



Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board

Report to: Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board

Meeting on: 18th September 2020

Subject: Covid-19 Risk Register

Author: Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer

1. Introduction

The global pandemic due to the Covid-19 virus has affected all aspects of service delivery for the Board's three functions. As a result of these wide-ranging effects, a separate Covid-19 Risk Register has been produced which identifies the risks, evaluates their potential consequences, and determines the most effective methods of controlling them.

As staff safety and wellbeing is of paramount importance and to assist in identifying risks to the staff in this current situation, the Senior Management Team have issued two staff surveys. The first was to check on everyone's health and well-being encouraging staff to look after themselves, take regular breaks, use annual leave to get away from the pressures of work etc, this survey also provided links to other appropriate information. The second survey carried out in August concentrated on staffs attitudes to returning to the office, what their main concerns were, how they see their role in the coming months and what kind of blended approach they would like to have to returning to the Robertson Centre. The results of this survey were an overwhelming majority of staff were happy to come back into the office, with all suitable health & safety measures in place. However, there remains a real concern over dealing with the public directly.

Following this survey we are currently evaluating options and discussing ways to ensure the Board has a staff presence in the office and at the same time ensuring that if there were to be an outbreak of COVID we have enough staff working remotely to guarantee a continued service delivery. We will also ensure messaging about the office remaining closed to the public remains in place for the time being.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the staff for their patience, resilience and flexibility in working within the new norm. We could not have continued to deliver our services without everyone's willingness to make things work. Both myself and the Assistant Assessors would like to note our appreciation for all of this.

I will keep the Board updated on when we do resume a presence in the Robertson Centre, this is of course subject to Scottish Government Guidance.

2. Recommendations

- i. The Board note the contents of the report.

Kate Crawford
Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer
8th September 2020

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RENFREWSHIRE VALUATION JOINT BOARD



COVID-19 RISK REGISTER IG7A

Title	Covid-19 Risk Register
Author	Assessor & ERO
Approved By	Senior Management Team
Date of Approval	September 2020
Reviewer	Assistant Assessor & ERO - Governance
Review Date	As Required

Review History

Review No.	Details	Release Date

Background

The global pandemic due to the Covid-19 virus has affected all aspects of service delivery. National/local lockdowns and the resultant Scottish Government restrictions have had a severe impact on working practices since March 2020. Due to the wide-ranging impact on the Board's staff, resources and functions, a stand-alone Covid-19 Risk Register was produced as well as being listed as a risk on the overarching Corporate Risk Register. The separate Covid-19 Risk Register contains further details of the risks and the mitigations the Board have identified.

Risk Management has been integral in dealing with the effects of these restrictions on working practices and have enabled the Board to operate and provide services in this challenging environment. Planning must be flexible and need to evolve to allow the Board to deal with the ever-present changes during the pandemic e.g. Scottish Government guidelines and the changes to their route map to move out of lockdown and ensure our key priorities are delivered.

The Covid-19 Risk Register identifies risks, evaluates their potential consequences, and determines the most effective methods of controlling them. The purpose is to reduce the frequency of risk events occurring where possible and minimising their effect if they do occur. In effect it's about ensuring the right things happen to allow the Board and that, 'risk-aware' not 'risk-averse' decisions are taken in all areas of service delivery.

The following risks are listed in order of significance with staff being the Board's most important resource. The risks for the majority of the risks are inter-related and, in some instances, inter-dependent and due to this situation the Senior Management Team will have an overview to ensure staff have the necessary resources and support to complete their identified controls.

