan are covered annually as part of the budgetary process and discussions with the Treasurer to the Board.

8. Climate Change, Sustainability and Environmental Implications

- 8.1. There are no climate change, sustainability or environmental implications in terms of the information contained in this report.

9. Other Implications

- 9.1. There are various risks associated with not either having or adhering to an organisational Service Plan. LVJB has in place a specific risk register which is monitored and reviewed by the management team.

10. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

- 10.1. Such matters are referred to in the Service Plan.

11. Privacy Impact Assessment

- 11.1. Such matters are referred to in the Service Plan.

Renzo Pacitti BSc MRICS

Assistant Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer

11 February 2021

Previous References

- ◆ 4 March 2019 – Lanarkshire Valuation Joint Board Service Plan – 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2022
- ◆ 1 June 2020 – Lanarkshire Valuation Joint Board Service Plan – 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2022 – Update

List of Background Papers

- ◆ None

Contact for Further Information

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**The Office of the
Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer**

SERVICE PLAN

April 2019 – March 2022



Our Core Purpose

To prepare, maintain and update an accurate Valuation Roll, Valuation List (Council Tax) & Electoral Register having regard to statutory requirements.

Our Vision

Our vision is to deliver quality in the work which we undertake, provide efficient services to all service users, and ensure completeness and accuracy of the Electoral Register, Valuation Roll and the Valuation (Council Tax) List.

In Order That We Achieve Our Vision We Will:

Ensure that our services are delivered in accordance with all statutory requirements.

Plan service development and delivery in accordance with the principles of efficient government and continuous improvement.

Undertake customer care surveys to assist us in improving our service delivery.

Recognise our employees as both stakeholders and our most important asset.

Take individual and collective responsibility for the services provided by LVJB.

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.

Undertake our duties having regard to sustainability.

Build on our achievements to date.

LANARKSHIRE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
ASSESSOR AND ELECTORAL REGISTRATION OFFICER
SERVICE PLAN
PART ONE
SERVICE FUNCTION

Lanarkshire 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 and South Lanarkshire Councils. With the agreement of the two Councils, the Board also has responsibility for the Electoral Registration function for Lanarkshire.

The Assessor is responsible for valuation for non-domestic rating (The Valuation Roll) and council tax banding (The Council Tax Valuation List), and in his 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.

1.1 VALUATION ROLL

The Valuation Roll is a list of all non-domestic properties, which are not excluded properties, along with the Net Annual and Rateable Values which the Assessor has established for each property. These annual values form the basis for non-domestic rates charges. The Roll is published annually and updated weekly.

The Assessor is required to complete a Revaluation of all non-domestic properties within the Valuation Roll, normally every 5 years. The most recent of these was completed in accordance with the statutory timetable and came into effect on 1 April 2017.

At 1 February 2019 there were a total 20,582 properties in the Valuation Rolls for North and South Lanarkshire Council areas, with a total rateable value of £1,035,634,890.

Update May 2020:

At 31 March 2020 there were a total of 21,008 properties in the Valuation Rolls for North and South Lanarkshire Council areas, with a total rateable value of circa £1,046 million.

Update February 2021:

At 31 January 2021 there were a total of 21,004 properties in the Valuation Rolls for North and South Lanarkshire Council areas, with a total rateable value of circa £1,023 million.

1.2 VALUATION LIST

The Valuation List is a list of all domestic properties upon which Council Tax charges are based. It is published annually and updated weekly.

Each dwelling is placed in one of eight broad valuation bands according to their estimated market value as at 1 April 1991.

At 1 February 2019 there were a total of 307,789 council tax entries – excluding garages - in the Valuation Lists for the Lanarkshire area.

Update May 2020:

At 31 March 2020 there were a total of 331,048 council tax entries – including garages - in the Valuation Lists for the Lanarkshire area.

Update February 2021:

At 31 January 2021 there were a total of 332,575 council tax entries – including garages - in the Valuation Lists for the Lanarkshire area.

1.3 REGISTER OF ELECTORS

The Register of Electors contains the names of all persons resident within the area and eligible to vote at UK Parliamentary, Scottish Parliamentary, European and Local Elections together with referenda. It is generally published annually, by 1 December, and updated regularly throughout the year.

Prior to publication, the Register is updated by an annual canvass consisting of a postal canvass of all households, which is usually carried out during July - November each year, and a door-to-door canvass.

At 1 February 2019 the total electorate in Lanarkshire who are eligible to vote in Scottish Parliamentary elections was 503,434.

Update May 2020:

At 31 March 2020 the total electorate in Lanarkshire who are eligible to vote in Scottish Parliamentary elections was over 500,000 electors.

Update February 2021:

At 31 March 2020 the total electorate in Lanarkshire who are eligible to vote in Scottish Parliamentary elections remains over 500,000 electors.

1.4 OTHER FUNCTIONS

The Assessor carries out a range of functions in support of these primary services, and these are covered in Part Two, Core Objectives, below.

1.5 RISK OF THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC ON THE FUNCTIONS OF LANARKSHIRE VALUATION JOINT BOARD

Following the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, LVJB's management team monitored advice from the UK and Scottish Governments, and also NHS Scotland. This has been an ongoing process whereby management has reacted to a fast

paced, ever changing situation during this health crisis. Given the guidance, all site visits were halted and will only resume when guidance from the aforementioned bodies changes. This has an obvious risk to our ability to maintain the Valuation Roll and Council Tax List, although we have taken steps to mitigate this by inspecting planning permission details online and keeping in contact with house builders, to acquire plans and dates of occupancy of houses.

In terms of the Valuation Roll we have received over 3,000 coronavirus material change of circumstances appeals. Negotiation and disposal of this unexpected volume of appeals will clearly place an onerous burden on the organisation's resources. In addition, the remaining 2017 Revaluation appeals, which were scheduled to be disposed of, in general, by the end of June, have been postponed and re-scheduled to be cited from September to the end of December. The negotiation and disposal of these timeously will be challenging.

There are 3 valuation appeal hearings set aside later in the year for the disposal of Council Tax appeals and given the current coronavirus situation, there is the risk that scheduled valuation appeal hearings will not proceed. There has also been a spike in Council Tax proposals since the lockdown the disposal of which will be another challenge to be met.

In terms of Electoral Registration matters, the annual canvass of electors will commence on 1 August. Although, as is detailed at 2.3.1 later, the number of canvasser household visits is expected to be lower this year there is still a risk that door to door visits may not be possible. The ERO will monitor Government advice in regards the ongoing public health crisis prior to arranging canvasser household visits.

In terms of risk to staff, a risk assessment in connection to the possibility of returning to work in LVJB offices has been drawn up and various items of PPE have been ordered. This will not take place until the guidance from the Governments allows it.

Going forward to mitigate the risk to LVJB service provision, should this situation continue or arise again, the PC refresh for LVJB will now be in the form of laptops to ensure a quick transition to home working should it be necessary.

Update February 2021:

SLC laptops have now been provided to all members of staff to permit remote & blended working and maintain service provision.

Following the development of a rota ensuring compliance with social distancing advice, some staff returned to the office from 29 June 2020. This situation continued until the festive break at which time, and following Government advice, all staff reverted to fully remote working arrangements.

In respect of the Non-Domestic valuation service area, LVJB have now received 4,276 appeals on the grounds that coronavirus has created a material change of circumstance affecting value. In respect of the vast majority of these coronavirus appeals the statutory time limit for their disposal has now been extended by the Scottish Parliament to 31 December 2021.

In terms of the planned disposal of outstanding of Council Tax appeals, six valuation appeal hearings have been scheduled this year to deal with these. However, face to face hearings have been cancelled by the Lanarkshire Valuation Appeal Panel until further notice due to the on-going health crisis.

In the Electoral Services area, it was agreed by LVJB's management team that the scheduled 2020 door-to-door canvass of electors should not be undertaken given the current health crisis and taking cognisance of the advice from the Scottish Government and NHS Scotland. However, all other elements of the annual canvass were undertaken with the Registers published on 1 December 2020.

LANARKSHIRE VALUATION JOINT BOARD
ASSESSOR AND ELECTORAL REGISTRATION OFFICER
SERVICE PLAN
PART TWO
CORE OBJECTIVES

2.1 THE VALUATION ROLL

2.1.1 Maintenance of the Valuation Roll

Maintenance of the Valuation Roll, including the addition of new subjects, the deletion of 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. Valuation Notices will be issued to all Proprietors, Tenants and Occupiers and all relevant changes will be notified to the billing authorities timeously.

Update May 2020:

In the financial year to 31 March 2020, some 1,311 value changes had been made to the Valuation Roll since 1 April 2019; 84% of these changes were made within 3 months of their effective alteration date (performance target for period 2019/20 set at 77%).

