

# WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

## Report by Chief Executive

Council Meeting: 27 June 2007

---

**Subject: Progress of Best Value Improvement Plan**

### **1. Purpose**

- 1.1** This report provides Members with an update on the progress made on the Best Value Improvement Plan.

### **2. Background**

- 2.1** The Accounts Commission in their findings following the Public Hearing<sup>1</sup> into the Audit of Best Value and Community Planning required the Council to produce an improvement plan to address the 11 immediate and 3 medium-term priorities identified in the Audit Scotland Report<sup>2</sup>.
- 2.2** A report<sup>3</sup> and draft plan was subsequently prepared for the Council meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2007, which was agreed by the Council. At this meeting the Council:
- Agreed to accept all of the recommendations contained in the letter from the Accounts Commission dated 14<sup>th</sup> December 2006.
  - Agreed, in principle, the draft Improvement Plan with a finalised report to be submitted to the Council Meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2007.
  - Endorsed the decision by the Chief Executive to recruit five new posts.
  - Agreed to delegate authority to the Chief Executive to engage appropriate external assistance as required.
  - Agreed to form a cross-party member/officer working group consisting of six Members (4 from the Administration and 2 from the opposition) to develop the Plan and monitor progress.
- 2.3** The Best Value Improvement Plan Member/Officer Working Group met on 14<sup>th</sup> February and 21<sup>st</sup> February 2007 and a progress report<sup>4</sup> was submitted to Council on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2007.
- 2.4** Further meetings of the Member-Officer Working Group took place on the 4<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> April 2007 and a progress report<sup>5</sup> was subsequently submitted to Council on 25<sup>th</sup> April 2007.
- 2.5** A further meeting of the Working Group took place on 19<sup>th</sup> June.

### 3. Overall Progress

- 3.1 External Assistance: As agreed by the Council the Chief Executive has approved the appointment of several consultancy organisations to provide external assistance. These comprise:
- **Brodies** - whose study covers organisational structures, scrutiny and decision making processes,
  - **Solace Enterprises** – to review efficient government and competitiveness,
  - **K3 Consultants** (Jean Couper) to review Leadership and Management Development arrangements, plus assistance in developing the new corporate plan and a review of our performance management framework
  - **IBP** – to carry out a staff survey,
  - **Hexagon Research** – to undertake a small consultation exercise on scrutiny arrangements,
  - **The Improvement Service** - to undertake a review of our approach to member-officer relationships
  - In addition tender returns are being evaluated regarding a review of our approach to dignity at work.
- 3.2 The 2007/8 budget has a general provision of £350,000 built in, with an additional £70,000 added to departmental budgets, to fund the Best Value Improvement Plan. There is also £440,000 of capital items. It is very likely that the external assistance will highlight the need for further resources in addition to this.
- 3.3 Eight Workstreams have been setup and a Project Manager appointed.
- 3.4 The detail of the improvement plan and the status of individual actions is shown in Appendix 1 and progress is summarised in Sections 4, 5 and 6 below.

### 4. Immediate Priorities

- 4.1 ***Establish arrangements and working practices which demonstrate openness and accountability in strategic decision making processes.***  
This is part of the Brodies study. A draft report has been received and is being considered by the CMT. An initial report will be submitted to Council in June 2007 – and following agreement of the general structure - detailed remits and procedures will be developed for agreement at the end of August.
- 4.2 ***Develop and implement medium to longer-term strategies to ensure effective management of resources, including financial planning and workforce planning. These arrangements should also be integrated with the service planning process.***  
A consultancy brief outlining a review of workforce-planning options has been prepared and appropriate external consultants are being reviewed; however we have now decided that this work should be delayed until the new management structures are agreed.

The recruitment of the Project Team to progress the procurement and implementation of the new HR system has been completed and the project is progressing satisfactorily. A progress report<sup>6</sup> was submitted to Corporate Services Committee in March 2007. A Project Board has been established and an options appraisal exercise undertaken in relation to the implementation of an HR Information system. The Project Team will also consider the development of establishment control mechanisms (which will also start to address workforce-planning issues). In addition, we will engage in work being carried out in this area at a national level.

A short-life officers' working group has been set-up to produce a financial strategy for the Council and further review our approach to priority-led budgeting (with some assistance planned from K3). The results of this will be integrated into revised annual planning and budget guidance planned to be issued to Departments in late August. Option appraisal training for senior officers has been carried out and a report prepared for the Corporate Services Committee<sup>7</sup>. The new Departmental Revenue Estimate Books are being issued in two phases. The budgets for 07/08 are in one set of books and a second set (currently in draft) will show indicative budgets for the following two years.

