



Governance Framework CORPORATE PLAN

2018-21

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Foreword

By the Assessor & ERO - Helen DM McPhee

I am pleased to present my second Corporate Plan as Assessor and ERO and it is written during a period of significant modernisation, transformation and challenge.

Over the period of the last Corporate Plan we have made significant progress against our goals and objectives. Already we are engaged in information technology modernisation, with our new EMS and early stages of digitisation. The landscape of service delivery has become ever more complex, and as an organisation we have to modernise and transform how we deliver our services, ensuring we have the necessary knowledge and skills to manage the complexities.

The planning period ahead will see a continuous drive for transformational change in services and in the way we deliver these. The emphasis will continue to be a focus on I.T. development. This will mean a change to how we work not only across the organisation, but in the wider Assessors and ERO community and with our constituent authorities.

In achieving meaningful change, quality and stakeholders confidence in them will be pivotal in success and leadership will play a major part in enabling that.

We will consider how we deliver our services to any change in government policy and or legislation while remaining focused on service delivery.

Amidst far-reaching change, our mission is simple:

“As an independent Local Government organisation, Ayrshire Valuation Joint Board's mission is to provide equitable, customer focussed, best value, high quality, professional valuation and electoral services for all its stakeholders.”

We will make use of all the resources at our disposal to achieve this, including in-house expertise, partnership working and targeted use of resources.

The pace of legislative change is striking and not without risk. Building awareness and understanding of these various changes will be essential for not only public understanding but service delivery through our teams.

Over the life time of this plan the market in which Assessors and EROs operate will evolve as legislative changes come to fruition and new technologies to deal with the change are sought. I will monitor developments actively and work with others to mitigate any risks to service delivery and the meeting of my statutory duties, while being careful not to prevent innovation that would benefit service users or enhance efficiency and value for money.

All this adds up to a significant body of work with complex interdependencies. It can only be achieved by working together with government/s, the Scottish Assessors' Association, other partners and stakeholders across Ayrshire and beyond to deliver the best outcome for service users.

To support our goals, modernisation and transformation we will continue to develop and motivate our people and target expertise wherever we see it.

Background to Corporate Plan

This Corporate Plan replaces the first plan approved by the Joint Board for the period 2015-2018. It aims to provide a 3 year Corporate Plan Framework for 2018-2021 which sets out priorities for AVJB and how we will use our resources to Modernise and Transform service in pursuit of my statutory duties and service delivery.

Previous Plan Progress

In the period 2015-2018, the following progress has been made in improving service delivery holistically over all our statutory and other functions.

Electoral Registration Services

- *A new EMS was sought and is now operational*
- *Worked with our EMS supplier to resolve a number of areas of improvement*
- *All statutory requirements met*
- *Targeted areas of low return rates*
- *All planned and unplanned elections delivered and within budget*
- *Absent Vote refresh completed for those requiring to refresh signatures etc.*
- *Worked with partners to consult on changes to legislation and reform of electoral services*
- *Through a co-ordinated approach we continue to engage underrepresented groups*

Valuation Services

- *Met all statutory duties, including: delivery of the 2017 Revaluation; appeal disposal*
- *Worked on our approach to disposal of the 2017 Revaluation appeals*
- *Sold House K.P.I.s introduced*
- *Holistic approach to service delivery where areas out with our KPIs and statutory duties were targeted with limited resources*
- *A number of valid and invalid Council Tax appeals were dealt with*

Governance

- *We have a partnership approach to H.R. working with SAC under our Service Level Agreement*
- *We are a member of the Ayrshire Champions Board*
- *We have worked in partnership with various organisations: including the Electoral Commission; Scottish Assessors' Association; the three constituent authorities etc.*
- *Numerous policies and procedures updated*
- *Records Management, including Personnel files being scanned*
- *Moved forward to meet the requirements of GDPR*
- *FOI requests all met with the statutory timescale*
- *Stakeholder centred policies*

Our People and Ayrshire

- *Healthy Working Lives*
- *Modern Apprentices*
- *Employability Fund Programme*
- *Sensory Impairment: Community Hearing Service in place led by the South Ayrshire H.S.C.P., of which we are a member*
- *We offer support to staff that require it – using Occupations Health Service, Counselling etc.*
- *PDR process continuing*

Information Technology

- *Funding has been secured for I.T. Modernisation*
- *SharePoint development to aid records management*
- *Back scanning of Council Tax files has begun*
- *The functionality of the new EMS is being expanded through staff and managers suggestions – working with our suppliers*
- *Engaged with SAC IT to aid core system replacement*

Our Values

The following are the key values to which all stakeholders should adhere to:

- *Valuing Stakeholders*
- *Service Delivery*
- *Co-Operation*
- *Positive*
- *Partnership Working*
- *Communication*



Strategic Content and the need for Modernisation and Transformational Change

This section explains why, going forward, traditional approaches to the provision of Valuation and Electoral Services, across all of Ayrshire must change.