Update February 2021:

In the period 1 April 2020 to 31 January 2021, some 323 value changes had been made to the Valuation Roll. 47% of these changes were made within 3 months of their effective alteration date (performance target for period 2020/21 set at 77%).

2.1.2 Revaluation Appeals

Following the completion of the 2017 Non-Domestic Revaluation, which took effect from 1 April 2017, LVJB received 9,277 appeals against these new valuations. This was a marked increase from the 7,563 appeals received in respect of the 2010 Revaluation.

In terms of the legislation these appeals have to be dealt with by 31 December 2020, ie, within a 3 year period. This will be a significant, resource intensive, challenge for LVJB. By 1 February 2019 LVJB had disposed of 3,231 appeals.

It should be noted that a review of the tribunals system in Scotland is underway and it is expected that this will have an effect on the existing structure of Valuation Appeal Committees throughout the country. Any planned changes to the current appeal system will be considered by the Assessor and his staff in terms of the impact on current working practices.

Where values are deemed to be correct, then they will continue to be robustly defended. Decisions of cases which have proceeded to a Valuation Appeal Committee hearing can be viewed at www.lvap.org. Going forward, new decisions will be hosted on a Scotland wide website which, when completed will be able to be viewed at <https://scotvac.org/>

Update May 2020:

At 1 May 2020 LVJB have disposed of 8,242 revaluation appeals leaving 1,039 appeals outstanding. Of this figure 827 had been cited for 4 hearing dates in May and June 2020.

However, following the Government's public health advice in relation to the coronavirus pandemic, the Lanarkshire Valuation Appeal Panel took the decision to cancel these hearings at a point where only 11 had been settled. The remaining 816 will be re- cited in due course once the panel has decided appeal hearings can resume.

At 1 May 2020 the Scottish Government has not determined whether an extension to the statutory disposal date for these appeals will be legislated for.

Update February 2021:

At 31 January 2021 LVJB have disposed of 8,784 revaluation appeals leaving 497 appeals outstanding of which 224 have been referred to the Lands Tribunal for Scotland for determination. All of the remaining outstanding appeals will be cited for hearing dates up to 30 June 2021.

However, following the Government's public health advice in relation to the coronavirus pandemic, the Lanarkshire Valuation Appeal Panel (LVAP) have taken the decision that face to face hearings will not recommence until further notice. They do however continue to cite appeals and LVJB staff discuss them in the normal fashion with the appellants and their professional agents. If, however, following completion of discussions agreement cannot be reached it will be necessary to have such appeals postponed or continued to a future hearing date.

All such appeals originally had to be disposed of by 31 December 2020. However, the Scottish Parliament enacted the Valuation Timetable (Disposal of Appeals and Complaints) (Coronavirus) (Scotland) Amendment Order 2020 which now extends this deadline for disposal until 31 December 2021.

2.1.3 Running Roll Appeals

The Assessor and his staff will include running roll appeals in his ongoing programme for the disposal of non-domestic appeals in accordance with statutory disposal dates for each appeal received.

Update May 2020:

As at 1 May 2020, 528 running roll appeals have been settled since 1 April 2017 settled. Running roll appeals are cited alongside revaluation appeals in respect of similar type subjects in similar locations. A further 392 had been cited for 4 hearing dates in May and June 2020, but as outlined at 2.1.2 above were unable to be disposed of following the decision to cancel these scheduled hearing dates.

This leaves 459 running roll appeals which are presently logged on our core system and which remain outstanding. However, a large number of appeals have been received since 1 March 2020, the vast majority of which have been lodged on the grounds of material change of circumstance due to the impact of the coronavirus. At 1 May 2020 the organisation had received some 3,022 such appeals through the Scottish Assessors Association portal and a further number via emails and letters which have yet to be quantified.

As stated earlier the negotiation and disposal of this unexpected volume of appeals will clearly place an onerous burden on the organisation's resources.

Update February 2021:

Non Covid-19 Running Roll Appeals: At 31 January 2021, 966 running roll appeals have been settled since 1 April 2017 leaving 818 appeals outstanding of which 49 have been referred to the Lands Tribunal for Scotland for determination. In a similar fashion to the revaluation appeals described at 2.1.2 above all of the remaining outstanding appeals will be cited for hearing dates up to 30 June 2021.

Covid-19 Running Roll Appeals: LVJB have received 4,276 running roll appeals on the grounds of Covid 19 constituting a material change of circumstance affecting value. Discussions at a national level through the Scottish Assessors Association are on-going in respect of these appeals to produce strategy for dealing with these exceptional numbers. The vast majority of these appeals require to be disposed of by 31 December 2021 and the negotiation and disposal of this volume of appeals within this timescale will clearly place an onerous burden on the organisation's resources.

2.1.4 Appeals to the Lands Tribunal for Scotland and Lands Valuation Appeal Court

The Assessor will allocate resources as appropriate to deal with appeals which are referred to the Lands Tribunal for Scotland and appeals to the Lands Valuation Appeal Court. Timetabling of such appeals is generally set by the respective appellate bodies.

Update May 2020:

As at 1 May 2020 there remains 19 appeals outstanding which are referred to the Lands Tribunal for Scotland.

Update February 2021:

As at 31 January 2021 there are now 290 appeals outstanding which are referred to the Lands Tribunal for Scotland.

2.1.5 Designated Assessor Responsibility

Under the terms of The Non-Domestic Rating (Valuation of Utilities) (Scotland) Order 2005 the Assessor for Lanarkshire is designated as being responsible for the conventional valuation of the majority (in rateable value terms) of the Electricity Utilities for all of Scotland. This has had a significant impact on the functions and structure of the office. The Assessor will continue to allocate resources as appropriate to deal with these additional legislative duties which are specific to the position of the Lanarkshire Assessor. The Assessor will raise the resourcing of these duties with the Treasurer to the Board where it is envisaged that their undertaking is either onerous in terms of resourcing, or where they may affect other service delivery areas.

The total value in the 2017 Revaluation Roll for Electricity subjects was over £450m. The Assessor has agreed the values of appeals lodged against the Transmission & Distribution Networks in addition to that of Scotland's Nuclear generating stations. These subjects total some £308 million of rateable value.

Running roll appeals have been received in respect of Electricity Generation subjects – wind farms. These appeals revolve around what the agents claim to be a

material change in circumstances affecting the value of the subjects. The appeals have been jointly referred to the Lands Tribunal for Scotland (LTS). Should the appeals proceed at the LTS the workload associated with running the appeals will be resource intensive.

The Assessor has formed a team to deal with these appeals.

Update May 2020:

As at 1 May 2020, 92 appeals in respect of Electricity Generation subjects remain outstanding (both 2017 Revaluation and Running Roll). These appeals had been cited by the secretary to Lanarkshire Valuation Appeal Panel for hearing dates of 13 May, 10 June and 24 June 2020. However, due to the current public health issue, the hearings have been cancelled. Whilst the appeals will be re-cited in due course, staff remain in dialogue with the ratepayers' professional representatives in an attempt to resolve these appeals.

Update February 2021:

As at 31 January 2021, 94 appeals in respect of Electricity Generation subjects remain outstanding (both 2017 Revaluation and Running Roll). Of these 81 have been referred to the Lands Tribunal for Scotland for determination. Notwithstanding such referrals, LVJB staff remain in dialogue with appellants and their professional representatives to explore whether settlement is possible without recourse to the Lands Tribunal.

2.1.6 The Barclay Review

The Scottish Government has recently concluded its review of non-domestic rating. The main impact for LVJB will be the change from 5 yearly revaluations to a system of 3 yearly revaluations. This will take effect from 1 April 2022.

The Assessor is working with the Scottish Assessors Association (SAA) to ensure that the Government's proposals are delivered, however it is understood that without significant amendment to the current legislation in relation to appeals that this change to 3 yearly revaluations will present the Assessor with significant resourcing challenges at current staffing levels.

Update May 2020:

The Non-Domestic Rates (Scotland) Act 2020 was passed into law by the Scottish Parliament on 11 March 2020. In addition to three yearly revaluations, the legislation has a number of sections which affect matters relating to the Valuation Roll, a summary of which is contained within the Progress Update report to the Board meeting of June 2020.

Update February 2021:

Updates on the workload associated with the Act continue to be summarised in the Progress Update presented at the quarterly Board meeting.

2.1.7 2022 Revaluation

During the currency of this Service Plan the Assessor will be required to deliver the 2022 revaluation of all non-domestic properties within the valuation area.