	Risk Statement	Owned by	Current Risk Control Measures	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Evaluation (L/M/H/VH)
REF.01 Staff	Staff are the Board's most important resource. Their mental health and well-being are imperative to the success of the Board carrying out its functions.	Senior Management Team/Line Managers	<p>(1) Follow Scottish Government (SG) Guidance to ensure staff are always protected.</p> <p>Home working facilitated for all staff. SG guidelines are, at present, home working being the default position in terms of non-essential offices. Adhered to and only if task cannot be completed remotely is Robertson Centre utilised in line with SG guidance.</p> <p>Contact arranged by Line Managers and where appropriate Senior Management team to ensure staff's well-being.</p> <p>Office closure implemented as soon as SG national lockdown was announced in March 20.</p> <p>No access to the public, external third parties to the Robertson Centre for as long as required to protect staff.</p>	2	3	Moderate
Description: (1) Inability of staff to work due to ill health.						
(2) Staff shielding/ personnel in high risk categories.		Senior Management Team	<p>(2) Follow SG Guidance for staff shielding or personnel in high risk categories. Where appropriate Covid Health Questionnaire will be sent to relevant members prior to the re-opening of the Robertson Centre to ensure staff are protected.</p> <p>Liaison with Renfrewshire Council's Human Resources and Health and Safety Departments regularly since March. Before final sign off Unison and Renfrewshire Council's Health and Safety Representatives will do final walk round of premises.</p>	2	3	Moderate

Risk	Risk Statement	Owned by	Current Risk Control Measures	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Evaluation (L/M/H/VH)
REF.02 Electoral Registration						
Description: <u>Canvass</u> (1) Inability to complete canvass due to ill health of staff/canvassers	If RVJB staff or temporary canvassers are ill, the canvass would not be completed or not completed timeously.	Senior Management Team Clerical Manager	(1) Default position for RVJB personnel is to work at home to mitigate the transmission of Covid-19. This will also prevent staff from contracting other virus from their colleagues e.g. common cold/flu. On reopening the Robertson Centre, a flexible approach to office working will be the preferred option e.g. mixture of home/office working to limit the no of people in the office at one time and to mitigate the transmission of any viruses. When it is the time for the traditional process of "door knocking" as the final stage of the canvass process, canvassers will be managed by Clerical Manager to ensure their well-being and have completed Covid -19 aware training to ensure their health and safety. This is assuming that this process can take place and national/local lockdowns are not in place which would inhibit the door knock process. Furthermore, extra canvassers will be placed on standby to mitigate the risk of the inability of canvassers to complete their allocation. As a result of the reform to canvass in 2020 the domestic properties which are required to be visited by a canvasser, are estimated to be approximately 27,000. This is a significant drop from the 2019 canvass figure of 54,000.	2	3	Moderate
(2) Inability to complete canvass due to ICT failure	As the canvass is currently being carried out remotely due to the continued closure of the Robertson Centre, the failure of ICT would have a severe effect on the completion of the canvass.	Senior Management Team/ Senior IT Manager/ Clerical Manager	(2) Regular liaison with IT Senior Manager to monitor staff's ability to work remotely and any IT issues with remote working are dealt with efficiently and effectively to ensure no loss of service where possible. Disaster Recovery Solution in place to ensure continuity of service in the event of ICT failure.	1	4	Low
(3) Unable to undertake door to door canvass due to local/national lockdown(s)	The possibility of local or national lockdowns are ever present and this will affect the undertaking of house visits which are legally required as part of the canvass.	Senior Management Team	(3) SG guidance will be continuously evaluated to ensure the Board adheres to any changes to guidance and reacts quickly to these changes. Audit of all decision making in relation to door to door canvass is documented clearly.	3	4	High
<u>Electoral Registers</u> (1) Failure of Electoral Registers to be published	Due to loss of key staff e.g. illnesses, IT issues while remote working, the electoral registers would not be provided securely to the recipients.	Clerical Manager/ Assistant Clerical Manager/IT Senior Manager	(1) Key staff knowledge share to ensure electoral registers are published on time. Regular liaison with key personnel to anticipate any issues and devise solutions quickly. Automate all aspects of the process to ensure the provision of the electoral registers are easily produced while remote working.	1	4	Low

			There is a proposed change to this year's publication date from the traditional 1 st December 2020 to 1 st February 2021. This change is currently proceeding through the government's legislative procedures. This will be kept under review to allow for any changes to working practices.			
Elections						
(1) Unplanned electoral event called and inability of staff to carry out duties	An electoral event could be called e.g. by-election and due to loss of electoral staff, IT issues while remote working, the election would be at risk in terms of registration.	Senior Management Team/Clerical Manager/ IT Senior Manager	(1) Default position for RVJB personnel would be to work at home to mitigate the transmission of Covid-19. This will also prevent staff from contracting other viruses from their colleagues e.g. common cold/flu.	2	3	Moderate
(2) Scottish Government Elections in May 2021	Running the next Scottish Parliamentary Elections under lockdown, under local or national lockdowns and the impact on registration levels and types of registrations will have a severe impact on resources. There could be an unprecedented rise in applications to vote by post, emergency proxies and this is a time-consuming process which also affects Returning Officers and their ability to supply extra ballot packs etc.		(2) Planning is already underway and ongoing discussions taking place with SG and fellow Electoral Registration Officers to develop contingency plans and identify resources required should the May election be affected by lockdown measures. The Electoral Commission, the Electoral Management Board for Scotland and the Scottish Assessors Association Electoral Registration Committee are all involved in preparing and planning for this election and the particular challenges it may bring.	2	3	Moderate