**4.3 *Ensure robust and effective scrutiny arrangements, including the involvement of opposition elected members, covering the council's decision making processes as well as service performance, are put in place.***

Hexagon Research have undertaken a small consultation exercise on possible options for modifying our scrutiny arrangements. This will be integrated into the results of the Brodies study (see 4.1 above). A full proposal will be presented to Council in August as part of the proposals for the remits of all parts of the new committee structure.

**4.4 *Develop a culture to support best value and continuous improvement across the organisation.***

A new officer project team (the Continuous Improvement Group) has been set up to manage the implementation of the new Public Services Improvement Framework (PSIF) and to address the cultural issues associated with Continuous improvement under the slogan of a 'fresh new start'. A training programme for internal assessors has been agreed and initial staff awareness publicity has been issued. The Group are planning to run some further staff awareness events and produce further internal awareness-raising publicity. The Team is reviewing ongoing Best Value Service Reviews and our Charter Mark and Investors in People programme. The Team have reviewed all services in the Council and have devised a programme of continuous improvement activities for each service as a precursor to the PSIF. A new Quality & Improvement officer – whose main task will be implementation of the PSIF- was recruited successfully and commenced on 23<sup>rd</sup> April.

A consultant's brief – covering a review of our arrangements for improving our approach to efficient government (including shared services) - was sent to SOLACE Enterprises. A draft report has now been received and is under review with the consultants. The format for an efficiency statement has been agreed by Cosla and a retrospective statement for 06/07 will be signed off in August.

**4.5 *Review political and managerial structures to ensure that they operate effectively and are complementary.***

This is part of the Brodies study (see 4.1 above)

**4.6 *Provide elected members with support and training to discharge their functions***

An enhanced induction programme for new and existing members was delivered immediately post the May elections (one-day event on 9<sup>th</sup> May). A further training needs assessment is in progress.

A consultancy brief to review approaches to improving Member-Officer relations and the protocol has been issued and the Improvement Service has been engaged to progress the review.

**4.7 *Agree and adopt an up-to-date community plan. Continue to drive the community planning partnership with a focus on defined outcomes.***

The final draft of the new Community Plan is available following a wide-ranging consultation exercise including taking in the requirements of Strategic Environment Assessment and Integrated Impact Assessment. This was endorsed by the Partnership Board in June and will be submitted to the Council in August. A review of progress on the outcomes highlighted in the Regeneration Outcome Agreement (ROA) is also on target for submission at the end of June.

**4.8 *Establish robust action plans for all areas of poor performance identified within the best value report and housing services in particular.***

The CMT are ensuring that Departments address all areas of poor service performance and that action plans be brought forward to the CMT and respective thematic committees. In addition, regular reports covering progress of all Statutory and Key Performance Indicators are being submitted to the CMT and will be submitted to future meetings of the Audit & Performance Review Committee.

**4.9 *Refine and embed the new performance management framework, improve traffic light reporting to better support scrutiny, resource allocation and public performance reporting.***

K3 Consultants are undertaking a review of the latest suite of performance reports going to members in June to ensure their consistency and correct use of traffic lights and comparator groups. A proposal to procure a new integrated performance and risk management system has been considered by the CMT and a report agreed by the Tender Committee<sup>8</sup>. The invitation to tender is due to be issued later this month.

**4.10 *Establish robust arrangements from which the council is able to demonstrate the competitiveness of its services.***

The external consultants from SOLACE Enterprises have reviewed our approach to testing competitiveness and a draft report has been received. The report recommends improving our approach to benchmarking and a series of actions will now be developed.

A report<sup>9</sup> on Statutory Trading Accounts was submitted to Corporate Services Committee in March 2007 recommending that we now operate two Statutory Trading Operations – Housing Maintenance and Grounds Maintenance.

**4.11 *Develop and embed a risk management culture across the council.***

A Risk Analysis Section is now part of the standard committee report template. A further tranche of risk management training from an external supplier was completed in March 2007. Existing departmental risk registers are currently being reviewed and transferred into the new risk register format. A guidance note and risk register on partnership risk has been issued. A review of appropriate software is underway in conjunction with the review of performance management systems as it is possible that a system could be procured that fulfils both areas.

**5. *Medium-Term Priorities***

**5.1 *Ensure robust review and option appraisal is undertaken on all services.***

The Continuous Improvement Group has agreed a process of peer-review for all best value service reviews and existing action plans (see 4.4 above). The Group have delivered a training package in service-delivery option appraisal.

**5.2 *Implement a leadership and management development programme***

K3 Consultants have been engaged to develop and deliver a leadership & management development programme for the CMT and Senior Managers. An 'Away-Day' was held on 11<sup>th</sup> May. A survey of managers has taken place and Middle Management training is being progressed using a framework developed by the Improvement Service; one of our officers is attending a pilot of this programme and will be learning how to deliver the programme in-house. Progress is being maintained on developing appropriate programmes for supervisors and team leaders.