As with the 2017 Revaluation there will be the creation of a Revaluation Strategy Group comprising members of staff from within LVJB's management and senior

management teams to set targets, monitor progress and review certain valuations. This group will meet monthly, or more regularly as required.

LVJB will engage with landlords, tenants and other relevant parties to ensure that all rental information required to complete the revaluation is sought.

Valuation staff will participate in meetings of the Scottish Assessors Association to ensure that consistency in valuation approach is achieved. Certain staff will also be required to draft valuation practice notes to be applied throughout Scotland.

Update May 2020:

Work in relation to the undertaking of the 2022 non-domestic revaluation continues to be considered by LVJB's senior valuation staff. Dialogue continues with the Scottish Assessors Association, and other interested parties, in respect of information requests in preparation for the revaluation, in particular in relation to Assessors' new information gathering powers as introduced by the Non-Domestic Rating (Scotland) Act.

Update February 2021:

In December 2020 the Scottish Parliament passed into law The Valuation (Postponement of Revaluation) (Coronavirus) (Scotland) Order 2020. It made two fundamental changes to arrangements for the forthcoming revaluation. Firstly, it has postponed the 2022 Revaluation by 12 months and accordingly the next non-domestic revaluation will come into force on 1 April 2023. The second change enacts that the tone date for the 2023 revaluation will now be one year prior to the date of the revaluation rather than two years as has been the situation in previous revaluations. In practice this moves the effective date from 1 April 2020 to 1 April 2022. This change to a one year tone date was a recommendation from the Barclay Review and was intended to have been implemented at the 2025 Revaluation.

Notwithstanding this postponement, work in relation to the undertaking of the 2023 Non-Domestic Revaluation continues to be considered by LVJB's senior valuation staff in their role as members of Scottish Assessors Association working groups and committees.

2.2 THE VALUATION LIST

2.2.1 Maintenance of the Valuation List

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 timeously.

Update May 2020:

In the financial year to 31 March 2020 some 3,165 new houses were added to the Valuation List since 1 April 2019; 96% of these additions have been made within 3 months of their effective completion date (performance target for period 2019/20 set at 87%).

Update February 2021:

In the period from 1 April 2020 to 31 January 2021 1,722 new houses were added to the Valuation List; 94% of these additions have been made within three months of their effective completion date (performance target for period 2020/21 set at 87%).

The volume of new housing is noticeably lower than at the same point in 2020 and since the start of this financial year on-site surveys have been paused due to health concerns relating to the pandemic. Notwithstanding this cessation of on-site surveys, LVJB staff have maintained good communication channels with sales staff of housing construction sites in North and South Lanarkshire and with individual house builders. This has enabled receipt of electronic plans, photographs, the banding of houses from desk-top, and receipt of dates of legal entry.

2.2.2 Alterations to Bands

Band changes following alteration and subsequent sale will continue in accordance with relevant legislation and the Joint Board's established procedures for completion within annual targets.

Update May 2020:

In the financial year to 31 March 2020 some 169 Council Tax bands have been increased since 1 April 2019 as a result of the property being altered and subsequently sold, the alteration being deemed significant enough to warrant an increase in band.

Update February 2021:

In the period from 1 April 2020 to 31 January 2021 some 125 Council Tax bands have been increased as a result of the property being altered and subsequently sold, the alteration being deemed significant enough to warrant an increase in band.

2.2.3 Proposals & Appeals

Council Tax proposals and appeals will continue to be considered, whether invalidly made or not, to ensure that dwellings are entered in the Valuation List at the correct band. When a band is considered to be incorrect, then the Assessor and his staff will correct it, either upwards or downwards, under current legislative powers.

Update May 2020:

As at 1 May 2020 some 129 proposals and appeals remain outstanding with 3 remaining Council Tax valuation appeal hearings having been arranged for the remainder of this year as part of a strategy to deal with these as efficiently as possible. Of this number, 36 have been identified as having been validly made. As already mentioned given the current coronavirus situation, there is uncertainty if scheduled valuation appeal hearings will proceed.

Update February 2021:

As at 31 January 2021 some 158 proposals and appeals remain outstanding with six remaining Council Tax valuation appeal hearings having been arranged for the remainder of this year as part of a strategy to deal with these as efficiently as possible. Of this number, 72 have been identified as having been validly made. As already stated at section 2.1.2 given the current coronavirus situation, the LVAP has taken the decision that there will be no face to face appeal hearings until further notice. Irrespective of this, appeals continue to be cited and discussed by LVJB staff and Council Tax payers in order to achieve a settlement where possible. Where this has not proven to be possible such appeals will be postponed to a future hearing date.

2.3 REGISTER OF ELECTORS

- 2.3.1 The Register of Electors will be published by 1 December in each year following a canvass carried out prior to publication unless legislation dictates otherwise. The objective of the canvass will be to ensure the maximum possible return of satisfactorily completed canvass forms and that the register accurately reflects the information contained on them.

The Statutory Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places is required to be carried out between October 2018 and February 2020 by the Returning Officer. The consultation period concluded on 22 November 2018. The required changes were finalised and implemented by the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) in time for the publication of the revised register on 1 December 2018.

Update May 2020:

This year, the annual canvass of electors will commence on 1 August which will involve the canvass of over 500,000 electors in over 300,000 households. It is envisaged that the requirement for canvasser household visits will be markedly lower than in previous years following the introduction of canvass reform.

Canvass Reform will permit the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) to data match existing electoral register against data sets held by the Department for Work & Pension (DWP) (known as national matching) and also against the Council Tax data sets held by the constituent authorities (known as local matching).

Where a household is fully matched through this process the ERO is no longer required to issue a Household Enquiry Form (HEF) to these households, but rather will issue a Household Notification Letter (HNL) to advise the household of the detail held on the register. HEFs and Invitation to Register forms (ITR) will now only be required to be issued to households which did not fully match during national and local matching process.

Additionally, canvass reform will permit the ERO to obtain current electors' details from certain categories of properties (eg, Care Homes, Halls of Residence etc) from a single, responsible individual.

As previously stated the ERO will monitor Government advice in regards the ongoing public health crisis prior to arranging canvasser household visits.

Update February 2021:

As noted at last year's update, the 2020 canvass was the first to be conducted under Canvass Reform which attempted to provide EROs with a streamlined procedure for the compilation of the electoral register whilst still maintaining its accuracy. The register was published on 1 December 2020.

Due to Government health advice, it was agreed by the LVJB Management Team not to conduct the door-to-door element of the canvass in 2020 however ITRs continue to be issued in an effort to ensure the accuracy of the Electoral Register. Over 25,000 ITRs have been issued since the start of the 2020 canvass.

- 2.3.2 The Register will be updated on a monthly basis between annual canvasses. All statutory notices and lists will be timeously provided to relevant parties.

Update May 2020:

Updates to the Electoral Register continue to be undertaken monthly. Whilst ERO staff have been working remotely since 24 March 2020, both scheduled updates of 1 April and 1 May have been completed.

Update February 2021:

Monthly updates to the Electoral Register have continued to be published every month since April 2020 both during periods of blended working and remote working.

- 2.3.3 Election Registers and Lists of Absent/Postal/Proxy voters etc will be produced as required by statute and by agreement with Returning Officers.
- 2.3.4 The Electoral Administration Act 2006 introduced a number of duties on the Electoral Registration Officer, including a duty to maximise registration and to collect personal identifiers for electors wishing to vote by post or by proxy.
- 2.3.5 Individual registration was implemented in Scotland on 19 September 2014. Processes and procedures have been developed to assist in managing this fundamental change to electoral registration, in particular to ensure that individual registration does not compromise the completeness and accuracy of the Electoral Register. Discussions will continue with the Cabinet Office and the Treasurer to the Board where it is envisaged that their undertaking is either onerous in terms of resourcing, or where they may affect other service delivery areas.

Work is underway to amend the legislation and guidance governing the annual canvass. This timetable should allow sufficient time for the redesign, development and testing of Electoral Registration Systems, for guidance to be revised and training delivered in time for the revised model to be used for the 2020 annual canvass.

Update May 2020:

The Canvass Reform Data Test (CRDT) element of canvass reform has now been completed. This was conducted by comparing a snapshot of the Electoral Register at 1 June 2019 with national and local data (as explained at 2.3.1 above) from the same date.

The purpose of this test is to provide a percentage “match” thereby permitting adequate planning for the likely number of HEFs and ITRs which will be required to be issued in 2020, assuming the 2020 data match produces broadly similar results to those produced using the 2019 test data.