Primarily change is necessary as demand is rising significantly whilst, in real terms, our budget is contracting. This makes it extremely challenging to give all service users and partners the expected service whilst meeting my statutory duties. The Assessor & ERO is working, through the SAA and other forums, to modernise our I.T. systems to bring about modernisation through technology.

The move towards greater utilisation of technology in service delivery in order to deliver “real” change will need the co-operation and help of a number of partners, especially the 3 constituent authorities.

Improved outcomes at reduced costs can only be achieved through: I.T. Development; Partnership Working; Development and Training of staff.

About Ayrshire Valuation Joint Board

Background

Ayrshire Valuation Joint Board was established by the Valuation Joint Boards (Scotland) Order 1995 to carry out the valuation functions of East Ayrshire, North Ayrshire and South Ayrshire Councils. It came into existence on 1st April, 1996 and was also given the responsibility of carrying out Electoral Registration on behalf of the three constituent authorities.

The composition of the membership of the Board is determined by the above Order and consists of 5 Councillors representing East Ayrshire Council, 6 Councillors representing North Ayrshire Council and 5 Councillors representing South Ayrshire Council.

In order to carry out the valuation and registration functions, the Joint Board is required by law to appoint an Assessor who is an independent statutory official and who will also be a Chartered Surveyor. The Assessor has also been appointed by the three constituent councils as Electoral Registration Officer. In pursuit of these duties the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer is answerable to the Courts in terms of valuation or registration decisions.

Additionally, the Assessor and her senior staff are members of the Scottish Assessors' Association (SAA). The Association was instituted in 1975 at the time of local government reorganisation and is the successor body to the Association of Lands Valuation Assessors of Scotland.



A voluntary organisation, the Association aims to facilitate, shared services and through a series of Committees and associated Working Groups, a consistency of approach in the administration of the valuation, council tax and electoral registration services.

The SAA also liaises, through regular harmonisation meetings, with the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) in England and Wales, the Northern Ireland Lands and Property Services (NILPS) and the Republic of Ireland's Valuation Office (RIVO). This allows all fourteen Assessors to work together efficiently towards improving service delivery.

The Joint Board, through the office of the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer, functions are provided for by the Valuation Acts; Council Tax legislation and the Representation of the People Acts. These create a valuation and electoral registration framework together with guidance issued by the Electoral Commission and other similar bodies.

Our Approach

We will be transparent in our approach to service delivery and partnership organisations; setting out our goals; inviting consultation from staff on matters that affect them; consult with service users to establish areas of improvement and manage expectations.

Each decision we make will be in the interest of all stakeholders and the impact on our constituent authorities. Gathering intelligence and analysing the evidence available to us will enable us to identify the greatest threats to the sustained provision of service delivery.

Vision

“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.”

Our Resources

The budget is set for 2018/19 with agreed savings. The auditors recommendation of 3 year rolling budgets are not completely achievable as the local government settlement is not known over a 3 year period.

It is hope with modernisation and transformation that savings in the medium to longer term can be made. All efficiencies are achieved through maintaining tight management controls to reduce our expenditure. We continue to work with the Treasurer to the Board to identify areas of potential savings.

The main threats, which are included in the Risk Register, are the move to 3 yearly revaluations from 2022 and the continued reduction in funding for IER which is expected to cease in 2020.

Staff Numbers:

42 staff representing a full time equivalent of 39 (approx.)

Our Role

We have a number of objectives a significant number of which are statutory as set out in the Valuation Acts.

- Produce and maintain the Valuation List (Council Tax)
- Dispose of all proposals/appeals (Council Tax)
- Prepare and maintain the Register of Electors
- Hear appeals relating to the Electoral Register
- Produce and maintain the Valuation Roll
- Dispose of all appeals relating to the Valuation Roll within statutory timescales
- Corporate Governance of the organisation



Goal 1

Service Delivery in accordance with Statutory Requirements

Objective 1

Our aim is to ensure that all of our services are delivered collectively and individually in accordance with all statutory requirements placed on the Assessor and ERO.

