

# WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

## Report by Chief Executive

Council Meeting: 30 January 2008

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**Subject: Single Outcome Agreements**

### **1. Purpose**

- 1.1** This report summarises the current status of the new Single Outcome Agreements (SOA) and notes the next steps required to implement them.

### **2. Background**

- 2.1** In 2000 the Scottish Executive and CoSLA began work on outcomes through a Strategic Issues Working Group. By 2001 Local Outcome Agreements had been set up for Better Neighbourhood Services Fund, rough sleepers, homelessness and older people, and by 2005 Regeneration Outcome Agreements & Anti-Social Behaviour Outcome Agreements were in place. During 2006/07 more outcome focussed work took place in the areas of Children's Services, Community Care and Health Improvement.
- 2.2** The Scottish Government is now in the process of introducing Single Outcome Agreements. These will reflect an entirely new relationship between local and national government and they significantly change the way in which accountability will work. The removal of ring-fencing will enable the national government to concentrate on the results we achieve rather than how we go about it. Another objective of the process is that the entirety of the public sector is signed up to a restricted set of national priorities.
- 2.3** The new initiative was introduced in the Concordat in November 2007. This highlighted the new relationship based on respect & partnership underpinning the Local Government settlement – and noted that there will be no structural reform of local government during the term of this Parliament. It contains a package of measures – including reduced ring fencing and reporting, with the aim of freeing up councils and partners to meet local needs. Our SOA will be based on the new National Outcomes plus a menu of local outcomes and will show how we are contributing to national outcomes.
- 2.4** A briefing on SOAs was provided to Councillors who attended the training session on 15<sup>th</sup> January. This report is based on that presentation.

### 3. Main Issues

#### SOA Process

- 3.1 Each council has to submit a single report on the year just finished and plans for the year to come, starting in 2008-09, setting out progress and achievements towards the national outcomes.
- 3.2 There will be no requirement to submit any other monitoring returns or plans, with the exception of:
  - those associated with statutory requirements,
  - any agreed transitional arrangements in moving to an outcomes based approach,
  - ongoing statistical returns
  - formal inspections.
- 3.3 CoSLA and the Scottish Government will put in place arrangements jointly to oversee and monitor the new partnership.
- 3.4 The SOA will cover all local government services in each local authority area as well as “a **significant** range of the responsibilities of Community Planning Partnerships where local authorities have a **significant** part to play.”
- 3.5 The initial agreements will be with each of the 32 councils with the aim of finalising agreements with Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs) next year. The guidance to date suggests that if a Council and its Community Planning Partners are in a position to draft a SOA covering all their activities by April 2008, then they should do so. It seems likely that the full SOAs required by April 2009 will have to include the full range of CPP activities.
- 3.6 There will be a substantial reduction in the number of separate funding streams to local government, well below the number that exist currently. No other Outcome Agreements will be then be required.

#### Developing Indicators

- 3.7 The **National Performance Framework** comprises 5 Strategic Objectives, 7 High Level Indicators & targets, 15 National Outcomes and 45 National Outcome Indicators. Local authorities are required to add outcomes from Community or Corporate Plans.
- 3.8 Four Pathfinder authorities have been involved in developing SOAs (North & South Lanarkshire, East Renfrew & West Lothian), over the period March-Oct 2007. They reviewed the scope, the need for specialist support, negotiation mechanisms, resources, guidance and commitment required and produced a Summary Paper.
- 3.9 The Improvement Service, (IS) has produced a report suggesting a draft template and a ‘first cut’ at list of 61 possible local measures. In addition they have issued three other papers –

- Paper 1: Identification of datasets,
- Paper 2: Survey of existing measures, and
- Paper 3: Relationship to three other thematic approaches – (Community care, Anti-Social Behaviour and Regeneration Outcome Agreements)

**3.10** The Improvement Service is continuing to review the national and local datasets and developing draft local measures. It is supporting the design of a template, helping with councils in profiling and trend analysis as well as raising awareness and capacity building. The IS is also supporting profiling in 2 councils by mid-Feb (East Dunbartonshire and Inverclyde) and developing an event programme covering practicalities and policy issues

*Benefits of SOAs*

**3.11** Linked to the reporting of outcomes, there is a need to refine our systems of performance management. The Scottish Government is working with local government to develop an agreed response to the Crerar review. This should lead to improvements in performance management and self-assessment, enabling a more focused and proportionate inspection regime, and in turn, will support the development of the SOA approach.