The CRDT produced a 78.89% match. If this result was repeated in this year’s canvass it would result in the requirement to issue circa 65,000 HEFs. This compares favourably with the numbers issued in recent years since the introduction of individual electoral registration which saw, in addition to over 300,000 HEFs being issued at the commencement of the canvass process, a further sizeable number of postal reminders to those households which made no initial return. Whilst this number varied annually, by way of example it was circa 140,000 during the 2018 canvass.

Consequently, it is envisaged that there will be a reduced number of door-to-door visits required for the annual canvass due to commence on 1 August 2020.

Update February 2021:

As explained at 2.3.1 above, it was anticipated that conducting the annual canvass of electors under the Canvass Reform regime would lead to a reduction in volume both paper communication and door-to-door canvassing. This reduction was realised.

Following a 79% match, an initial 65,164 canvass forms were issued to properties lacking a full match, which in turn required a further 49,683 reminders to be issued. By way of comparison, at the 2019 canvass over 300,000 initial communications were issued (at that time they were called Household Enquiry Forms (HEFs)).

In 2019, following the issue of the HEFs and subsequent reminders, there was a requirement to canvass over 105,000 properties in person. At the 2020 this element of the canvass had fallen to 37,435. However due to the on-going health crisis LVJB's management team took the decision that this element of the canvass should not be conducted. The matter remains under constant review with regard to advice received from NHS Scotland and the Scottish Government.

IER continues to be actively pursued by LVJB who issue ITRs to potential electors where names have been received from a variety of sources, such as Council Tax information, telephone calls and canvass forms.

- 2.3.6 There is the requirement, for the ERO to continue the process of refreshing personal identifiers collected in relation to absent voting. This exercise will be repeated annually in January of each year

Update May 2020:

A refresh of personal identifiers was carried out in January of 2020, which involved a write out 9,786 electors requesting a refresh of their signature, with a further 3,933 reminders where no return had been made. 1,696 returns were received from reminders.

Update February 2021:

A refresh of personal identifiers was carried out in January of 2021, which involved a write out to circa 3,500 electors requesting a refresh of their signature.

- 2.3.7 Following the extension of the franchise allowing 16 and 17 year olds to vote in Scottish elections LVJB Assistant Assessors continue to work in partnership with their respective contacts within the Local Authorities Departments of Education and Further Education establishments to encouraging young persons in Lanarkshire to register to vote.

Update May 2020:

LVJB continues to liaise with the education authorities of both North and South Lanarkshire to record relevant details of "attainers" – young people who are currently 14 or 15 years old and who will become eligible to vote in certain elections from their 16th birthday.

Following the enactment of the Scottish Elections (Franchise and Representation) Act 2020 foreign nationals with a legal right to reside in Scotland will have the right to vote in Scottish elections as will prisoners who have been sentenced to prison terms of 12 months or less (the latter being enacted on 1 April 2020). The ERO has been working collaboratively with other EROs, the Scottish Government and the Scottish Prisons' Service (SPS) to ensure full compliance with the provisions of the Act. The Minister for the Constitution has recently approved the prisoner registration

form and work remains ongoing with regard to finalising a data sharing agreement (DSA) between the SPS and EROs.

In the interim period the ERO will be able to verify any application to register with the SPS prior to the DSA being approved.

Update February 2021:

Following the enactment of the Scottish Elections (Franchise and Representation) Act 2020 LVJB is now adding both prisoners and foreign nationals with a right to reside in Scotland to the electoral register.

- 2.3.8 The next scheduled election is the Scottish Parliamentary elections on 6 May 2021.

Update February 2021:

Following the survey of a representative sample of eligible voters in Scotland work conducted on behalf of the Scottish Government in August and November 2020 titled "Public attitudes towards voting in Scotland in the context of COVID-19" LVJB are currently preparing for an anticipated upsurge in postal vote applications.

At present LVJB has circa 67,000 postal voters registered. However, the findings of this survey suggest that 40% of the electorate may opt to vote by post. Based on these results LVJB are currently considering arrangements to meet this anticipated increased demand in postal vote applications.

These arrangements include the training of existing staff in the valuation service of the organisation and potentially employing temporary staff from outwith LVJB. It is envisaged that processing this volume of application will require management to offer overtime to staff both for evenings and weekends. In anticipation of this the Scottish Government has provided a sum of £362,118 to LVJB to assist with the anticipated increase in workload.

It is not possible to predict if such volumes will be realised and if they are at what point they will be received. LVJB's Management Team continue to assess the risk associated with the increased workload. Dialogue continues with South Lanarkshire Council (IT Services) and LVJB's software application provider to ensure that system performance requirements are met.

2.4 CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

- 2.4.1 The Valuation Joint Board will ensure that the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer is adequately resourced to perform his statutory functions. It will meet to discuss and approve budgets, policies and practices as is deemed necessary and the members will act in accordance with the Code of Conduct for Councillors.
- 2.4.2 The officers of the Valuation Joint Board will act in accordance with the relevant Schemes of Delegation, Financial Regulations, Standing Orders and Codes of Conduct. Further, reference will be made to such good practice and good governance guidance as is provided by Audit Scotland.
- 2.4.3 The Service Plan and other relevant plans will be maintained and actioned. The Service Plan will cover a three year period, whilst noting matters of relevance beyond that timescale. Such plans will be reviewed in a manner which integrates with budget planning.

Update May 2020:

A new service plan was presented to the Board at the 4 March 2019 meeting. This covers the period 2019 to 2022, to which this report is the first update.

Update February 2021:

LVJB will continue to provide annual updates to the Service Plan during its currency and provide such updates to the Board. This is the second such update.

- 2.4.4 A revised Code of Corporate Governance will be developed and implemented. Fraud prevention measures will be implemented in accordance with South Lanarkshire Council guidance.

Update May 2020:

A report, on the Local Code of Corporate Governance, was presented, by the Assessor, to the Board at its meeting on 4 March 2019. This was based on the framework established by The Chartered Institution of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and The Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) in the publication Delivering Good Governance in Local Authority Government Framework (2016 Edition).

Fraud prevention measures have been implemented in accordance with South Lanarkshire Council guidance.

- 2.4.5 The strategic objectives will be laid down and monitored by the Senior Management Team, whilst both strategic and operational matters will be considered by the LVJB's Management Team. Actions will be communicated to staff by means of team briefings and written bullet notes.

Organisational strategic objectives will be set/reviewed at LVJB's monthly management team meetings, bulleted and relayed to staff via core briefs and section meetings. They will also be set/reviewed at regular meetings of the senior management team and cascaded down through the monthly management meetings.

Update May 2020:

During the run up to the coronavirus pandemic, a daily Business Continuity/Emergency Planning meeting of LVJB's Management Team was set up to monitor the emerging situation and to ensure that LVJB staff would be in a position to work from home to ensure that the key functions of the Board were undertaken.

This meeting continued, once the office was vacated and home working began, and scheduled meetings continued to be undertaken as deemed appropriate in order that statutory undertakings are met where possible to do so.

Update February 2021:

The Senior Management Team and Management Team continue to meet as scheduled, using MS Teams where appropriate. Staff continue to be regularly updated of salient matters through Management Team bullet points and, where appropriate, feedback from the weekly Senior Management Team meeting

- 2.4.6 Effective performance management systems have been implemented with the Assessor's monthly Management Team meeting being identified as the principal forum for matters relating to performance management, planning and reporting.

Update May 2020:

In-house performance management information is presented and discussed at LVJB's monthly management team meetings, and the regular senior management team meetings.

Update February 2021:

All scheduled Management and Senior Management Team meetings have continued to take place as scheduled either remotely or in person.

- 2.4.7 Specific operational matters will be within the remit of the various scheduled meetings set up to ensure that operational procedures are reviewed, updated and implemented, and also that best practice is shared between working partners, such as parties responsible for election management issues and non-domestic rates and Council Tax billing. Additional groups, such as The Health and Safety Working Group will also contribute towards ensuring that appropriate procedures and processes are adhered to. These groups in turn will report to the LVJB's Management Team.
- 2.4.8 Senior management will liaise as and when required with staff representatives.
- 2.4.9 Where deemed appropriate the Valuation Joint Board will align its personnel and other related policies with those of South Lanarkshire Council.
- 2.4.10 The financial management and operations of the Valuation Joint Board will be subject to internal and external audit (see later).
- 2.4.11 LVJB is fully committed to the principles and practice of Best Value.
- 2.4.12 LVJB's Records Management Plan was approved by the Keeper of Records of Scotland on 9 August 2016. LVJB will continue to adhere to the agreed plan to meet its full obligations under the Public Records (Scotland) Act 2011.

An invitation to submit our Progress Update Review (PUR) was received by LVJB in May 2018. Following submission, the final report on LVJB's PUR by the Public Records (Scotland) Act 2011 Assessment Team was received in September 2018. The Assessment Team evaluated the submission and agreed that the proper record management arrangements outlined in LVJB's plan continue to be properly considered.