What we plan to do 2018-19

1. Maintain Valuation Roll in line with statutory requirements
2. Dispose of appeals within statutory requirements, including Lands Tribunal for Scotland and the Lands Valuation Appeal Court
3. Audit processes, procedures and values/bands
4. Further develop IT systems, applications and communications
5. Prepare and publish the Electoral Register by 1st December
6. Maintain the Electoral Register for statutory update each month
7. Conduct the annual canvass
8. Dispose of any registration appeals
9. Refresh AV personal identifiers per statutory requirements
10. Deliver all ERO functions in connection Elections and Referendums – unplanned

11. Ensure completeness and accuracy of the Electoral Register
12. Continue to maintain and update the Council Tax Valuation List
13. Dispose of all outstanding Council Tax Proposals and Appeals, where possible whilst dealing with other statutory deadlines
14. Implement changes to legislation
15. Monitor all key performance indicators

What we plan to do 2018-2021

1. Continue with modernisation and transformation with a focus on information technology
2. Prepare for the 2022 Revaluation and 3 yearly revaluation thereafter
3. Continue with the non-domestic rates appeal programme
4. Continue to deal with Council Tax proposals and appeals
5. Identify areas of improvement
6. Deliver all ERO functions in connection Elections and Referendums – planned and unplanned

Goal 2

Best Value and Improvement

Objective 1

Our aim is to plan service development and delivery, in consultation with our stakeholders, in accordance with the principles of best value and where possible continuous improvement. Monitor and report performance to our stakeholders.

What we plan to do 2018-19

1. Deliver corporate improvement
2. Comply with our Strategic Objectives, AVJB's Mission, Vision, Aims & Objectives
3. Maximise efficiency and effectively manage our resources
4. Work closely with the Treasurer to the Board and Elected Members when considering budgets
5. Set robust performance objectives and thereafter continually monitor and review those targets, taking account of financial constraints and competing priorities
6. Encourage colleagues to engage and embrace in the process of meeting and exceeding performance targets
7. Use all available resources to effectively communicate to all stakeholders our performance targets and progress achieved in meeting those targets
8. At Performance Development Reviews feedback to staff individual progress and meet their training needs

What we plan to do 2018-2021

1. Plan ahead for the arrival of new technologies
2. Maintain and develop shared services with appropriate partners
3. Maintain and develop our commitment to effective partnership working, including, Scottish Government, Electoral Commission, Cabinet Office, EMB, RICS, IRRV, SAA, VOA, AEA, Constituent Authorities etc.
4. Embrace modern methods of communication e.g. Facebook, Twitter etc.
5. Further develop our Information Technology to improve outcomes
6. Continually review the management of resources across all functions of the Board
7. Continue to operate planned budgets over a three year cycle, where possible
8. Ensure our mission, vision and strategic direction are effectively communicated to staff and all stakeholders

Goal 3

Sound Governance

Objective 1

Our aim is to integrate our Governance responsibilities, such as FOI, Data Protection, Records Management, Complaints, Equalities etc., into every aspect of our service delivery.

Objective 2

We will take steps to expand upon what we publish on our website to make our data more accessible.

What we plan to do 2018-19

1. Recognise that sound governance practices are fundamental to our service delivery
2. Continue to review and modernise our Policies; Procedures; Plans; Registers etc.
3. Maintain and update our Service Level Agreements/Data Sharing Agreements with each of the three Ayrshire Councils and others – GDPR compliant
4. Continue to monitor and report all complaints received in accordance with our Model Complaints Procedure
5. Continue to have Health & Safety issues at the core of our service
6. Meet the requirements of the GDPR
7. Continue the property review

What we plan to do 2018-2021

1. Review our Governance & Performance Framework and Scheme of Delegation, where appropriate
2. Review our Modernisation & Transformation Programme
3. Embed equality and diversity issues in all of our practices
4. Monitor and review compliance with Records Management, FOI, Data Protection and Equalities
5. Continue to input all relevant information to the Scottish Information Commissioner's database of FOI and EIR requests
6. Continue to support the Youth Employment Agenda
7. Implement, where appropriate, all external and internal Auditor recommendations and actions
8. Identify and mitigate risk, through the Corporate Risk Register
9. Maintain task specific plans and risk registers
10. Modernise and transform the organisation, where we move from labour intensive processes to information technology driven change
11. Review our Service Level Agreement with South Ayrshire Council for the corporate services as our requirements change, as required

Goal 4

Consultation

Objective 1

Consult stakeholders on matters affecting them, which will have an Organisational focus and in turn improve efficiency and transparency.

