

Corporate Plan 2005/9

Progress in 2005/6

Introduction

The Council's Corporate Plan for 2005/9 guides the work of our services and our employees. It does this by setting out a clear vision for West Dunbartonshire that is shaped by partnership:

Working together we want to end poverty and exclusion, deliver better services and improve the quality of life for the people of West Dunbartonshire.

Following from this vision, we identified six key priorities for 2005/9. These are:

- regenerate and develop the local economy;
- promote health and well-being;
- promote lifelong learning;
- create a better environment;
- develop our children and young people; and
- provide high quality, best value services.

These priorities have been translated into specific, measurable objectives. Targets have been set for each objective, enabling us to monitor, manage and report our progress to all our stakeholders.

Throughout 2005/6 we have been busy implementing our action plans to help achieve our objectives. Our progress has been reported in the Council's newspaper, *West Dunbartonshire News*. Since August 2005, every issue has included two pages of articles about our performance, each issue focusing on one of the key priorities. This booklet updates these articles, highlighting some of the work we have carried out in 2005/6 and the impact this has had on meeting the targets set for our objectives.

If you would like additional copies of this booklet please contact the Policy Unit: telephone 01389 - 737231 or e-mail us at policy.unit@west-dunbarton.gov.uk

For further information, please contact Lynn Henderson, Policy Officer, Chief Executive's Department on 01389 -737528.

Corporate Priority: Regenerate and develop the local economy

Our focus is on area regeneration; enterprise, new business and job creation; helping people into work; and tackling the effects of poverty.

Area Regeneration

Town Centres and Waterfront Areas

The Town Centres Initiative Partnership, of which the Council is a major partner, produced leaflets setting out details of the Alexandria Town Centre action plan (Heart of the Vale) and the Dumbarton Town Centre action plan (Rediscovering Dumbarton). These ambitious plans are now being implemented through the Partnership. Around 800 new homes are proposed in and around Dumbarton town centre, with a further 300 new homes proposed or under construction in Alexandria. It is hoped that this will result in over £120 million worth of private sector investment and the creation of 500 new jobs in retail and construction.

In 2005/06 we spent £730,000 on improvements to car parks, pedestrian access, community safety and public realm in Dumbarton and Alexandria. A further £447,000 will be spent this year in addition to the current capital allocation.

The Strathleven Regeneration Company has been established by the Council and Scottish Enterprise Dunbartonshire to develop and implement regeneration strategies and projects in the Dumbarton and Vale of Leven area. Its present focus is the Strathleven Bond site. Following the negotiation of a joint venture agreement with private sector parties, planning applications for business and residential developments have been submitted.

With Scottish Enterprise Dunbartonshire, we have helped set up Clydebank Re-built Ltd to regenerate all aspects of Clydebank - its economy, environment, buildings and society. This will require us to work in partnership with many different organisations and groups, especially those who own much of our riverside land. Clydebank Re-built has been designated a Pathfinder Urban Regeneration Company (URC) by the Scottish Executive, one of only three in Scotland. These pathfinder URCs are dedicated arms-length bodies which co-ordinate the delivery of urban regeneration projects. Their longer-term goal is to use public sector investment in such a way as to maximise a 'positive market response' and, as such, provide a means through which the public and private sectors combine effectively to create growth and add value for both.

In 2005/06 we provided Clydebank Re-built with £910,000 of funding and this was invested in a series of public realm improvements and the completion of new industrial units at John Knox Street. Progress has also been made with Clydebank Re-built and private sector interests in bringing forward proposals to regenerate the riverside areas at Clydebank and work has commenced constructing a new campus for Clydebank College. We also secured £1million of funding for the Forth & Clyde Canal and a series of projects aimed at public realm improvements, facilities to increase the use of the canal, towpath improvements, access and signage and community involvement will be undertaken this year and next.

Roads and Transport

During 2005/6 we completed the new public transport interchange in Dumbarton High Street using £1million of Scottish Executive grant funding.

Bus priority measures were completed to the west of Dumbarton town centre and a 100+ space car park/park and ride has been constructed close to Dumbarton Central Station. The existing car park adjacent to Dumbarton East Station has been extended using Scottish Executive funding.

In Clydebank, public realm improvements have continued along the A814 corridor, in conjunction with Clydebank Rebuilt. Plans for a new transport interchange at Chalmers Street are being considered by a partnership of SPT, Clydebank Rebuilt and the Council.

During 2005/6 we invested an additional £500K to replace and improve street lighting including the introduction of 'white' light in many areas.