LVJB have been scheduled by the Keeper to submit its next PUR in August 2019.

The Keeper decided to review the Model Plan to ensure it continues to work for public authorities and support the aims of the Act. A consultation period for this review is now open and will conclude on 7 March 2019.

Update May 2020:

Following receipt of LVJB's invite to submit the Progress Update Review (PUR) in August 2019, this was timeously provided to the Keeper of Records in October 2019. The Keeper duly provided his report on our PUR in February 2020 and was satisfied with the organisation's commitment to records management obligations and noted that "the proper record management arrangements outlined by the fourteen elements in the authority's plan continue to be properly considered."

Update February 2021:

Following receipt of LVJB's invite to submit the Progress Update Review (PUR) on 7 August 2020, this was timeously provided to the Keeper of Records on 16 November.

- 2.4.13 LVJB will undertake an annual review of the Risk Register.

Update May 2020:

The Risk Register was reviewed by LVJB's Management Team in January 2020 and was the subject of a report to the Board at its meeting on 2 March 2020.

Update February 2021:

The Risk Register was reviewed by LVJB's Management Team and is the subject of a report to the Board on 1 March 2021.

- 2.4.14 The lease of the premises from which the Assessor & ERO provides his service from will end in May 2021. Discussions will be undertaken with relevant parties in respect of LVJB's occupational requirements.

Update May 2020:

Detailed discussions have taken place between SLC's Housing and Technical Property Manager and the Assessor and Assistant Assessor (North), including the undertaking of an options appraisal with regards to securing suitable office accommodation for LVJB's staff once the lease on the current accommodation expires.

Update February 2021:

Board approval was granted for the relocation of LVJB's office premises at the Joint Board meeting of 7 September 2020 and it is expected that LVJB will take occupation of the new office in mid-February 2021.

2.5 HEALTH AND SAFETY

- 2.5.1 Lanarkshire Valuation Joint Board will take all reasonable steps to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all its employees, and all persons likely to be affected by its operations.

Lanarkshire Valuation Joint Board has a general duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of all employees under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 require all employers to assess the risks to their employees while they are carrying out their daily duties. Employees whose job requires them to deal with the public can be at risk from violence. In line with South Lanarkshire Council's OHSMS, Lanarkshire Valuation Joint Board have developed their own Personal Safety System. The Personal Safety System has two objectives:

- To reduce the risk of aggressive or violent behaviour from service users.
- To ensure that service users with various requirements retain a sense of personal safety when using our services.

Update February 2021:

LVJB continue to operate a Personal Safety System. Additionally, and with particular reference to the current health crisis, new Risk Assessments and Safe Systems of Work have been developed in relation to office based working and conducting the door-to-door electoral canvass. Further, similar documents are currently being drafted in relation to on-site surveys, when deemed safe to resume.

- 2.5.2 LVJB have adopted, use and participate in South Lanarkshire Council's Occupational Health and Safety Management System (OHSMS). LVJB's Management Team will ensure that this function is adequately resourced to meet legal obligations and ensure that health and safety is an integral part of the overall management culture.

LVJB's in-house H&S committee meets quarterly. LVJB H&S representatives will attend and participate in meetings of South Lanarkshire Council's Finance and Corporate Health and Safety Group. Both meetings are minuted, actions undertaken as appropriate and all information relevant to LVJB is disseminated to staff. H&S is a standing item on the agenda of LVJB Senior and Management Team meetings.

Update May 2020:

LVJB's in-house H&S committee continues to meet quarterly and its representatives continue to attend and participate in meetings of South Lanarkshire Council's Finance and Corporate Health and Safety Group.

Update February 2021:

LVJB's in-house H&S committee continued to meet quarterly until the start of the Covid-19 pandemic at which time, due to the low numbers of staff attending the office physically, in-house meetings were replaced by a more fluid system of control and information provision. With LVJB's move to new office premises beginning on 15 February 2021, the next scheduled meeting of the in-house group will take place as scheduled on 23 February using MS Teams.

LVJB's representatives continue to attend and participate in meetings of South Lanarkshire Council's Finance and Corporate Health and Safety Group including MS Team Meetings during the pandemic.

- 2.5.3 Health and Safety Officers will be appointed to actively participate in South Lanarkshire Council's, Finance and Corporate Health and Safety Group meetings so that Risk Assessments, Safe Systems of Work and PUWER assessments continue to be relevant as South Lanarkshire Council's OHSMS changes.

Update February 2021:

Since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic LVJB instigated daily Emergency Business Continuity & Planning meetings to plan for home working. Part of this plan was to prepare Risk Assessments and Safe Systems of Work for when staff could return to the office.

- 2.5.4 A Fire Action Plan has been developed in line with the OHSMS to ensure the safe evacuation of employees and service users.

Update May 2020:

The Fire Action Plan is maintained to show the names of LVJB's current floor controllers. These are reviewed and replaced as appropriate and was most recently updated in March 2020 where a floor controller left the organisation and was replaced by a current member of staff.

Update February 2021:

The Fire Action Plan continues to be maintained to show the names of LVJB's current floor controllers. These are reviewed and replaced as appropriate.

- 2.5.5 Risk Assessments and Safe Systems of Work are developed, reviewed and updated in line with the OHSMS to ensure the safety of all employees.

Update February 2021:

LVJB have developed a comprehensive Risk Assessment and Safe Systems of Work for office base working during the pandemic when restrictions allow. This included restricting numbers of staff who could come into office so that two metre distance could be maintained at all times. Additionally, LVJB's Management Team approved the provision of PPE, two metre markings on the floor, a one-way system in the office to minimize staff contact, restricting toilets to one person at a time and provision of hand gel to all staff.

- 2.5.6 Relevant training will be identified and provided to all staff in line with the OHSMS to ensure the safety of all employees. New employees will be given information and training on health and safety as part of Lanarkshire Valuation Joint Board's staff induction procedure. H&S instruction is included in LVJB Induction Procedures.

Update May 2020:

All new staff meet with the responsible Divisional Assessor on their first day, where H&S matters are discussed. Thereafter line managers arrange required training courses either through SLC People Connect, Learn On Line or in house. This training is recorded in staff PDR.

Update February 2021:

Since the commencement of home based working LVJB have employed one new member of staff. The H&S part of the induction was undertaken, albeit via MS Teams rather than face to face. MS Teams is also the medium used for the majority of PDRs and it remains a requirement of managers at these reviews to assess the individual training needs of each employee in respect of H&S and arrange training accordingly.

- 2.5.7 All matters relating to health and safety will be communicated to staff by email, management bullet points, LVJB health and safety group minutes and training. Any matters relating to individual members of staff will be communicated through email, Personal Development Review meetings, and training.

Update February 2021:

Whilst undertaking blended and remote working during the Covid-19 pandemic, staff have continued to be updated with regards to health & safety matters. At the outset of the pandemic this was through the Business Continuity & Emergency Planning daily meetings and relevant information has continued to be disseminated through Management Team meeting bullet points and section meetings.

- 2.5.8 LVJB have developed a Traffic Management Plan relating to the premises at North Stand, Cadzow Avenue, Hamilton.

Update May 2020:

Whilst this remains in force, the Traffic Management Plan remains a document which is reviewed as and when deemed appropriate.

Update February 2021:

A review of the current Traffic Management Plan was under way with a view to adding speed bumps to Cadzow Avenue, however as LVJB will be moving to new office premises the organisation will have no further involvement in this matter.

- 2.5.9 LVJB have recently updated the Surveying Safely guidance note which is available to all staff.

Update May 2020:

As stated at 1.5 following the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, LVJB's management team monitored advice from the UK and Scottish Governments, and also NHS Scotland. This has been an ongoing process whereby management has reacted to a fast paced, ever changing situation during this health crisis. Given the guidance, all site visits were halted and will only resume when guidance from the aforementioned bodies changes.

Update February 2021:

On-site inspections remain paused at the current time due to the health pandemic, however a Risk Assessment & a Safe Systems of Work procedure is being developed in anticipation of the re-commencement of on-site surveys. LVJB will continue to monitor advice received from the Scottish Government and NHS Scotland when developing these documents.

2.6 ACCOUNTABILITY

- 2.6.1 Annual Accounts will be submitted for external audit and published in accordance with the requirements of Audit Scotland.

Update May 2020:

Undertaken by the Treasurer to the Board for 2019/20 annual accounts.

Update February 2021:

This will be undertaken by the Treasurer to the Board for 2020/21 annual accounts.