**3.12** Local authorities will have to agree to deliver on a specified set of commitments from within the funding envelope provided. However, local authorities will be able to retain – for the first time - all their efficiency savings to re-deploy against ongoing pressures.

**3.13** The intention is that the SOA will help focus the Community Plan and the council's corporate plans. At this stage it is envisaged that the SOA will sit along-side the corporate plan and below the Community Plan and thus complement them. The SOA is not intended to be lengthy.

*Issues to be considered*

**3.14** It is apparent that not all implications in terms of the CPP focus have been fully developed. There has been some feedback from CPP representatives nationally suggesting that the introduction should be delayed to allow the time needed to involve partners properly. However CoSLA had previously agreed that it was important for local government to respond positively and quickly to the new approach. It will therefore be important to agree a clear definition of the status of the initial drafts. As discussed above however, there are issues about who the agreement should be with – and who should be involved in negotiation and in any disputes.

**3.15** Draft SOAs are required by April 2008 covering the work of the council as a minimum and as much of the work of the CPP as we are in a position to include. Although the SOA is only about council's own services this year – it should be pointed out that in many cases it is difficult to draw precise boundaries, since other partners influence the way many services are

provided. Full SOAs are required by April 2009 – which must cover the work of the whole CPP.

- 3.16 There are a number of concerns that the ‘single’ element will –over time - be eroded by various parties who might wish to create a ‘special case’ for their own areas of professionalism or specialism. We should guard against this happening.
- 3.17 Although not confirmed, it is likely that the new set of outcome indicators will be integrated with a number of the current Statutory Performance Indicators, (SPIs), which will replace the current set of SPIs. Audit Scotland has confirmed that the current suite of SPIs will remain in place until the details and definitions of the new measures have been agreed. In England, this has already happened and Councils there now have a new set of 198 outcome and output measures from April 2008, which has replaced their ‘Best Value Performance Indicators’ (their equivalent of the SPIs)

#### Development in West Dunbartonshire Council

- 3.18 A month long initial consultation on local outcome measures was carried out by the Improvement Service with Councils, with a deadline of 15<sup>th</sup> January. The intention is that CoSLA will agree (in principle) the preliminary set of outcome measures and the template at their leaders meeting at the end of January.
- 3.19 An officers’ working group has been set-up with council and CPP officers and met for the first time on 23<sup>rd</sup> January. Updates will be provided on progress of the group and on recent developments.
- 3.20 Members require to agree the most appropriate committee for approving developments and monitoring progress. The options would include the Corporate & Efficient Governance Committee or the Audit & Performance Review Committee. It is suggested that the final draft of each annual SOA report should be agreed by Council.

#### **4. Personnel Issues**

- 4.1 There are no personnel issues.

#### **5. Financial Implications**

- 5.1 There are no financial implications at this stage

#### **6. Risk Analysis**

- 6.1 The reputation of the Council will suffer if a draft Single Outcome Agreement for 2008/09 is not completed and agreed by the Council by April 2008. This could have implications for the next funding settlement.

## **7. Conclusions**

- 7.1** This report outlines the details, as far as they are available at present, of the purpose and structure of the SOA approach. It notes that there are a number of potential benefits, most importantly in terms of increased local control of the way in which the Scottish Government's priorities are delivered – along with the opportunity to focus more on local priorities. It highlights, (in paragraph 3.13 – 3.16), some of the issues which still require to be resolved at a national level.
- 7.2** There are some concerns regarding the pace and clarity of communication at a national level on what is required. In addition, given the proposals to widen the SOA approach in future, there is also concern that not all parts of the public sector are up to speed with the SOA approach.
- 7.3** We believe that the best way forward for West Dunbartonshire Council is to base the 2008/9 SOA on the councils current corporate plan (which already contains objectives and measures that have a degree of partner involvement), and then to work with CPP partners during next year to move towards a more comprehensive and inclusive agreement for the following year (2009/10).

## **8. Recommendations**

- 8.1** Members are invited to note the report.
- 8.2** Members are asked to agree the general approach to development as outlined in paragraph 7.3.

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**David McMillan**  
**Chief Executive**  
**Date: 23 January 2008**

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**Appendix:** None

**Background Papers:** Concordat Document  
Pathfinder Report

List of English National Indicators

Papers from Improvement Service:

- Possible Outcomes/Draft Template
- Paper 1 Datasets
- Paper 2 List of Measures – Council data
- Paper 3 Other approaches

(All Papers available from the Policy Unit on request)

**Wards Affected:**

All Wards