

## **WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL**

### **Report by Strategic Lead – Communications, Culture, Communities & Facilities**

**Audit Committee: 20 November 2019**

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#### **Subject: West Dunbartonshire Best Value Assurance Report**

#### **1. Purpose**

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to update members on progress towards delivery of the improvement plan agreed with Accounts Commission following the 2018 Best Value Assurance process of West Dunbartonshire Council.

#### **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1** Members are asked to:
- Note the progress made to date against the Best Value Assurance Report (BVAR) improvement plan for West Dunbartonshire Council

#### **3. Background**

- 3.1** The Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 established statutory duties for Scottish Local Authorities, focused on securing Best Value. Under these arrangements West Dunbartonshire Council was last audited in 2006, with follow up reports published until 2010.
- 3.2** The Best Value Assurance process took place in West Dunbartonshire from January to April 2018. Audit Scotland carried out an evidence review of strategies and documents, as well as conducting a range of interviews and attending key council meetings.
- 3.3** The BVAR for West Dunbartonshire was presented to Accounts Commission on 7 June 2018 and published on Thursday 28 June, along with the Accounts Commission findings, on the [Account Commission website](#). The report was circulated to all elected members on the date of publication, along with a briefing note on Commission findings. Following this, the report and a supporting improvement plan were considered by Council in August 2018. The improvement plan was approved for delivery during 2018/19 – 2019/20, with progress updates to be reported through Audit Committee.
- 3.4** The BVAR provided an assessment of the Council and its performance since the last audit in 2006. Overall the audit was positive, providing independent external assurance on delivery of Best Value in West Dunbartonshire. The Commission endorsed the recommendations made in the Audit Scotland report and also noted the significant progress made by Council since the most recent audit follow-up report in 2010.

**3.5** Based on the BVAR, Audit Scotland made five recommendations which provide direction on the key areas which Council should focus improvement activity over the coming period. These recommendations cover the themes of:

- Capital project management
- Workforce planning
- Reducing absence
- Developing the Community Alliance
- Enhancing cross party working

#### **4. Main Issues**

##### BVAR & Recommendations

- 4.1** The improvement plan agreed by Council in August 2018 detailed the actions and timescales for delivery of these in each of the five recommendation areas of the BVAR. Lead officers were also identified in the improvement plan.
- 4.2** Work on the range of actions identified to address the recommendation areas of the BVAR has been monitored through Performance & Monitoring Review Group on a monthly basis. In addition, it was agreed that progress would be reported to Audit Committee on a regular basis over the period of the plan with a final report presented to Council following conclusion of the improvement plan.
- 4.3** Audit Scotland is currently reviewing progress of the improvement plan as part of their core annual audit activity. In doing this, the senior auditor met with the performance & strategy manager to gain a general overview of the actions areas. Following this, individual meetings were being arranged with action lead officers as required.
- 4.4** The scorecard report, attached as appendix 1, describes progress to date in each of the five action areas. Good progress has been made on delivery of the agreed actions on cross party working, capital programme management and workforce.
- 4.5** As was reported in August, the Strategic Lead for Housing & Employability highlighted that the initial delivery date for action area 4 on community empowerment was proving challenging. Work on development of the community empowerment strategy progressed well, but did not progress at the pace required to deliver for the June 2019 target date for the action. This was to ensure full ownership and support for the strategy and supporting action plan across key stakeholder groups at a community, Council and partnership level. The Strategy will be presented for endorsement at Community Planning West Dunbartonshire before being considered for approval at November Council.

## **5. People Implications**

- 5.1** There are no people or personnel implications directly associated with this report. Actions will be delivered within existing capacity.

## **6. Financial and Procurement Implications**

- 6.1** There are no financial or procurement implications directly associated with this report. Actions will be delivered within existing budgets.

## **7. Risk Analysis**

- 7.1** Council is required to act on the recommendations made by Audit Scotland and the findings of Accounts Commission. Failure to deliver on the agreed improvement plan would present a risk to the Council's statutory duty to deliver best value and to the reputation of the organisation.

## **8. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)**

- 8.1** The improvement plan and associated actions do not have specific relevance to any protected group. The progress report on activity does not require an impact assessment to be undertaken.

## **9. Consultation**

- 9.1** The improvement actions contained in appendix one were developed in consultation with all key services.

## **10. Strategic Assessment**

- 10.1** The improvement plan and response to the BVAR and Accounts Commission findings ensures delivery of the Council priorities:
- open, accountable and accessible local government
  - efficient and effective frontline services that improve the everyday lives of residents

**Malcolm Bennie**  
**Strategic Lead – CCC**  
**21 October 2019**

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**Appendices:** BVAR Improvement Plan – progress report

**Background Papers:** [West Dunbartonshire Council Best Value Report 2018](#)

**Wards Affected:** All