- 2.6.2 The procedures and practices of the Valuation Joint Board will also be subject to external audit.

Update May 2020:

Audit Scotland undertook an annual audit for the 2019/20 year, the outcome of which forms part of a separate report to the Board.

Update February 2021:

Audit Scotland will undertake the annual audit for 2020/21.

- 2.6.3 A Service Level Agreement has been entered into with the Internal Audit Services of South Lanarkshire Council, and an audit strategy encompassing the requirements of the external and internal auditors devised.

Update May 2020:

An SLA has been agreed for the current year.

Update February 2021:

An SLA has been agreed for the current year.

- 2.6.4 Detailed Annual audit plans will, likewise, be agreed with Internal Audit Services of South Lanarkshire Council.

Update May 2020:

Internal audit have carried an audit of the “Non-Domestic Appeal Process”, which is the subject of a separate report to the Board.

Update February 2021:

Work is currently underway with the internal auditor assessing emerging risks as a result of the pandemic.

- 2.6.5 Performance will be monitored and reported internally and externally. Accordingly, a schedule of performance reports has been developed and reported at monthly Management Team meetings and also other scheduled meetings where deemed appropriate. In response to changing external requirements and management need, this schedule will be subject to continuous review.

Update May 2020:

LVJB have made a return to the SAA Governance Committee in respect of 2019/20 Key Performance Indicators and such indicators are included within LVJB’s Public Performance report which is the subject of a separate report to the Board.

Update February 2021:

LVJB continue to monitor performance through the developed suite of statistics and have submitted the annual return to the SAA Governance Committee in respect of 2020/21 Key Performance Indicators.

- 2.6.6 Decisions of the Management Team will be minuted.

Update May 2020:

Undertaken for all management team meetings throughout 2019/20.

Update February 2021:

The decisions of the Management Team meeting continue to be minuted.

2.7 BEST VALUE

- 2.7.1 LVJB 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 operation.

Update May 2020:

LVJB staff participate in SAA Governance Committee meetings whereupon best practice is discussed and shared amongst all Assessor & EROs’ offices.

Update February 2021:

During periods of remote/blended working LVJB staff continue to participate in SAA Governance Committee meetings via MS Teams. Governance also remains a standing item on the agendas of meetings of both the Senior Management Team and the Management Team.

- 2.7.2 Performance will be planned and targeted. Key Performance Indicators have been agreed in conjunction with the Scottish Government and the Scottish Assessors' Association and reported to the Scottish Government and other key service users annually. Targets will however have to be set mindful of the continued budgetary constraints which public local authority bodies are experiencing, including LVJB.

Update May 2020:

Performance management information covering all the Board's key service delivery areas is considered at both the regular senior management team meetings, and the monthly full management team meetings. Improved performance measures are then rolled out to operational meetings to improve organisation efficiency and effectiveness.

Update February 2021:

Performance management continues to be monitored.

- 2.7.3 Performance Indicators will be used for year-on-year comparisons as well as comparisons with other bodies where deemed appropriate.
- 2.7.4 In accordance with Section 13 of The Local Government in Scotland Act 2003, the performance of LVJB in relation to its functions will be reported to all service users of the Valuation Joint Board, including staff, in the most appropriate manner. These statistical measures are placed on the LVJB website under the heading Public Performance Reports.

Update May 2020:

LVJB's Public Performance Report for the period 2018/19 was presented to the Board meeting of 3 June 2019. The Public Performance Report for the period 2019/20 is the subject of a separate Board report.

Update February 2021:

LVJB's Public Performance Report for the period 2019/20 was presented to the Board meeting of 1 June 2020.

- 2.7.5 Service User Consultations will be continually developed and implemented and the outcomes taken account of in Service Planning. This consultation includes a Customer Care Policy and Customer Comments and Complaints procedures, together with initiatives co-ordinated via the Scottish Assessors' Association such as consultation on future development of the SAA Portal (www.saa.gov.uk).

Users of LVJB's services are sampled at random for their comments on the service LVJB provides and complaints are reported to the Board quarterly and summarised to the Board annually.

Update May 2020:

LVJB's Customer Care survey process is currently under review with the aim of increasing the number of returns made to the organisation. It is expected that the revised survey process will include for electronic returns to be made to survey questionnaires.

Update February 2021:

LVJB have taken the opportunity to re-assess the appropriateness of our Customer Care strategy and have undertaken a modernisation appraisal to ensure that the process is current.

- 2.7.6 A Service Plan will be produced and annually updated in light of changing priorities and external factors.

Update May 2020:
See 2.4.3.

Update February 2021:
See 2.4.3.

- 2.7.7 LVJB recognises its duty under the Government's 'Efficient Government' initiative and will prepare and monitor plans to ensure compliance. LVJB will prepare annual efficiency statements and report to the Board.

Update May 2020:
LVJB's annual Efficiency Statement for 2018/19 was presented to the Board at the meeting of 3 June 2019. The annual Efficiency Statement for 2019/20 is the subject of a separate report.

Update February 2021:
An efficiency statement will be presented to the Board at the quarterly meeting in June 2021.

2.8 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

- 2.8.1 LVJB recognises its duties under Equalities Legislation and is committed to eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations.

- 2.8.2 LVJB has published an Equal Opportunity Policy setting out a summary of policy objectives.

- 2.8.3 Regulation 3 of The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012 requires a listed authority to publish a Mainstreaming Equalities Report and Equality Outcomes. LVJB published their latest report in April 2017 for the period 2017 to 2021 and this is available on our website. This continues the work that commenced in 2013.

Update February 2021:
Updated Equality Outcomes for the period April 2021 to April 2025 will be published on the 30 April 2021.

- 2.8.4 Regulation 4 in accordance with Section 6 of The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012 and 2016 LVJB as a listed authority has a duty to gather and use employee information on the composition of its employees and the recruitment, development and retention of employees. LVJB has produced annual Employee Information Reports from April 2014 onwards to include the annual breakdown of the information gathered and the 2018 report is available on our website.

Update May 2020:
LVJB's Employee Information Annual Report is published on our website and is the subject of a separate report to the Board.

Update February 2021:

LVJB's Employee Information Annual Report was published on our website on the 30 April 2020.

- 2.8.5 A Mainstreaming Equalities progress report and Annual Equality Report will be published on our website in April 2019.

Update May 2020:

The Mainstreaming Equalities report and the Annual Equality report was published on LVJB's website on 30 April 2019.

Update February 2021:

The next Mainstreaming Equalities report and the Annual Equality report will be published on LVJB's website on 30 April 2021.

- 2.8.6 Relevant training on equality and diversity will continue to be provided to all staff.

2.9 STAFFING AND PERSONNEL MATTERS

- 2.9.1 Appropriate training will be provided to all members of staff in accordance with both Lanarkshire Valuation Joint Board's and staff training needs. Such needs will be assessed at annual and interim Performance Development Reviews (PDR's).

In addition to training being built into PDR's, LVJB also have comprehensive training guides for trainee valuers and trainee technicians, which are currently being reviewed.

Update May 2020:

Following a comprehensive review of training needs, and subsequent approval by LVJB's management team, a new training guide has been produced for trainee valuers and their supervisors and counsellors. This new guide ensures LVJB's training remains both current and compliant with the requirements of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS).

Additionally, a revised training guide for trainee technicians has also been adopted.

Update February 2021:

LVJB continues to provide training to staff as appropriate to their individual needs. This training is identified by managers at each employee's Personal Development Review (PDR) which have continued throughout the period of blended and remote working. At present, these meeting are primarily facilitated through MS Teams.

- 2.9.2 Staffing requirements continue to be monitored via LVJB's management team with respect to matters such as previous year's performance, anticipated workload, staffing levels, and budgetary constraints. In accordance with the Audit Scotland recommendation, LVJB has developed a Workforce Plan to ensure that the right number of people with the right skills are in the place to deliver our short and long term objectives. This plan will be reviewed annually.

The Plan has highlighted LVJB's well established succession planning with the recruiting of trainee technicians and trainee valuers. In its Electoral Services and Clerical Support section LVJB utilise South Lanarkshire Council's Modern Apprenticeship Programme to assist in the filling of clerical assistant posts.

Update May 2020:

LVJB's Workforce Plan was recently reviewed and updated, with a new workforce plan being developed and expected to be ready for LVJB's management team's consideration in Autumn 2020.

Update February 2021:

LVJB's Workforce was reviewed and updated in Autumn 2020.

- 2.9.3 The Valuation Joint Board has adopted The Competence Initiative Scheme, including an annual Performance and Development Review process. This encompasses a range of procedures for managing both organisational and employee performance and is a process which links the Joint Board's strategies and service objectives to tasks and employees. It provides a systematic approach to management which is based on setting objectives, assessing performance, appraising achievement and identifying ways to improve, through training and development, at both an organisational and individual level.