Risk	Risk Statement	Owned by	Current Risk Control Measures	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Evaluation (L/M/H/VH)
REF.03 Non-Domestic Rates						
Description: (1) Failure to perform statutory duty of compiling and maintaining the Valuation List for Council Tax due to restriction in working practices e.g. ill health of staff, restriction on on-site inspections as per SG guidance to protect staff and stakeholders.	Ill health of staff or their inability to carry out tasks would lead to failure to perform the Board's statutory duty in relation to Non-Domestic Rates as staff are our most important resource.	Senior Management Team	(1) Home working facilitated for all staff to ensure continuity of service for Non-Domestic Properties and regular updates to all 3 constituent authorities of the Board have taken place. Further investment in IT was undertaken to facilitate discussion of appeals e.g. all valuation staff provided with mobile phones. Inspections carried out prior to National Lockdown in March to ensure details were held for relevant properties. Inspections since March only undertaken in rare circumstances and in line with SG guidance, RICS guidance and local procedures prepared for the Board and approved by Unison.	3	4	High

			<p>Once full inspections are approved for Board staff to undertake the relevant PPE will be provided and guidance provided in line with SD guidance.</p> <p>Line Managers/Non-Domestic Rates Team continuously exploring alternatives to physical inspections and liaising with relevant stakeholders to carry out alternative solutions.</p>			
(2) Inability to dispose of Non-Domestic Rates appeals in statutory time frame due to loss of staff to illness/IT failures	Disposal of all rating appeals is governed by legislation and the inability to dispose of the appeals by the relevant time frame would lead to the relevant statutory disposal date not being met.		<p>(2) As at the 30th June staff have disposed of 91.3% of the 2017 Revaluation Appeals. Staff allocated the remaining Revaluation appeals which initially had to be disposed of by 31st December 20. The SG have recently extended the disposal date for Revaluation appeals from 31st December 2020 to 31st December 2021.</p> <p>Regular liaison with Secretary to the Valuation Appeal Panel to discuss Covid-19 situation in terms of procedures of hearings taking place and appeals cited for each hearing.</p>	1	5	Low
(3) Inability to discuss Non-Domestic Rates Appeals due to non-availability of appellants or their agents	As above.		<p>(3) Liaison with agents, where possible, to continue discussions of outstanding Revaluation/Running Roll appeals out with the citation timetable.</p> <p>Staff are exploring all avenues to initiate and complete discussions with appellants and their agents e.g. investigations into contact details for surveying firm, head office.</p> <p>Regular liaison with Secretary to the Valuation Appeal Panel to discuss Covid-19 situation in terms of procedures of hearings taking place and appeals cited for each hearing.</p>	1	5	Low
(4) Approximately 3,000 material change of circumstances appeals lodged in 2020 due to Covid-19 with a disposal date of 31 st March 2021	As above.		<p>(4) The SG have extended the disposal date for all running roll appeals due to be disposed of before the 1st April 2021 (including the Covid-19 material change of circumstances appeals) to the 31st December 2021. Work has already commenced in programming the disposal of the running roll appeals and scheduling will now take account of the extension to the statutory disposal date.</p> <p>Regular liaison with the Secretary to the Valuation Appeal Panel to discuss the outstanding running roll appeals and their disposal dates.</p>	1	5	Low
(5) Revaluation 2022 preparation	Failure to deliver the 2022 Revaluation would lead to a breach in the Board's statutory duty and would lead to uncertainty for all the Board's stakeholders.		<p>(5) The SG have recently proposed a postponement of one year to the 2022 Revaluation which had a tone date of 1st April 2020. Therefore, if the Scottish Parliament approve the amendment, the next Revaluation will take place on the 1st April 2023 with a tone date of 1st April 2022.</p> <p>Qualified valuer recruitment to take place as soon as possible to ensure the ongoing preparation for the next Revaluation.</p>	1	5	Low