External Funding

One of the ways we are helping the economy is to assist third sector and social economy organisations to apply for grant funding. In 2005/6, the External Funding Officer assisted 34 organisations to apply for grant funding and helped attract £735,961 to the area. It is anticipated that through the on-going work of the External Funding Officer the number of successful applications will continue to increase during 2006/7.

Access to the Countryside

The Ranger Service works with local schools and communities to encourage people to make full use of the countryside. In 2005/6 we secured external monies to assist fund project development. The Local Access Forum has been established and a series of projects aimed at improving access to the countryside and open spaces has been undertaken. Funding has also been secured to support West Dunbartonshire Greenspace Project for 2006/07. In 2005/6 we spent 68% (£68,000) of our budget on environmental improvements, projects to enhance green spaces, woodland management, access improvements, environmental education, and a series of events.

Enterprise, New Business and Job Creation

Helping Businesses

In 2005/6, the Council helped train 267 local business employees, assisted 233 businesses to grow and develop and assisted 15 social economy organisations.

During 2005/6, we managed the Council's portfolio of around 680 industrial, commercial and non-operational properties and provided business support services for lessees. This generated £4.43 million in rental income for the Council.

We also consulted with local businesses to enhance the profile of our Trading Standards team and all those regarded as high risk were inspected to ensure their compliance with the principles of Fair Trading.

Enterprise for Work in Schools

The Council raises awareness of the world of work by encouraging pupils from primary and secondary schools to participate in a wide range of enterprising and entrepreneurial programmes. Many of these programmes are delivered by Careers Scotland and our business, Council and voluntary sector partners. In the region of 97% of 4th year pupils can access the work experience programme, managed and serviced by East Dunbartonshire Council for both Councils.

West Dunbartonshire Council's Vocational Programme was launched in 2004 in partnership with Glasgow City Council, Clydebank College and Springboard. All high schools participate in the programme which is funded via the Cities Growth Fund and European Social Fund. Initially it provided 96 places with vocational options in hospitality and construction. By 2005/6, this had increased to 194 places, with additional vocational options in tourism, early education and childcare, sport and recreation and motor vehicle engineering. The programme will continue to expand to provide, over time, all young people with the opportunity to access vocational learning.

Helping People into Work

Modern Apprenticeships

Through our Housing Maintenance Direct Labour Organisation (DLO), we provide modern apprenticeships for young people seeking a trade in the building and maintenance industries. We also provide training places through the New Deal Environment Task Force for young people who have experienced long term unemployment, equipping them with the necessary

skills to find employment. In the summer of 2005 we added 6 new apprentices to our workforce. In addition, we provided training in partnership with other training providers for 187 young people.

In 2005/6, we recruited another 14 young people to join our developing Administration Modern Apprentice Programme. In partnership with the Careers Service and local organisations, we continued to provide training and employment opportunities for young people with additional support needs through Scottish Enterprise's National Programme 'Get Ready for Work'. We also provided opportunities for six young people to obtain modern apprenticeships in construction and all six are performing well at college and in the workplace.

Welfare Rights

The Working for Families project, run by the Council, the Job Centre and Lennox Partnership, helps single parents return to work by providing assistance with benefits claims and money advice. Seventy-four people were assisted by the project in 2005/6.

Tackling the Effects of Poverty

The Anti-Poverty Strategy

In 2005/6, 21% of children in West Dunbartonshire were living in workless households, an improvement on the previous year's figure of 23%. The percentage of children living in low income households remained unchanged at 21%. In order to address these issues, we developed and implemented an Anti Poverty Strategy. This will be reviewed at the end of March 2007. We also produced an updated version of our Social and Economic Profile and developed detailed statistics based on the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) to support our anti-poverty strategy work.

Benefits

More than 5000 people accessed the Welfare Rights Service in 2005/6, generating more income for West Dunbartonshire citizens than in 2004/5. Over 200 clients received advice and representation about a benefits dispute, resulting in a 50% success rate and £0.5m of additional benefit for those clients. However, due to the closure of a local Appeals Service in Bowling and Dumbarton and the length of time it is now taking for appeals to be heard, the number of appeals heard has dropped.

Corporate Priority: Promote health and well being

Our focus is on promoting health and well being in relation to vulnerable people; and in developing the Council as a health improvement organisation.

Vulnerable People

Housing Adaptations

This year around £545,000 has been allocated from the private sector housing grant from Communities Scotland towards grant applications for adaptations for the disabled, elderly and infirm to enable them to continue to live in the family home.