**5.3 *Review community engagement activity for efficiency and effectiveness.***

One aspect of the Brodies study is to review the role of the Community Participation Committee within the decision-making structures, and the CPC itself has considered a discussion paper<sup>10</sup> on its role and made recommendations for the future. The consultation network is reviewing our consultation strategy, setting up more training, updating the database of consultations and reviewing the effectiveness of the recent budget consultation exercise. The new administration have requested the opportunity to comment on the consultation strategy. This will be considered at the first appropriate meeting following the recess.

## 6. Other Priorities

- 6.1 Human Resources:** A consultant's brief to review our dignity at work procedures and develop effective mediation and support arrangements for staff has been tendered for and returns are currently being evaluated. A report<sup>11</sup> was put to the JCF on 1<sup>st</sup> March on processes for settling outstanding grievances. Consultants from IBP are currently preparing a report on the staff survey (carried out in late April-early May). Future work in this workstream will encompass developing an HR strategy, further developing our approach to improving absence and developing a refreshed learning and development strategy. Capacity to deliver is a concern, however, and further staff resources will be likely required to progress these issues, and options for this are part of the Brodies study.
- 6.2 Customer First:** Good progress is being maintained in developing our new contact centre software and integrating it to back-office systems. The pilot contact centre was originally planned to go-live in May 2007 – but was slightly delayed to accommodate departmental workloads at the time of the original plan for implementation. Building work was completed this week and a phased implementation is planned from June-August 2007. A report on the evaluation of the pilot will be prepared for a future meeting of the Corporate Services Committee.

The Customer Services Section Head has now been recruited and commenced on 19<sup>th</sup> March. The Customer Centre Team Leader has also accepted the offer of appointment, while the seven Customer Centre Officers who will be funded from existing departmental staff/vacancies were interviewed and are currently being appointed. This will enable staff training to commence soon.

The integration of the Corporate Address Gazetteer to the CRM system and the development of the Local Citizens Account is underway. The scoping and development of the National Entitlement Card system and National Citizens Account has also commenced along with the development of the data adaptors to send and receive secure data to the National Infrastructure.

Work is well progressed on further developing the Council's website and meeting our ESD (Electronic Service Delivery) targets by improving online interaction including authentication, e-planning, e-care, e-booking etc, while implementing Benefits Realisation via process mapping and redesign to streamline bureaucracy as part of the Efficient Government Agenda. The Document Imaging project is key to reducing bureaucracy and a minimal amount of capital funding has been obtained to continue this corporate project to some extent over the next year. ICT&BD also intends to review the corporate complaints procedure and integrating it into the contact centre as well as carrying out regular reviews of customer care.

- 6.3 Planning & Performance Management:** Jean Couper from K3 Consultants has commenced work with staff from the Policy Unit in facilitating a series of workshops in June with the CMT, the Administration and senior staff to produce a new corporate plan and linked departmental service plans.

- 6.4 Asset Management:** A report on improving our strategic approach to asset management is currently being considered by the CMT. This is a significant and critical issue for the Council – involving the second phase of the Schools Estate, commercial properties, care homes etc. Meantime the current asset management group is progressing with the collation of asset related data into the new asset management database. The collation of property-related data is on track; however, there are some issues still to be resolved to fully populate the system with estates, occupancy and finance data. Progress has been made on the review of care homes; condition surveys are complete, property values estimated, improvement proposals prepared and suitability surveys are in progress. In addition, the homes are part of a larger Best Value Review.
- 6.5 Procurement:** The procurement forum undertook a review of the corporate procurement strategy which was reported<sup>12</sup> to Corporate Services Committee in March 2007. A full review of the Strategy will be undertaken this year. A sustainable procurement policy<sup>13</sup> was agreed by the Committee in January 2007. The new procurement unit met all its financial targets for the year 06/07. The purchasing cards pilot continues within the Roads section and has now commenced for stationery in three council locations. The capital plan for 07/08 includes a sum to progress e-procurement and a temporary staff post is being recruited. A short-term officer-working group is progressing the creation of approved contractor lists for the Council and a report is being considered by the CMT on 19<sup>th</sup> June. Social Work Services submitted a report<sup>14</sup> on approved suppliers to Social Justice Committee in June.
- 6.6 Sustainable Development:** Recruitment of the new post of Sustainable Development Officer was successful and the new postholder commenced work on 16/4. The development of the sustainable development strategy is now progressing. Progress is also now underway in implementing action plans related to the Climate Change Declaration. The recruitment of the Biodiversity Officer (jointly funded by ourselves, Scottish Natural Heritage and East Dunbartonshire Council) is progressing (interviews held on 1<sup>st</sup> June). It was slightly delayed due to slippage in getting final agreement from EDC.
- 6.7 Equal Opportunities:** Implementation of the Race and Disability Equality duties is progressing and a report<sup>15</sup> to the Social Justice Committee on the options for addressing the Gender equality duty was presented in March 07. The Disability Equality scheme has been launched and was reported<sup>16</sup> to Social Justice Committee in June. This meeting also received a report<sup>17</sup> on progress in installing access improvements. The draft Gender Equality Scheme is being submitted to Council in June and a report<sup>18</sup> on options for implementing a new approach to integrated impact assessment was submitted to the Social Justice Committee in June. A new Equalities Officer (Employment) has been appointed to assist in ensuring we meet our statutory obligations as an employer and take forward best practice in this area.