Risk	Risk Statement	Owned by	Current Risk Control Measures	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Evaluation (L/M/H/VH)
<p>REF.04 Council Tax</p> <p>Description: (1) Failure to perform statutory duty of compiling and maintaining the Valuation List for Council Tax due to restriction in working practices e.g. ill health of staff, restriction on on-site inspections as per SG guidance to protect staff and stakeholders.</p>	<p>Ill health of staff or their inability to carry out tasks would lead to failure to perform the Board's statutory duty in relation to Council Tax as staff are our most important resource and would lead to uncertainty to all our stakeholders e.g. ratepayers amassing large backdated bills for council tax, a degree of uncertainty to budgets of our three constituent authorities.</p>	<p>Senior Surveyors/ Principal Surveyors/ Council Tax Team</p>	<p>(1) Home working facilitated for all staff to ensure continuity of service for Non-Domestic Properties and regular updates to all 3 constituent authorities of the Board have taken place. Further investment in IT was undertaken to facilitate discussion of appeals e.g. all valuation staff provided with mobile phones.</p> <p>Inspections carried out prior to National Lockdown in March to ensure details where held for relevant properties. Inspections since March only undertaken in rare circumstances and in line with SG guidance.</p> <p>Once full inspections are approved for Board staff to undertake the relevant PPE will be provided and guidance provided in line with SG guidance.</p> <p>Line Managers/Council Tax Team continuously exploring alternatives to physical inspections and liaising with relevant stakeholders to carry out alternative solutions.</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>4</p>	<p>Moderate</p>
<p>(2) Inability to dispose of Council Tax appeals and proposals due to loss of staff to illness/IT failures</p>	<p>Ill health of staff or their inability to carry out tasks would lead to failure to perform the Board's statutory duty in relation Council Tax as staff are our most important resource and would lead to uncertainty for all our stakeholders e.g. ratepayers concerns in relation to their council tax band and a degree of uncertainty to the budgets of our three constituent authorities.</p>	<p>Principal Surveyors/ Senior Surveyors/ Valuation Staff</p>	<p>(2) All staff allocated council tax appeals/proposals to review and ultimately dispose since March. Further investment in IT to facilitate discussion of appeals etc e.g. all valuation staff provided with mobile phones.</p> <p>Liaison with agent acting on behalf of a no of council tax appellants previously cited for a Valuation Appeal Panel Hearing in April 20, cancelled by the Secretary to the Hearing, to continue to discuss the appeals out with the hearing timetable.</p> <p>Regular liaison with Secretary to the Valuation Appeal Panel to discuss Covid-19 situation in terms of hearings.</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>Moderate</p>

Risk	Risk Statement	Owned by	Current Risk Control Measures	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Evaluation (L/M/H/VH)
REF.05 ICT	<p>The national lockdown and government restrictions have a severe impact on working practices and resulted in the closure of the Robertson Centre with home working not previously carried out. Since the national lockdown in March 2020, all staff have been facilitated with remote working to ensure continuation of our service delivery, where possible.</p> <p>The inability to work remotely would have a severe impact on service delivery.</p>	Senior Management Team/ Senior IT Manager	<p>(1) Investment in remote working undertaken and continuously evaluated to ensure staff have the necessary tools to complete their duties.</p> <p>Where staff are unable to carry out their duties efficiently remotely, alternative solutions identified e.g. Wi-Fi dongle, tasks carried out at the Robertson Centre under SG guidelines.</p> <p>Purchase of further resources to allow staff to split time between home and office-based working ensuring continuity in service delivery.</p>	1	5	Low
<p><u>Description:</u></p> <p>(1) Inability to work remotely</p>						
(2) Non availability of systems, either through system/ telephony or power supply	The non-availability of systems would have a major impact on the Board's statutory duties.	Senior Management Team/ Senior IT Manager	<p>(2) IT department monitor hardware/software to identify any issues and take remedial action quickly.</p> <p>Disaster Recovery Solution in place to ensure continuity of service in the event of ICT failure.</p>	1	5	Low
(3) Due to remote working now being undertaken since March 2020, increased risk of data breach.	A data breach due to the commencement of remote working would demotivate staff, reputational damage and in certain circumstances potentially a substantial fine from the governing bodies	Senior Management Team/ Senior IT Manager	<p>(3) Online iLearn courses undertaken by staff regarding data security.</p> <p>Robust IT security procedures in place.</p> <p>Information security policies revised and where appropriate created e.g. Remote Handling Policy. Relevant documents circulated to all staff and where appropriate held on document management system for reference purposes for staff.</p>	1	3	Low