Sheltered Housing Service

The 24-hour warden service introduced in 2004/5 was extended to provide coverage in all Council sheltered housing units, providing full cover 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. All residents are supported through this service, amounting to 256 people in 2005/6. 85 people in sheltered housing also received homecare services in 2005/6.

A SMART technology pilot introduced in 2003/4 has now been extended to 6 sheltered housing units with 143 residents benefiting. The service will be extended to all sheltered housing units in 2006/7, eventually covering all residents.

An intensive step-up, step-down service provides support to people following their return home from hospital. In 2005/6, 20 people received this service.

Community Based Support

Community based support services enable vulnerable people to live at home with support. The Council will continue to work with NHS partners to deliver more efficient health and social care for older people and those with a disability. In 2005/06:

- 86 people with learning disabilities and their carers received community based short breaks in 2005/6.
- 385 people with a learning disability were supported to live independently at home.
- 1,250 community alarms were provided to local authority, private and housing associations tenants.
- 11,153 hours of Home Care were provided to people aged 65 and over across West Dunbartonshire.
- 1,013 referrals were received by Rapid Response Teams who, together with NHS partners, assist in avoiding unnecessary hospital admissions through home care and housing support or, if necessary, admission to residential or nursing care.
- 2,133 people received a Single Shared Assessment, carried out jointly with social work, health and housing, to meet their community care needs.
- The McMillan Carers Scheme provides a care service to people who have a cancer diagnosis and around 20 to 25 people receive this service in any given week.
- The Home Care and Bathing service has been extended throughout the Council area with 168 receiving this service to date.
- As at 31 March 2006, the Acquired Brain Injury Project was supporting 39 clients. In 2005/6, the project delivered training to 71 people who work with people with an acquired brain injury. The Council will continue to work with both health boards to sustain this project.
- 66 carers received a short break service in 2005/06, just short of the 100 target set for the year. The Respite and Carers Short Breaks Service and Carers Centre Project who provide this service have an important role to play in supporting carers. They are looking at ways to ensure that they meet the needs of carers and are seeking their views through carer involvement in planning forums.

Welfare Rights Service

In partnership with Macmillan Cancer Relief, the Welfare Rights Service has been providing benefits and financial advice to cancer patients in a contract worth up to £327,000 over three years. Early indications are that over 250 people accessed this service in 2005/6 and the annual equivalent of the money generated is in excess of £700k.

Welfare Rights continued to support the Clydebank Asbestos Group (CAG) throughout 2005/6. This included joint organisation of an International Asbestos Conference, assisting the CAG with a campaign on legal matters, attending meetings at the STUC Perth and the House of Commons, and advising the group on a number of ongoing issues.

Developing the Role of West Dunbartonshire Council as a Health Promoting Organisation

Joint Health Improvement Plan

Improving health in Scotland is a national challenge. In order to achieve this within West Dunbartonshire, the council and its partners have developed and agreed a Joint Health Improvement Plan. The Plan was developed following extensive consultation and reflects a common commitment to improving health - a complex and long term challenge. It begins to identify the many interconnecting issues which can contribute to a healthier lifestyle and represents the first step in developing a co-ordinated and consistent approach to health improvement in West Dunbartonshire.

The Plan sets out the strategic context for joint working and identifies key aims and objectives for improving health that will be taken forward over the next few years and beyond. In 2006/7, the Council and its partners will implement their action plans to help achieve these objectives in relation to the main themes of alcohol, social capital, violence and abuse, healthy eating, physical activity, mental health, sexual health, drugs, smoking, and safe and healthy environments.

Choose Life

Choose Life is a national suicide strategy and action plan to prevent suicide in Scotland. The campaign is overseen and supported by the Scottish Executive and implemented in West Dunbartonshire through the Community Planning Partnership.

The broad focus of the strategy is on managing and co-ordinating agency efforts in relation to suicide prevention; exploring new and innovative ideas; highlighting and filling gaps in existing services; building capacity that is sustainable; and achieving best value.

Some of our key achievements in 2005/6 include:

- raised awareness within the local community and within the Council through publicity activities including articles in the staff magazine and the local press, the development of a Choose Life web page and intranet site, a calendar distributed to every home in West Dunbartonshire, information cards distributed to all Council staff and a poster campaign in schools;
- provided training for staff who work with those at risk, especially school and social work employees, including 25 employees trained in Mental Health First Aid, 130 in Applied Suicide Prevention Skills, 60 as staff companions, 24 in self harm awareness, and 6 suicide talks with 95 participants; and
- built capacity of partners to deliver training by training 6 staff in Applied Suicide Intervention Skills and 3 in Mental Health First Aid.

