

# WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

## Report by the Chief Executive

Council : 24 June 2009

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**Subject: Early Member Involvement in Decision Making – Key Strategic Issues**

### **1. Purpose**

- 1.1** This report provides Council with proposals for the key strategic issues which should provide the focus for the early involvement of elected members in decision making during 2009/10.

### **2. Background**

- 2.1** The report on Strategic Leadership which was agreed at the end of February 2009 included the commitments that:

- The CMT would produce a programme for Members' consideration, of key strategic issues for Council decision and Elected Member involvement for 2009/10, and develop an annual plan thereafter (finalised in March / April each year – following the Budget decisions). This should be linked clearly to the SOA and the Corporate Plan.
- (For 2010/11 onwards), the initial draft of this programme should be available in the previous October each year to inform the budget process. This will involve clarification of the decision making cycle and in particular the approach to Policy Led Budgeting.
- The programme of key strategic issues should also include proposals for the appropriate development mechanisms.

- 2.2** The immediate priority for Council is to agree a plan for the issues which will be addressed during 2009/10.

### **3. Main Issues**

#### Types of issues for discussion

- 3.1** The appendix to this report identifies some of the main strategic issues which are likely to require member decisions during 2009/10. The proposals do not focus on the highest level strategic goals, (Improving Health & Wellbeing, Building Safe & Strong Communities etc), as these are not likely to require specific individual decisions – but they do aim to keep the discussion and decision making at a level which is more than the purely operational, by focusing on major areas of work which will contribute to the high level goals.

- 3.2** In addition to specific strategic issues, there is also a need to involve members more fully in the Corporate and Service planning processes. This will be developed as part of the regular annual cycle.

- 3.3** There will also be issues which may not require immediate decisions, but which would benefit from a more general system of discussion, (e.g. reversing population decline). This process is also being developed.
- 3.4** Directors will also identify operational issues which would also benefit from early discussions with members. These will be handled at a departmental level.

#### Links with planning processes

- 3.5** Links between specific strategic issues and
- The SOA,
  - Community & Corporate Planning processes and
  - “Improving Council” proposals
- are recorded in the appendix. Service Plans are currently being finalised, but it should be noted that these will also link with some of the key strategic areas. Some of the key strategic issues mentioned will also feature in the discussions of Community Planning Thematic Groups. These structures will link to Council decision making, but should not be a substitute for mechanisms which involve a wider range of elected members.

#### Mechanisms for discussion

- 3.6** An overarching mechanism for early member involvement is proposed as follows:
- opening with a seminar involving all relevant members,
  - following through with opportunities for more detailed discussion
  - use of the pre agenda meeting as a ‘testing & validation’ opportunity
  - maximising the opportunities for any final questions or clarification well in advance of Council or Committee meetings
  - presentation to Council or Committee
- This will provide a structure for discussion of the areas which are identified as top priorities.
- 3.7** It is proposed that the full approach should focus on a limited number of top priorities – 8 areas are proposed in the recommendations in paragraph 7.1, and are expanded in the appendix to this report. For other issues, a reduced version may be relevant, and in some instances, structures for discussion are already established. These mechanisms should also include opportunities for option appraisal and integrated Impact assessment, (equalities & sustainability issues).
- 3.8** Where structures are already established, e.g in relation to financial planning and budgets, there may be a need to enhance these structures to cover the full range of issues which require member involvement – and to ensure that all relevant members have the opportunity to contribute.

## **4. Personnel Issues**

- 4.1** There are no personnel issues, (other than the requirement to review workload priorities to ensure that these processes can be supported).

## **5. Financial Implications**

- 5.1** Any financial implications will relate to the costs of operating the mechanisms which will allow fuller member involvement. (e.g. Venues, catering, travel expenses, staff time etc). It is not envisaged that these will be significant, as long as the staff time involved is built in to regular workloads.

## **6. Risk Analysis**

- 6.1** There is a risk that if we do not implement the recommendations which were agreed by Council in February 2009, then we will not be in a position to demonstrate that we have improved Strategic Leadership, and decision making will continue to take place in a more adversarial manner.