**6.8 Public Performance Reporting:** Work is on-track to continuously improve the balance of public performance reporting – which will also include a review of the style and content of the annual performance report.

## **7. Personnel Issues**

**7.1** Recruitment of the agreed posts has been largely completed.

## **8. Financial Implications**

**8.1** Expenditure to date has been met from the revenue (£420,000) and capital (£440,000) allocations previously agreed by Council.

**8.2** To Period 2 (15<sup>th</sup> May) expenditure is as follows:

### Revenue Items

Brodies Consultants:	£33,274
IBP (Staff survey):	£ 4,667
Staff Salaries:	£15,745

### Capital Items

HR system:	£ 3,735
------------	---------

**8.3** A further £70,750 has been committed as follows:-

Solace Enterprises	£26,250
K3 Consultants	£25,500
IBP	£14,000
Hexagon	£ 2,000
Quality Scotland Membership	£ 3,000

## **9. Risk Analysis**

**9.1** No Risk Analysis is required at this stage.



## 10. Recommendations

10.1 Members are invited to comment on progress made to date.

.....  
**David McMillan**  
**Chief Executive**  
**Date: 20 June 2007**

---

**Person to Contact:** David Webster, Section Head Performance Management,  
(01389) 737143  
[david.webster@west-dunbarton.gov.uk](mailto:david.webster@west-dunbarton.gov.uk)

Liz Cochrane, Principal Policy Officer (01389) 737271  
Headquarters - Garshake Road  
[liz.cochrane@west-dunbarton.gov.uk](mailto:liz.cochrane@west-dunbarton.gov.uk)

**Appendix 1:** Best Value Improvement Plan

**Background Papers:** See list below

**Wards Affected:** All

---

<sup>1</sup> [Public Hearing 29-30<sup>th</sup> November 2006 - Transcript](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Final Audit Scotland Report on the Best Value Audit in West Dunbartonshire Council February 2007](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Report to Council 17<sup>th</sup> January 2007](#) on Findings of Accounts Commission

<sup>4</sup> [Report to Council 28<sup>th</sup> February 2007](#) on BV Improvement Plan plus [Appendix 1](#) and [Appendix 2](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Report to Council 25<sup>th</sup> April 2007 on progress of BV Improvement Plan](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Report to Corporate Services Committee March 2007 on HR System Procurement.](#)

<sup>7</sup> Report on Option Appraisal Training to Corporate Services Committee 27<sup>th</sup> June 2007

<sup>8</sup> [Report to Tender Committee 25<sup>th</sup> April 2007 on Performance Management System](#)

<sup>9</sup> [Report to Corporate Services March 2007 on Trading Accounts](#)

<sup>10</sup> [Report to Community Participation Committee March 2007 on Community Engagement Structures](#)

<sup>11</sup> [Report to JCF 1<sup>st</sup> March on Outstanding Grievances](#)

<sup>12</sup> [Report to Corporate Services Committee March 2007 on Corporate Procurement Strategy.](#)

<sup>13</sup> [Report to Corporate Services Committee January 2007 on sustainable procurement.](#)

- 
- <sup>14</sup> [Report to Social Justice Committee 13<sup>th</sup> June on Approved Providers](#)
- <sup>15</sup> [Report to Social Justice Committee 14 March 2007 on Gender Equality Duty](#)
- <sup>16</sup> [Report to Social Justice Committee 13<sup>th</sup> June 2007 on Disability Equality Scheme](#) plus  
[Appendix](#)
- <sup>17</sup> [Report to Social Justice Committee 13<sup>th</sup> June 2007 on Access Improvements](#) plus  
Appendix
- <sup>18</sup> [Report to Social Justice Committee 13<sup>th</sup> June 2007 on Integrated Impact Assessment](#)  
plus [Appendix](#)