In addition, the Choose Life strategy won a bronze COSLA award in 2005/6.

Integrated Impact Assessment

Council policies and strategies have an impact on the health and well being of the community. In 2005/6, the Council piloted an impact assessment process which requires policies and strategies to be assessed for any negative impact on health and well being at an early stage in

their development. This health impact assessment process has been integrated with other equalities areas such as race and disability.

West Dunbartonshire is one of the first Council's in Scotland to have an established process for impact assessment. A number of policies and strategies have been impact assessed including the Housing Allocations policy, the Community Learning and Development Plan, the Community Care plan and the Smoking Policy.

As a result of impact assessing the Housing Allocations policy a number of issues have been highlighted for review including:

- the response to victims of domestic abuse;
- the accommodation needs of paid carers;
- the availability of information in minority languages;
- the aids and adaptations policy; and
- equal opportunities monitoring.

Health at Work

The Council recognises that improving the health of its workforce, many of whom reside in the area, is a key element of effective people management practices. To achieve this, the Council has developed a wide range of initiatives promoting physical, mental and social well being. One of these initiatives, the Scottish Health at Work Award (SHAW), is a programme that requires the Council to deliver a range of health events. In 2005/6, these focused on positive mental health, HIV/AIDS awareness, and smoking.

As a result of the work carried out in 2005/6, the Council is on target to achieve the bronze SHAW award and will be seeking to attain silver in 2007.

The current focus is on promoting a Health for Life programme for employees, a free 12 week intensive distance learning course covering all aspects of health and well being.

Healthy Eating At School

The "Hungry for Success" and "Buzzing for Health" initiatives aim to improve the dietary habits of all school and early years children.

Working with the Health Boards, the Council has introduced the Scottish Nutrition Standard for school meals in all its primary schools and work is in progress to introduce the standard in secondary schools by December 2006.

Healthy eating vending machines are being used to deliver a Breakfast Club service to all secondary schools.

A cashless catering system has been introduced in all secondary schools which will allow quicker throughput of pupils during breaks, eliminate the potential for bullying and remove the stigma attached to free school meals.

The kitchen and dining areas within schools are currently being improved. These improvements will be completed in secondary schools by December 2006.

Various initiatives have been implemented to raise parents and children's awareness of healthy eating. The curriculum will now include more references to diet, nutrition and healthy eating and new resources are being considered to support schools in this.

Integrated Community Schools

The Scottish Executive's original aim was that every school in Scotland would be an integrated community school (ICS) by 2007/8 and be working to achieve health promoting school status. Reflecting the Scottish Executive's developing agenda, the emphasis is now on schools participating fully in the delivery of integrated children's services, incorporating health promoting school, Eco Schools, Determined to Succeed and other associated initiatives which require

integrated approaches for their successful delivery. West Dunbartonshire's ICS model is based around school clusters, all of which have a Pupil and Family Support Service and support from a Health Promoting School Team, Joint Assessment Team, and Community Learning and Development. All schools/school clusters are making good progress.

Health Promoting Schools

Part of the process to becoming an Integrated Community School is to achieve Health Promoting Status. A Health Promoting School's main aims are:

- to promote the physical, social, spiritual, mental and emotional health and well-being of all pupils and staff; and
- to work with others in identifying and meeting the health needs of the whole school and its wider community.

All our schools have implemented aspects of the Health Promoting Schools agenda but to ensure that they all become Health Promoting by the target date of December 2007, the council will:

- support developments which reflect the essential attributes of Integrated Community Schools;
- assist and support head teachers with documentation and measuring progress; and
- monitor and report on progress.

Exercise

In order to encourage exercise, the Council's Passport to Leisure Scheme is actively promoted to leisure centre users. As part of this promotion, free cards are offered to all West Dunbartonshire school children with an uptake of approximately 75%.

2,000 free fitness and lifestyle assessments have been carried out at our three main leisure centres.

The Council is ranked 2nd for pool attendance within urban councils and 20th across all Scottish councils. It is ranked 5th for indoor sports attendances within urban councils.

Funding has been found to continue the Exercise Referral Scheme for another year and an Exercise Counsellor has been appointed to provide a referral scheme from the Meadow Centre and Vale of Leven Pool.