Objective 2

To enable our work, we will continue to build our capacity and develop our people. The effective and efficient use of our resources, including through the use of technology and engagement through the SAA, will ensure we make the best use of public money.

What we plan to do 2018-19

1. Prepare and publish statutory reports
2. Maintain appropriate public participation schemes
3. Maintain, update and improve our website
4. Inform service user of delays at times of high service engagement
5. Consult service users
6. Listen to the views of our employees
7. Take account of the views of our employees
8. Involve employees in the decision making process

9. Recognise employees who make a contribution to service improvement
10. Encourage an exchange of ideas through various mediums
11. Recognise and consult with trade unions and other such stakeholders, as appropriate
12. Consult with partners
13. Engage with partners to develop shared services
14. Modernise and transform the organisation, where we move from labour intensive processes to information technology driven change

What we plan to do 2018-2021

1. Prepare and present reports to the Board
2. Input into the SAA annual report/updates
3. Maintain customer targeted policies

Goal 5

Supported and Motivated Colleagues

Objective 1

Our aim is to recognise the key role our colleagues play in the delivery of our services. We also aim to continue to recognise and encourage innovation, engagement and achievement.

What we plan to do 2018-19

1. Communication improvement
2. Effectively communicate to all colleagues that they are the Board's most important assets
3. Continue to introduce colleague centred Policies and Procedures
4. Maintain and review the PDR process to identify training needs
5. Monitor and review the Core/Essential Training Requirements
6. Continue to provide training and development opportunities, where budgets allow

What we plan to do 2018-2021

1. Upgrade the Board's premises and equipment to provide a better working environment, where budgets allow
2. Encourage contribution to service development at all levels
3. Modernise and transform the organisation, where we move from labour intensive processes to information technology driven change
4. Continue Healthy Working Lives Initiative
5. Expand toolbox talks over the three core functions

Measuring our Success

We will survey our stakeholder external through our customer questionnaire and internal through the annual staff questionnaire. This will sit alongside the suite of annual key performance indicators and budget reporting all of which will be presented to the Board and published on our website.

AVJB will work with stakeholders to identify any specific needs that arise from changes to legislation and government recommendations, such as those recommended by the Barclay Review of NDR. This will include identifying areas where uniformity and consistency could be achieved throughout Scotland and support the development of the Assessors' Portal. As an organisation we will continue to act on feedback that our approach to service delivery is accessible and fit for purpose. We will continue to strive to ensure fairness, transparency and consistency in our decision-making.

The Joint Board faces major challenges over the coming months and years ahead, including the 2017 Revaluation appeals; the recommendations from the Barclay Review on Non-Domestic Rates; reduced IER funding; and Corporate Governance challenges. We will continue to seek opportunities to share services and make efficiency savings in order to reduce costs and deliver an efficient service in accordance with best value principles. We recognise leadership, guidance and support are crucial to the success of the organisation.

In order to operate within a challenging environment inward capital investment will be required to modernise and transform the organisation, where we move from labour intensive processes to information technology driven change. In removing manual processes there is the potential to improve efficiency, effectiveness, reduce costs and risk without a major impact on service delivery. However, the support of the three constituent authorities and the Board will be crucial in achieving the vision for the future.

In meeting our aims and the challenges we face we will focus on our five strategic goals and from these a number of objectives.