## **7. Conclusions and Officer Recommendations**

- 7.1** Following discussion by the Corporate Management Team, 8 areas are proposed which will require key decisions in 2009/10 – and which therefore should be recommended to members as top priority for the new process:
- Financial / Budget Planning, (including wider issues such as impact of recession and changing service needs). Consideration of pressures, risks & solutions
  - Provide school resources fit for purpose in the 21<sup>st</sup> century
  - Models of integration with NHS & CHP
  - Meeting the Scottish Housing Quality Standard by 2015 / Stock Transfer
  - Waste Management Targets
  - Managing resources / assets (including infrastructure hub)
  - Clyde Valley CPP – Shared Service Developments and NSS Diagnostics – Shared Service Developments
  - Adult care provision
- 7.2** In addition, other issues, which may require decisions in 2010/11 and beyond, could benefit from discussion forums to begin the exploration of member's views. These might include:
- Marketing West Dunbartonshire as a business location, place to stay, and place with tourist potential
  - Addressing population decline
- 7.3** It is recommended that Council:
- Agrees the 8 key priorities proposed in paragraph 7.1 to launch the new approach to decision making in 2009/10
  - Considers the opportunities for initial discussion forums on matters which do not require immediate decision, and whether the suggestions in paragraph 7.2, or others, are appropriate

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**David McMillan**  
**Chief Executive**  
**Date: 10 June 2009**

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**Person to Contact:** Liz Cochrane – Head of Service, Policy & Performance  
Tel: 01389 737271  
E-mail: [liz.cochrane@west-dunbarton.gov.uk](mailto:liz.cochrane@west-dunbarton.gov.uk)

**Appendix 1:** Proposals for Key Strategic Issues for Early Member Involvement

**Background Papers:** Report to Council – February 2009

**Wards Affected:** All

**Strategic Decision Making – Proposed Key Issues for Early Involvement by Elected Members – 2009/10**

Item	Issue	Lead Dept.	Proposed Mechanism for Development	Link (Community Plan [CP], Corporate Plan, SOA, Improving Council [IC])
1	Financial / Budget Planning, (including wider issues such as impact of recession and changing service needs) Consideration of pressures, risks & solutions	CS / All	Strategic Financial working group already exists Revised finance review framework. Opportunities for wider member involvement would require consideration.	Corporate Plan – Theme 6 Objective – Improve medium to long term financial planning  IC – p 18
2	Provide school resources fit for purpose in the 21 <sup>st</sup> century	E&LLL	Member involvement structures in existence, although full member participation requires further consideration	CP – P32  Corporate Plan – Theme 1 Objectives – Deliver the agreed programmes of new primary & secondary schools – and rationalise and redevelop remaining primary schools  Identify funding and establish business plan for delivery of new Dumbarton Academy  SOA – 04.3
3	Develop models of integration with Community Health Partnership (CHP) & NHS	SW&H	See paragraph 3.6	
4	Meeting the Scottish Housing Quality Standard by 2015 / Stock Transfer	HEED	See paragraph 3.6 Also - local regeneration groups are being established which involve local members.	CP – P26  Corporate Plan Theme 1 Objective – Improve the quality of the Council

				Housing Stock SOA – 10.3
5	New Waste Management Targets	HEED	See paragraph 3.6	CP – P 21  Corporate Plan Theme 4 Objective - Manage waste in a more sustainable way  SOA – 14.3
6	Managing resources / assets (Including infrastructure hub)	CS / HEED	See paragraph 3.6	Corporate Plan – Theme 6 Objective – Improve service efficiency and competitiveness  IC10 IC 13-17
7	Clyde Valley CPP – Shared Service Developments NSS Diagnostics – Shared Service Developments	CES	See paragraph 3.6	Corporate Plan – Theme 6 Objective – Join up and share services with other providers
8	Adult care provision	SW&H	See paragraph 3.6	CP – P30  Corporate Plan – Theme 2 Objective – Increase the proportion of older people needing care support who are able to sustain an independent quality of life as part of the community  SOA - 06.1