In 2006/7, the Council will focus on increasing access to exercise for young people aged 12 to 18 years within the main leisure centres. This will include:

- consulting with young people within this age group;
- increasing juvenile sessions in all main site Cosmopolitan Gyms;
- introducing a programme of inclusion for 12 and 13 year olds within juvenile sessions;
- developing a 14 to 15 year old membership scheme, allowing greater access to gyms at all times; and
- developing an improved membership scheme for 16 to 18 year olds.

Youth Sports

There is a rewarding sports coaching and festival programme in all schools that enhances children's physical, psychological and social development and encourages activity as part of a daily routine. Festivals have taken place in football, rugby, hockey, and athletics and there have been very positive evaluations from primary school pupils and staff.

Sports programmes have continued to develop through the Better Neighbourhood Services Fund with 700 pupils participating in after-school clubs on a weekly basis. There is also an ongoing Disability Sports Programme within the community and schools.

Outdoor Activities

There is an ongoing programme to deliver multi-activity outdoor education courses on a non-residential basis and to progress the skills outlined in the national governing bodies for each individual discipline, for example, mountain biking and kayaking.

The courses are being delivered collaboratively with teaching staff. They include 3 day/ 2 night expedition courses in mountain biking and kayaking which incorporate a self-sufficient element targeted at secondary pupils, focusing on camping and cooking activities. These have been well received.

The number of pupils participating in mountain biking courses is expected to increase and feedback from both schools and pupils has been very positive.

Orienteering courses with specific 5-14 years attainment targets are being delivered to every primary and secondary school. Evaluations of these courses, which include residential courses, have also been very positive.

Corporate Priority: Promote lifelong learning

Lifelong learning is about providing learning opportunities in a variety of contexts beyond school and higher education. Young people and mature adult learners alike can learn in different ways, from developing basic skills to pursuing formal qualifications. Community based learning may involve one-to-one tuition, group activities and family learning.

Access, Participation and Achievement

Learning in the Community

Significant developments have occurred in the area of community learning and development over the past few years. A new five year plan for Community Learning, Development and Guidance was produced and is now being implemented.

The plan focuses on ensuring children and young people have an active voice and part to play in the democratic decision making process and the delivery of services for the community by partner agencies.

The Youth Strategy, which focuses on the delivery of services for young people by partner agencies, was launched in May with 125 youth representatives attending. Central to this strategy is Dialogue Youth, a national initiative promoting the involvement of young people in the decision-making processes of the Council, including the development of policies and the design and delivery of services. A Youth Forum has been formed to plan a Scottish Youth Parliament event.

In relation to adult learning, several successful learning opportunities took place in 2005/6 contributing to a 39% increase in adult achievement over the past year.

Libraries as a Learning Resource

In 2005/6 20.9% of the resident population were members of a local library, a slight fall from 21.6% in 2004/5 which is in line with national trends. The target for 2006/7 is to redress this decline through a vigorous programme of stock promotions, literary events, children's activities and learning centre courses.

During 2005/6 borrowers placed over 8,200 requests. The average time taken to satisfy these requests has fallen from 19 days in 2004/5 to 16 days in 2005/6.

The number of learning centre and learning access point users has risen slightly in 2005/6 to 8,219 or 8.9% of the resident population. There were over 91,000 bookings, a rise of 30% over the previous year, with the average number of uses per user also rising in that time period from 8.6 to 11.1. As part of the West Dunbartonshire Accessibility Strategy, 70 children took part in the 'It Takes All Sorts' project.

The summer Reading Voyage challenge of 2005 was completed by 190 children and 635 children took part in other organised holiday activities in libraries during the summer period. The Vis-Ta project, which has been funded by a £32,000 grant from the Scottish Arts Council, has successfully established the posts of writer, artist and illustrator-in-residence to work with young people to create stories and interpret them visually on the web.

A programme to bring all P1, P4 and P7 classes in West Dunbartonshire into our libraries has resulted in 2,300 children visiting with their school during 2005/6.

A member of the library staff has been seconded as Bookstart Co-ordinator. This project, funded by the Scottish Executive, provides free books to children and advice to their parents. Over 2,600 Bookstart packs were distributed by health visitors, library staff and early years workers during 2005/2006, reaching approx 88% of the estimated birth rate. Requests for Booktouch packs for visually impaired children were requested from Additional Support Needs and over 300 babies and toddlers have attended Bookstart events since October 2005.