South Lanarkshire Council have amended their PDR process to include a behaviours framework. LVJB will consider adopting this at the annual PDR's in April 2019.

Update May 2020:

LVJB will adopt the South Lanarkshire Council's PDR behaviours framework at the 2020 annual review. Regular liaison meetings will be held with South Lanarkshire Council's Personnel Services and LVJB staff representatives.

Monthly meetings between SLC Personnel staff and LVJB representatives are undertaken prior to LVJB's monthly management team meetings in order to provide timely Personnel updates to LVJB's management team.

Update February 2021:

LVJB have adopted South Lanarkshire Council's PDR behaviours framework and all staff annual reviews are conducted under this new framework. At April 2020 however, as the office had recently moved to remote working, that review did not take place but rather it was rolled together with the 6 monthly update in October 2020. It was however understood that some members of staff may have wished to raise issues at the April review (such as possible re-gradings) and so all staff were offered the opportunity to undertake a remote PDR in April if they wished to.

- 2.9.4 LVJB remains committed to offer an interview to disabled people who meet the minimum criteria for the job.

Update May 2020:

LVJB staff undertook regular meetings with SLC Personnel Services staff throughout 2019/20. The outcome of these meetings was reported to LVJB's regular Management Team meetings.

Update February 2021:

Lanarkshire Valuation Joint Board remains a user of the disability confident scheme, we guarantee to interview all disabled applicants who meet the minimum competency/behaviour requirements for the position. Additionally, LVJB also guarantee an interview to veterans of the armed forces where their previous employer was the armed forces and who meet the minimum requirements for the position.

2.10 FINANCE AND BUDGETING

2.10.1 The officers of the Valuation Joint Board will act in accordance with the relevant Financial Regulations and Standing Orders, which will be regularly reviewed.

2.10.2 In partnership with the Finance and IT Resources of South Lanarkshire Council, budgets will be prepared annually for approval by the Joint Board.

LVJB prepare a 3 year financial plan on an annual rolling basis. The first of these was approved by the Board in March 2018.

2.10.3 Appropriate procedures for procurement, authorisation and payment have been implemented in accordance with guidance from SLC.

2.10.4 Adequate training in respect of these procedures will be provided to relevant staff.

2.10.5 Financial monitoring reports are received and verified on a monthly basis with variations in expenditure being reported both to management and to the Joint Board.

Update May 2020:

LVJB staff liaise regularly with the staff of the Treasurer to the Board in respect of financial monitoring and planning matters, and discuss the various reports produced by the Treasurer for each Board meeting, including the Annual Accounts.

Update February 2021:

LVJB staff continue to liaise with the staff of the Treasurer to the Board in respect of financial monitoring and planning matters, and discuss the various reports produced by the Treasurer for each Board meeting, including the Annual Accounts.

2.11 INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY & INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

2.11.1 The provision of Information Technology assets, systems and services by South Lanarkshire Council is managed through regular liaison with the Business Systems Manager and Project Manager allocated to LVJB.

Update May 2020:

The Assistant Assessor (North) holds monthly meetings with two of SLC IT's business managers, who in turn attend LVJB's monthly management team meetings. The Assistant Assessor reports to both the Management Team and the Senior Management Team on all related IT issues.

Update February 2021:

Regular dialogue including scheduled meetings continue to take place.

2.11.2 The Service Level Agreement (SLA) with SLC (IT) will be reviewed and updated where appropriate.

Update May 2020:

The SLA is currently under review. Discussions are at an advanced stage.

Update February 2021:

The SLA remains under review by SLC IT.

- 2.11.3 Assets will be refreshed in accordance with the Service Level Agreement between SLC and their hardware suppliers.

Update May 2020:

A full PC and monitor refresh was due to take place in May 2021. However, LVJB's providers of the Electoral Management System, EROS, recommended that Windows 10 should be used with their product and that they could not guarantee support for Windows 7. Accordingly, the refresh will be undertaken almost a year early, with laptops, instead of PC units, being installed which will help facilitate homeworking for staff.

Update February 2021:

LVJB purchased laptops to facilitate homeworking, however opted to retain the existing desktop PCs as a contingency particularly in respect of the upcoming Scottish Parliament Election.

- 2.11.4 LVJB adheres to the principles of Data Protection and regularly reviews its Notification to the Information Commissioner. Privacy Impact Assessments will continue to be undertaken for new policies prior to implementation. Formal data sharing agreements will be entered into with other parties where deemed appropriate to do so.

Update May 2020:

LVJB continues to comply with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

LVJB have updated their privacy notice, data protection policy and employee guidance to comply with the new Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations.

Update February 2021:

Following the withdrawal from the EU, the Data Protection Act 2018 was amended on the 1 January 2021 to reflect the UK's status outside the EU. The UK General Data Protection Regulations (UK GDPR) came into effect on the 1 January 2021. It is based on the EU GDPR with some changes to make it more effective in a UK context. LVJB continues to comply with the DP Act 2018 and the UK GDPR. The EU GDPR does not apply to LVJB as it does not operate in Europe or offer goods and services to individuals in Europe.

LVJB are currently updating their privacy notice, data protection policy and employee guidance to reference the UK GDPR where required.

- 2.11.5 Procedures are in place to enable compliance with the requirements of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002. In October 2017 both LVJB and the Assessor adopted the SIC Model Publication Scheme which we are only required to do once. Thereafter, the Joint Guide to Information has been continually reviewed to ensure compliance with guidance issued by the SIC and is published on the LVJB website.

Update May 2020:

LVJB's staff continue to comply with the requirements of the FOISA Act 2002, responding to information requests in line with legislative requirements.

Update February 2021:

LVJB's staff continue to comply with the requirements of the FOISA Act 2002, responding to information requests in line with legislative requirements.

- 2.11.6 Satellite systems to support primary functions and reporting requirements will be maintained and developed as required.

Update May 2020:

Managed via the meetings referred to at 2.11.1 and via LVJB's monthly Management Team meetings.

Update February 2021:

Systems have been adapted as required in order to facilitate direct and remote working.

- 2.11.7 LVJB will play an active role in the development of the SAA Portal with a view to continuing the provision of this web based joined up service delivery initiative.

Update May 2020:

LVJB continue to play an active role in the SAA Portal's development with representation on the SAA's Portal Management Committee. There are several Portal projects ongoing at present including a project to make more non-domestic summary valuations available to view, a mapping project which will allow the public to view properties on a mapping tool and from that tool to access the values of these properties, and some technical projects to increase the efficiency of the Portal and to enhance the user journey.

Update February 2021:

The SAA Portal has been further developed to facilitate a mapping tool which is now available for public use. The project to make more valuations available to the public is currently being further developed.

- 2.11.8 The LVJB website was reviewed in 2018 with a view to it remaining current and relevant to users. The content of the website will be monitored to ensure that it remains current.

Update May 2020:

LVJB's website content remains under continual review with the announcements facility being used regularly following discussions at each LVJB Management Team meeting.

Update February 2021:

The content of LVJB's website continues to be monitored and regular use is made of the announcements facility.

- 2.11.9 LVJB will continue to utilise the most appropriate PC Operating System and desktop applications as advised by SLC IT.

Update May 2020:

As part of LVJB's PC refresh, the organisation will move from Windows 7 operating system to Windows 10. This will ensure that key software applications will remain supported.

Update February 2021:

The move to Windows 10 has taken been undertaken with few issues reported, thus, ensuring LVJB's key software applications remain supported.

- 2.11.10 Information Technology initiatives shall be continually considered by LVJB's Management Team in terms of their possible contribution to delivering services more efficiently and effectively.

LVJB will continue with the programme to digitise paper based records.

Update May 2020:

LVJB's paper based Council Tax records have been moved to a digital platform and a project to digitise non-domestic records has commenced. This will assist with business continuity plans going forward.

Update February 2021:

LVJB's non-domestic records have almost all been digitised and with the domestic records already having been digitised this allows for service to be maintained in respect of maintaining the valuation roll and council tax list whilst undertaking remote working.

2.12 KEY PARTNERSHIPS

- 2.12.1 The support services provided by South Lanarkshire Council will continue to be managed by regular liaison meetings with relevant persons in each of the supporting resources.

Update May 2020:

Regular meetings continue to be undertaken between SLC staff and LVJB officers in relation to business areas such as Personnel matters, Health and Safety, Equal Opportunities and Information Technology.

Update February 2021:

During the period of remote and blended working, these meetings have continued to take place via MS Teams.

