

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by Chief Executive

Council: 25 August 2010

Subject: Shared Risk Assessment - Assurance and Improvement Plan

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1** This report presents to members for the first time the Assurance and Improvement Plan (AIP) received from the combined scrutiny bodies in June 2010. The full report is attached at Appendix 1 of this report.

2. Background

- 2.1** In response to comments from Councils over several years about the burden of the scrutiny regime in place, Professor Lorne Crerar was commissioned to conduct a review of regulation, audit, inspection and complaints handling of public services in Scotland. Following this review it was determined that scrutiny of public services needed to be streamlined.

The result is that, in common with all 32 Councils, the scrutiny bodies operating in West Dunbartonshire Council have adopted a shared risk assessment and the output from this collaborative approach is the Assurance and Improvement Plan (AIP).

The AIP draws on the work and experience of a number of scrutiny bodies including :

- Audit Scotland
- Care Commission
- HM Inspectorate of Education
- Scottish Housing Regulator
- Social Work Inspection Agency
- KPMG, External Auditor

The objectives of this collaborative approach are to maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of scrutiny work and minimise the impact of scrutiny activity on the council

- 2.2** The Council welcomes this approach which hopefully will reduce any duplication by auditors and inspectors and therefore reduce the burden on officer time spent supporting scrutiny activity. The scrutiny will be targeted at areas assessed as being a significant risk.

3. Main Issues

3.1 Scrutiny Risk

The AIP sets out the planned scrutiny activity for West Dunbartonshire Council for the period April 2010 -March 2013 based on the scrutiny risk assessment of the council. Scrutiny risk is the risk that will trigger scrutiny activity and not the inherent risk for example as in the risk of harm to an individual. Risk is defined as:

- Red, where there are significant concerns which would indicate the need to undertake some scrutiny activity in order to provide public assurance;
- Amber, where there are areas of uncertainty or gaps in the information available to determine whether or not scrutiny is necessary; and
- Green, where there are no significant concerns.

3.2 Areas of Significant Risk

3.2.1 Three areas of significant risk have been identified in the assessment of West Dunbartonshire Council:

- Outcomes relating to regenerating and growing the local economy – given the social and economic context of West Dunbartonshire, economic regeneration is a significant priority. Indicators suggest a mixed picture of progress and the economic downturn has impacted on major regeneration projects.
- Vision and strategic direction – there is continued concern with the strategic leadership of the council, with this limiting progress with improvement and impacting on decision making. This is of particular concern given the council's financial position and the requirement to make difficult decisions in 2010/11 and beyond to achieve the savings required.
- Financial resources – Longer term financial planning is developing, but the Council faces significant financial pressures

3.3 Areas of Uncertainty

3.3.1 Four areas of uncertainty have been identified:

- Health & Wellbeing - The lack of performance data on this priority area makes an overall risk assessment of the progress being made by the council and its partners difficult
- An Improving Council - The council has made improvements but the pace of change is slow

- Performance Management and Improvement – Customer focus varies across services and requires further development at the corporate level. Performance management arrangements are developing but the process of agreeing a revised Best Value Improvement Plan has been slow.
- Use of Resources – Assets The council faces challenges in rationalising its schools estate and its ability to realise funds from surplus assets will be difficult in the current economic climate.

3.4 Council Response

- 3.4.1** Departments have already identified through their departmental planning process actions to deliver on these key areas of concern and these have been brought together in an AIP scorecard report which is attached at Appendix 2 of this report.

Progress against this action plan will be reported to Council on a quarterly basis.

3.5 Scrutiny Activity

- 3.5.1** In appendix 3 of the AIP the scrutiny activity for the next three years is outlined. In year 1, 2010/11 there will be a:

- SWIA follow up inspection
- Care commission Fostering and Adoption inspection
- SHR – submission of SHQS monitoring information for a 'mid point' update
- HMICS & Audit Scotland – joint Best Value Audit and Inspection of Strathclyde police Force and Board; and
- KPMG will closely monitor the council's progress on delivering savings identified in the 2010/11 budget and monitor the council's progress on its Best Value Improvement Plan.

4. People Implications

- 4.1** There are no people implications.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1** For financial year 2010/11, a budget of £108,500 has been set aside for improvement activities associated with the Best Value Improvement Plan. It is anticipated that, any costs specifically associated with the AIP will be met from this within this budget.

6. Risk Analysis

- 6.1** Strategic Risk SR012 (Poor reports from external sources) currently has a score of 8 (critical impact, likely to occur). The target is to reduce the

overall score to 4. Scrutiny by the Council of the new AIP is a key component of meeting this risk reduction target.

7. Equalities Impact

- 7.1** No significant issues are identified at this stage regarding potential equality impact of this action plan.

8. Conclusions & Officer's Recommendations

- 8.1** Elected Members are asked to note the contents of the Assurance and Improvement Plan and approve the action plan attached in appendix 2.

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Chief Executive
Date: 9 August 2010

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Appendix 1: Shared Risk Assessment - Assurance and Improvement Plan

Appendix 2: Assurance and Improvement Plan – Scorecard Report

Background Reports None

Wards Affected All