

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by Chief Executive

Council : 29 April 2009

Subject: Best Value 2

1. Purpose

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is notify Elected Members of a formal consultation process on the Accounts Commission proposals for Best Value 2 (BV2) which closes on 31 May 2009.

2. Background

- 2.1** The Accounts Commission and Audit Scotland have completed the first phase of their Audits of Best Value and Community Planning which commenced in 2004. Only two reports remain to be published from the 32 Councils.
- 2.2** BV2 is the next phase of Auditing and will involve all 32 Councils in a further round of Best Value audit activity.
- 2.3** The Commission have produced proposals for BV2 and are requesting feedback from Councils by 31st May 2009.

3. Issues

- 3.1** The Commission has indicated that BV2 will be proportionate, and will reflect the level of commitment councils can demonstrate to Best Value as well as their record in improving services and outcomes for local people.
- 3.2** There will be a stronger focus on looking at how councils work with partners and how they listen to local people's views of their council and their experience of using services. The Single Outcome Agreement (and progress against the targets) will be key to this. The content of the audit will be informed by the issues that matter most to local people, such as the quality of local services, how safe people feel, what support is available for vulnerable people and the quality of the local environment.
- 3.3** The Commission's role in coordinating scrutiny activity will also be evident. BV2 will be the focus for more streamlined scrutiny as it will become the single corporate assessment framework for Scottish councils and the audit work will be based on a shared risk assessment drawn up in consultation with other local government scrutiny bodies.

- 3.4** The consultation documents draw on Best Value audit experience so far, continuing discussions with councils and the findings of an independent review of the Best Value audit process, published in 2007, which showed that whilst the process was established and credible it could be further improved.
- 3.5** The documents include options for introducing clearer judgments on council performance, based on the Accounts Commission and Audit Scotland's views of the characteristics of a Best Value council. There is also a proposal to introduce a degree of peer involvement, whereby representatives from other councils would be involved in audits.
- 3.6** The feedback received will help shape the development of BV2, which will be tested with five pathfinder audits later in the year at The Highland Council, Angus Council, Scottish Borders Council, Dundee City Council and East Ayrshire Council. Audit Scotland will carry out joint scrutiny planning at these five BV2 pathfinder sites and also at Fife Council and West Dunbartonshire Council. This work will also feed into BV2 development.
- 3.7** The documentation has been circulated to Senior Officers of the Council and the Community Planning Partnership and responses have been requested by a deadline of Friday 22nd May.
- 3.8** Elected Members are also requested to provide any views on these proposals by the 22nd May to the contact below.
- 3.9** The summary of the consultation proposals is included as Appendix 1 to this report and a Response Questionnaire is shown as Appendix 2. The full proposals are available on the Audit Scotland Website (www.audit-scotland.gov.uk) or from the Chief Executive's Policy Unit on request. Hard copies are also available in Members offices.
- 3.10** A single response collated from responses from Elected Members, Partners and Senior Officers will be produced and sent to the Accounts Commission on the 31st May by the Chief Executive.
- 3.11** A further report on the details of the proposed pathfinder audit work in West Dunbartonshire Council and the final version of the Commission's BV2 Audit approach will be submitted to Council at a future date.

4. Personnel Issues

- 4.1** There are no personnel issues.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1** There are no financial implications.

6. Risk Analysis

- 6.1** None at this stage

7. Recommendations

- 7.1 Members are requested to consider the proposals and provide any feedback by 21st May 2009.

.....
David McMillan
Chief Executive
Date: 16 April 2009

Person to Contact: David Webster - Manager, Improvement & Performance
Council Offices, Garshake Road, Dumbarton G82 3PU
Tel: 01389 737143
E-mail: david.webster@west-dunbarton.gov.uk

Appendix 1: Summary- Best Value 2 Proposals for Consultation
Appendix 2: BV2 Consultation Questionnaire

Background Papers: None

Wards Affected: All