Risk	Risk Statement	Owned by	Current Risk Control Measures	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Evaluation (L/M/H/VH)
REF.06 Resources	<p>The national lockdown and government restrictions have a severe impact on working practices and resulted in the closure of the Robertson Centre with home working not previously carried out.</p>	Senior Management Team/Senior IT Manager/ Line Managers	<p>(1) Home working set up for all staff by May 2020. Further investment in home working is required and options being investigated currently e.g. expand use of mobile phones for all staff.</p> <p>Management review Scottish government restrictions and guidance continuously to ensure staff and all stakeholders' safety are at the forefront of decision making and processes.</p> <p>Line Managers contact staff regularly to monitor staff's wellbeing.</p> <p>When the Robertson Centre reopens, SG guidelines followed, and Liaison undertaken with Renfrewshire Council's Human Resources and Health and Safety Departments regularly since March. Before final sign off Unison and Renfrewshire Council's Health and Safety Representatives will do final walk round of premises.</p> <p>Liaison with third party suppliers to ensure all necessary cleaning and sanitising products are supplied and fitted with protocol for refill.</p>	4	2	Moderate
<p><u>Description:</u></p> <p>(1) Closure of the Robertson Centre since March 2020 to mitigate the transmission of Covid-19 and in adherence to national lockdown.</p>						
(2) Interaction with stakeholders and service users affected by restrictions to working practices	Physical interaction with staff and external parties ceased in March 2020 and this has affected the normally efficient service delivery of the Board's duties.	Senior Management Team/ Senior IT Manager/Line Managers	<p>(2) Out of office notifications, telephone script and RVJB website reflect current situation and updated to reflect changes.</p> <p>Notification sent to Board members of situation facing the Board and measures taken to deal with the issues.</p> <p>Management review Scottish government restrictions and guidance continuously to ensure staff and all stakeholders' safety are at the forefront of decision making and processes.</p> <p>Regular contact with staff to appraise them of the situation and regular updates of changes.</p>	4	2	Moderate
(3) Inability to host/attend meetings with both staff and external parties e.g. Board Meetings.	Due to initial SG restrictions, physical meetings were not permitted and without a lack of alternative solutions, the inability to hold meetings would seriously impact on the statutory duties of the Board.	Senior Management Team/ Senior IT Manager	<p>(3) Board meetings held virtually to ensure continuity of service and awareness for Board Members.</p> <p>All staff set up with the ability to have virtual meetings to ensure continuity of service and to allow Managers to liaise with staff regularly.</p>	4	2	Moderate
(4) On-site inspections not carried out in the main since March 2020.	The ability to carry out physical inspections is imperative for the Board to compile and maintain the Valuation Roll for Non-Domestic Rates, Valuation List for Council Tax and, at canvass period, the Register of Electors.	Senior Management Team/Principal Surveyors	<p>(4) Alternative methods of inspection explored and used where appropriate. In the event an on-site visit is required and can be accommodated under SG guidelines, these visits are identified, risk assessed and carried out adhering to guidelines.</p>	5	4	Very High

(5) Failure of external partner in administering Service Level Agreement.	Impact of Covid-19 restrictions may have a detrimental effect on Renfrewshire Council, carrying out their duties under the Service Level Agreements currently in place.	Senior Management Team/ Senior IT Manager	(5) Regular liaison with relevant personnel from Renfrewshire Council to ensure required duties under Service Level Agreement are undertaken by the Council timeously. Any gaps in provision are identified and alternative solutions adopted.	1	3	Low
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