

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Chief Executive

Council: 27 February 2008

**Subject: Response to Audit Scotland Progress Report – January 2008.
Proposed Structure for Management of Best Value Improvement
Activity**

1. Purpose

- 1.1** This report proposes a revised method for the project management of the Best Value Improvement Plan.

2. Background

- 2.1** Following the initial Best Value Audit Report in February 2007, Audit Scotland and West Dunbartonshire Council agreed a Best Value Improvement Plan. A Project Management approach was used to drive the Council's improvement agenda. However, the Follow-up Audit Report produced by the Accounts Commission in January 2008 identified a number of important issues regarding the current approach:

- *The WDC Best Value Improvement Plan contains eleven immediate and three medium term priorities to address the Accounts Commission findings, it also contains an additional 13 priorities. Audit Scotland have commented that whilst it is commendable that the Council have built additional improvements into the Plan, attention should be focussed on first achieving the 9 immediate and 3 medium term priorities*
- *Lack of prioritisation and additional priorities could affect the Council's capacity to deliver the short and medium term priorities. It is suggested that the slippage in the current Best Value Improvement Plan confirms Audit Scotland's findings.*
- *The current structure of a Programme Board with cross party representation and introducing an additional Improvement and Efficiency group to oversee the work of the eight work streams is an overly complicated landscape.*
- *The current remit of the Improvement and Efficiency group to oversee all continuous improvement and efficiency data, as well as systematically assessing the competitiveness of all services, is wide and extensive*
- *The linkages and relationship between the Improvement and Efficiency group and the Programme Board is unclear*
- *There is insufficient focus on the desired impact and outcomes of the improvement activity*

- 2.2 While it is proposed that the full detail of the revised Best Value Improvement Plan will be developed and presented to Council in April 2008, it is nevertheless important to agree the process for taking this forward at the earliest possible stage. The structure proposed in paragraph 3 will address the points raised in the Audit Progress Report.

3. Main Issues

Proposed structure of project management

- 3.1 To consolidate improvement activity across the Council, and reflect the links that exist between the short and medium term priorities from the Best Value Improvement Plan, a revised structural option has been prepared. This contains five broad, integrated improvement teams, led by an Improvement and Efficiency Executive. Trade Union representation would also be included in each of the five work streams (See Appendix 1)

Method and source of reporting

- 3.2 To increase the scope of reporting to Elected Members, and in recognition of the wide ranging remit of the work streams involved in the Project Management Structure, it is proposed that performance should be reported directly to full Council.

Functional responsibilities of the Teams

- 3.3 The teams have been designed to reflect a primary focus on achieving the short and medium term Best Value Improvement Priorities. Priorities with the closest functional relationships have been grouped together to ensure integrated working is built into the process and to accommodate areas of responsibility of staff participating in the teams. Nevertheless it is also recognised that there must be effective joint working *between* teams, and effective monitoring of the overall progress.

The Improvement and Efficiency Executive

- 3.4 The Improvement and Efficiency Executive would be constituted as a working group of the Council. The membership of the Improvement & Efficiency Executive should reflect the importance of the overall monitoring of this activity and it is recommended that this group should be composed of elected members, supported by the Chief Executive. It is proposed that the membership should consist of 4 members of the Administration, 3 members of the main opposition group, and 1 member from other opposition. This would reflect the political composition of the Council. The Leader of the Council should act as Chair with support from the Deputy Leader and the Leader and Deputy Leader of the opposition. This Executive should replace both the initial member / officer Best Value Improvement Plan Working Group, and the more recently established Improvement & Efficiency Steering Group. This addresses the concerns noted in the Audit Progress Report which referred to 'an overly complicated landscape'.

- 3.5** The role of the Executive would be primarily to monitor the impact of the Best Value Improvement activity across the teams, to ensure that the Council achieves the required impact on performance. A holistic view of activities across the various teams is required to ensure strategic integrated practice is always considered where appropriate.

4. Personnel Issues

- 4.1** There are no immediate Personnel issues.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1** There are no immediate Financial Implications

6. Risk Analysis

- 6.1** There is a risk that if we do not restructure the approach to delivering the Best Value Improvement Plan, then we may not address the comments made in the Best Value Audit Progress Report.

7. Conclusions

- 7.1** To emphasise the level of importance of the Best Value improvement process, Executive Directors should take responsibility for each of the work streams. The eight current work streams should be consolidated to five, and integrated to reflect the clear links between the improvement priorities. The primary focus of improvement should be to implement the short and medium term priorities successfully, whilst taking every opportunity to maximise impact on the community. Members should take responsibility for the overall monitoring through the Improvement & Efficiency Executive.

8. Recommendations

- 8.1** Members are invited to consider and agree the proposals for a revised management structure.

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Date: 21 February 2008

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Appendix 1: Chart showing proposed structure

Background Papers: Audit of Best Value and Community Planning – Progress
Report , January 2008

Wards Affected: All