- 2.12.2 Being the primary recipients of operational outputs (Valuation Rolls, Councils Tax Valuation Lists and Electoral Registers), LVJB recognises both North and South Lanarkshire councils as key stakeholders and will consult with these bodies in all areas relating to these matters.

Update May 2020:

Such matters are managed via identified officers from each organisation who maintain dialogue on a number of areas of mutual interest, in recognition that both North and South Lanarkshire councils are key stakeholders for LVJB.

Update February 2021:

During the period of remote and blended working, communication has continued in relevant areas such as electronic weekly transfer of updates to both the Valuation Roll and Valuation List and the actioning of occupation details as provided by those councils. Additionally, both councils are provided with a copy of the published Electoral Register in December each year and obtain the monthly updates if so requested.

- 2.12.3 LVJB will continue to commit resources to the workings of the Scottish Assessors' Association. 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 with a view to continuing the process of sharing services where possible and sharing best practice.

Update May 2020:

The Joint Board continues to commit resources to the workings of the Scottish Assessors' Association, participating in Plenary, Committee and Working Group meetings. The Assessor & ERO sits on the SAA Executive, currently holding the position of Vice President.

Update February 2021:

During this period of remote and blend working the above noted Committees and Working Groups have continued to be attended by Joint Board staff remotely through MS Teams. The Assessor & ERO sits on the SAA Executive and will take up the position of President in May this year.

- 2.12.4 Through the SAA, LVJB will maintain liaison with bodies such as the Valuation Office Agency (England and Wales), the Valuation and Land Agency (Northern Ireland), the Valuation Office of Ireland, The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors and The Institute of Revenues, Rating and Valuation.

The Assessor is now part of the Executive of the SAA and accordingly attends harmonisation meetings with the Valuation Office Agency (England and Wales), the Valuation and Land Agency (Northern Ireland), and the Valuation Office of Ireland.

Update May 2020:

LVJB continue to make representation to the identified bodies via the appropriate SAA spokespersons and to make direct contact with the VOA to discuss matters relating to electricity subjects and in respect of subjects for which LVJB members of staff have a particular responsibility.

The Assessor & ERO sits on the Executive of the SAA and accordingly attends harmonisation meetings with the Valuation Office Agency (England and Wales), the Valuation and Land Agency (Northern Ireland), and the Valuation Office of Ireland.

Update February 2021:

The Assessor & ERO has continued to attend Harmonisation meetings which have been undertaken remotely with the Valuation Office Agency (England and Wales), the Valuation and Land Agency (Northern Ireland), and the Valuation Office of Ireland in a virtual setting.

- 2.12.5 Similarly, Joint Board staff participate in the workings of the Association of Electoral Administrators were deemed appropriate.
- 2.12.6 LVJB recognises the role of, and support provided by, The Electoral Commission (EC) in respect of Electoral Registration matters and will continue to participate in EC events.

Update May 2020:

LVJB maintain communication with the Electoral Commission generally via the SAA Electoral Registration Committee meetings.

Update February 2021:

The monthly Electoral Registration Committee meetings have continued through this period of blended and remote working via MS Teams and the Electoral Commission (EC) attend those meetings. LVJB staff continue to receive bulletins and attend relevant EC events.

- 2.12.7 Staff are recognised as both key assets of the Valuation Joint Board and primary stakeholders and will be consulted on matters such as improving service delivery both via team meetings and through representative organisations where appropriate. Scheduled section/team meetings will continue to be undertaken and act as forums for staff to be consulted on improving service delivery.

Update May 2020:

Regular section meetings and core briefs continue to act as forums for staff consultation on improving service delivery. Where appropriate, staff are consulted by way of project teams in respect of specific pieces of work and project teams assembled where required.

Update February 2021:

Meetings, where possible, were continued and scheduled via MS Teams.

- 2.12.8 Relationships with external suppliers of systems and services are subject to contract conditions and/or Service Level Agreement and are managed through liaison with the relevant account manager or similar representative.

Senior staff monitor the bulk mailing and printing contract ensuring that deadlines are met. The awarding of a new contract is currently in the final stages and is being managed by South Lanarkshire Council's procurement team.

Update May 2020:

With regards to LVJB's two core software applications, LVJB continue to participate in Idox events (in relation to LVJB's core electoral registration software application) and liaise with LVJB's Northgate account manager (in relation to LVJB's core valuation software application). The award of the bulk mailing and printing contract was successfully concluded by SLC procurement services, with the current contract running from 1/4/2019 to 31/3/2023.

Update February 2021:

LVJB continue to explore options with Idox and SLC IT to improve performance and enhance efficiency in electoral services. Additionally, LVJB are currently liaising with Northgate to enhance the range of valuation subjects for which a valuation tool is available thereby increasing the total number of valuations which can be made available to the public at the SAA portal. Further, LVJB have expanded their use of their bulk mailing and printing partners to digitise almost all non-domestic paper files and through the creation of standard templates, have developed a suite of letters which can now be issued to stakeholders where it is deemed more appropriate than electronic communications.

2.13 MISCELLANEOUS

- 2.13.1 The Valuation Joint Board is committed to various initiatives, not covered above but which have significant implications for Service Planning, priorities and actions. These tend to be of an ad-hoc nature and demand variable commitment.

- 2.13.2 LVJB will respond, either directly or through its relevant associations, to pertinent legislative and other consultations.
- 2.13.3 Any future local authority boundary or electoral constituency changes will require resource allocation and planning.

Following a boundary review by the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland an area at Cardowan, Stepps which is currently in Glasgow City Council will be transferred to North Lanarkshire Council. This change will come into force from 1 April 2019 and a project team is liaising with its counterpart in Glasgow to ensure that all relevant matters are transferred to LVJB prior to this date to permit continuity of service provision in terms of Council Tax and Electoral Registration services.

Update May 2020:

The Cardowan Stepps Local Government boundary review was successfully concluded with the 153 properties in question moving from Glasgow City Council to North Lanarkshire Council, effective from 1 April 2019.

Following on from this, in October 2019 the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland commenced an Interim Review of the Scottish Parliament constituency boundary between Glasgow Provan constituency and Coatbridge and Chryston constituency, and the Scottish Parliament region boundary between Glasgow region and Central Scotland region, at Cardowan by Stepps. In the review the Commission will propose that the Scottish Parliament constituency and region boundaries are amended to align with the new administrative area boundary in the vicinity.

Update February 2021:

The Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland has completed an Interim Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries at Cardowan by Stepps.

The Commission submitted the Report and Final Recommendations for its Review of the Scottish Parliament constituencies of Glasgow Provan and Coatbridge and Chryston and Scottish Parliament regions of Glasgow and Central Scotland to Scottish Ministers, on 18 March 2020. Scottish Statutory Instrument 2020/375 was made on 11 November 2020 and the new boundaries will come into force at the next Scottish Parliament election in May 2021.

LVJB's electoral records have now been updated to reflect this amendment.

- 2.13.4 LVJB is committed to the development and implementation of both North and South Lanarkshire Councils' Corporate Property Gazetteer and Property Database, and through these initiatives the formation of a National Gazetteer and use of National Unique Property Reference Numbers.

Update May 2020:

LVJB's Audit and Information Team is assisting North Lanarkshire Council resource the population of the CAG and the identification of map Eastings and Northings, whilst also working with the CAG custodian of both North and South Lanarkshire to ensure the CAG is kept up to date.

Update February 2021:

LVJB continue to download CAG data from One Scotland Gazetteer which is populated into our core system facilitating consistent recognition of property across Council services.

- 2.13.5 LVJB is committed to ensuring that environmental sustainability is considered when delivering our services. Part 4 of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 requires that a public body must, in exercising its functions, act: in a way best calculated to contribute to delivery of the Act's emissions reduction targets; in a way best calculated to deliver any statutory adaptation programme; and in a way that it considers most sustainable. In complying with its duties, LVJB have developed an Environmental Action Plan, which is reviewed monthly at management team meetings, with any environmental initiative implemented within LVJB being subsequently reviewed.

Update May 2020:

LVJB have adopted several actions resulting from the implementation of its Environmental Action Plan. Examples of this are ensuring all recyclable containers are emptied and cleaned before being placed for recycling, turning down the brightness of all new digital phone monitors LED displays and the decision not to use plastic stirrers for cups and the cessation of the use of plastic cups themselves.

The plan is a standing item at LVJB's Management Team meetings.

Update February 2021:

Through the period of remote and blended working arrangements this matter has remained as a standing item at LVJB's Management Team meetings. This past period has seen LVJB's Management Team agreeing to cease the use of certain plastic products and replace with recyclable alternatives.