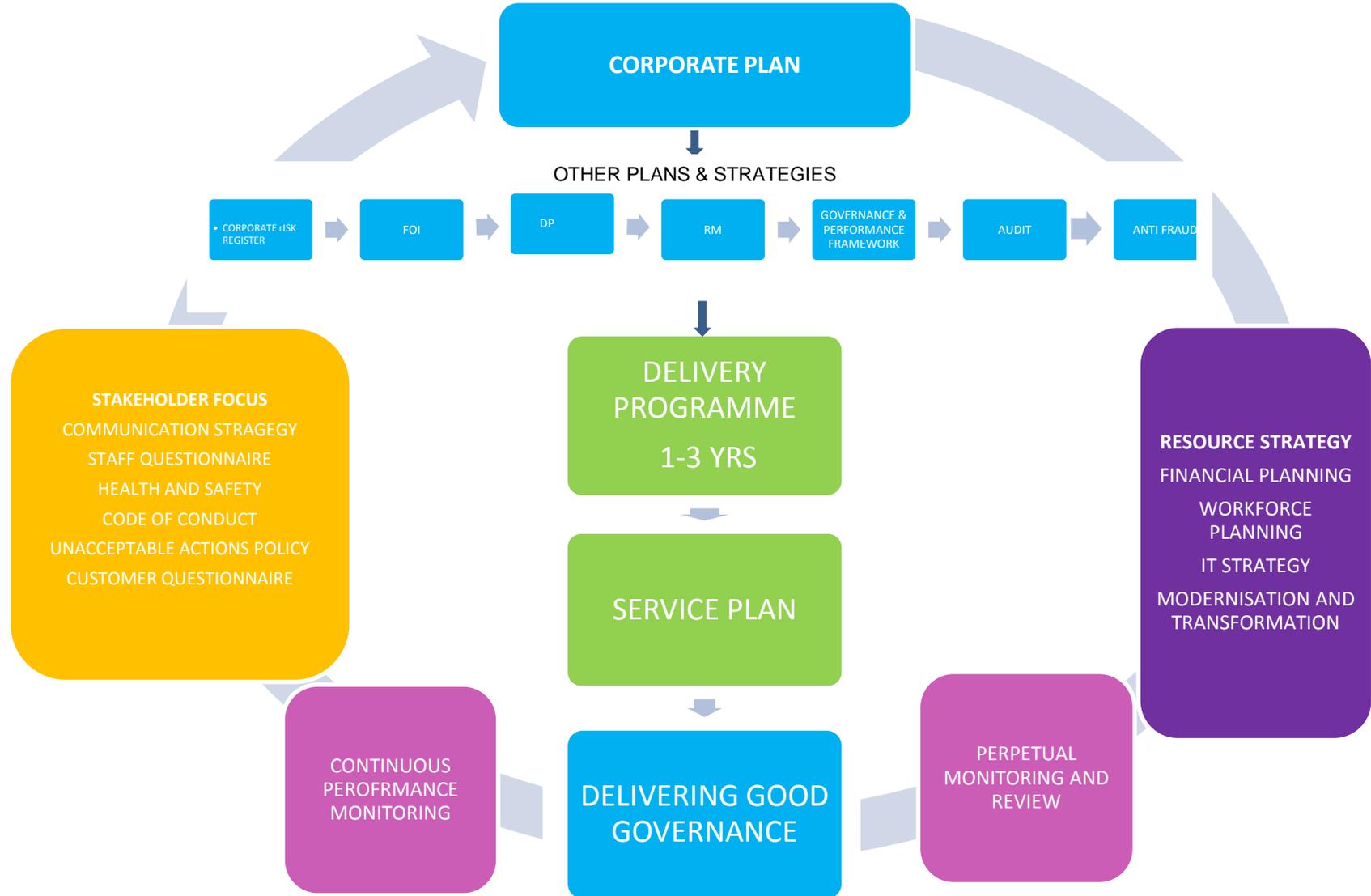
This Corporate Plan sets out our strategic goals and priorities for the period 2018 to 2021 and sits alongside our Governance and Performance Framework and our Service Plan.

It is just one of many policies, plans and strategies that interface with each other to allow us to achieve our overall aims and objectives.

The Corporate Plan and other plans and strategies are shown in **Diagram 1** below. Like all other plans and strategies, the Corporate Plan will be discussed at each meeting of the Assessor's Corporate Governance Forum. In addition, the Corporate Plan will be reviewed and updated on an annual basis, if required. Progress will thereafter be reported to all stakeholders, through the Assessor and ERO's Good Governance Report and the Boards Public Performance Report both produced annually.

Overall delivery of the Corporate Plan rests with the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer with the support of her Senior Management Team.

Diagram 1 – Governance Framework



Further Information

If you have any queries on the content of this Plan, or wish to enquire or discuss the work of Ayrshire Valuation Joint Board please use the following sources to get in touch with us.

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If you require a copy of this Plan in an alternative format and/or language please contact us.