The number of reading groups either supported by or directly led by the Library Service has risen from 8 in 2004/5 to 15 in 2005/6. Over 1250 people attended events during the annual Literature Festival in June 2005. Of these, over 600 were children, an increase of almost 200% on the previous year.

National initiatives in adult literacy have been supported and careers information points have been established in the three main libraries in co-operation with Careers Scotland.

All 11 libraries are Learndirect Scotland branded centres.

There were over 680,000 hits on the libraries web page in 2005/6, an increase of 22% over the previous year.

Induction loops have been installed in all 11 libraries and the mobile library, and all libraries have assistive technology for disabled people for equal access to IT.

Library staff contributed to the digital Clydebank Story which has had over 100,000 hits since its launch in December 2004.

The Housebound and Mobile Library Service has completed its best value review and this will ensure that residents will benefit from improved services.

Enterprise in Education

In accordance with the Scottish Executive's Determined to Succeed recommendations, the Council has developed an action plan to help children and young people adopt a "can do, will do" approach and develop their self-confidence and belief in their abilities. Through this, several schools have been successful in securing funding for innovative projects and others have successfully run their own franchise companies, raising money for the benefit of the wider community.

In partnership with Clydebank College, Glasgow City Council and others, two vocational pilot programmes have been established. The first group of students will complete the programmes in June 2006.

Increasing Cultural Activity

Cultural Activities

There has been a significant drive by the Council to increase cultural provision and promote active participation in cultural activities:

- The national launch of the Imperial War Museum Exhibition attracted over 2000 visitors including 1000 school pupils.
- Clydebank Museum was refurbished and the digitisation of the Singer Collection was completed as well as the development of the professional national touring exhibitions programme. A short-term post of Education Officer for the Museum Service has resulted in an enhanced learning input, fact sheets, resource packs and higher school user figures.
- Heritage trail brochures were developed and published in partnership with West Dunbartonshire Heritage Limited to encourage people to explore and appreciate the heritage within their own and neighbouring areas.
- The Council attracted major events to the area such as the REM concert at Balloch in June 2005 and continues to "grow" events such as the Royal Scottish Pipe Band Championships. It has also supported local organisations to stage events such as the Loch Lomond Highland Games, the Loch Lomond Folk Festival, the West Dunbartonshire Festival and the Whitecrook Gala Day.
- "What's Culture Got To Do With It?" was the theme of the Annual Community Week in 2004. The Council's own event which opened the week, Community Day, was also focused on culture in its broadest sense. This day was attended by 270 people and involved 55 displays.

- The Council successfully attracted external funding for 16 cultural projects including funding for: Lomond Folk Festival in 2004; IT equipment for Clydebank Local History Society; and start up expenses and promotion for Clydebank Restoration.
- 'Their Past, Your Future' programme of events, funded by the Big Lottery, has been promoted by the Scottish Museums Council as an exemplar of best practice and was awarded a bronze COSLA award for excellence in 2006.
- The Backdoor Gallery was identified as an example of best practice by the Scottish Arts Council.
- External auditors highlighted the development of West Dunbartonshire Arts Council and West Dunbartonshire Heritage Ltd as examples of good practice.

As a result of these initiatives, the number of individuals and establishments participating in cultural activities in West Dunbartonshire in 2005/6 is 68,159, an increase of 1,649 on the previous year.

The Arts

A music motivator team, established with funds from the Scottish Arts Council (SAC), helps pupils in all 34 primary schools to develop their general music skills and knowledge as well as build confidence and self-esteem. This pilot project is proving to be very successful with school and pupil feedback uniformly positive.

A team of cultural co-ordinators, also funded jointly by the SAC, continues to plan a wide range of creative and cultural projects within and outwith the school curriculum. Current creative projects focus on World War II, the Turkey Red printing and dyeing industry and local maritime heritage.

Other new activities include: dance opportunities through schools and at the new, purpose built dance studio at St Andrew's High School (The STAND); opportunities for young people to develop contemporary music skills at the new Cre8 music studio in Clydebank High School; developing the summer holiday programme; and the Friday evening urban arts school as part of The Pulse youth action project.

<h2>Improving our Schools for the 21st Century</h2>

Integrated Community Schools

The Integrated Community School Initiative (ICS), bringing together the provision of school education, informal and formal education, social work and health education services, has had an increasingly positive impact on social inclusion and raising achievement for young people in West Dunbartonshire. This has been acknowledged recently by external auditors.

Through the initiative, schools and school clusters are working with parents and a host of partner agencies to address children's needs in the round. Vocational programmes for young people and innovative enterprise projects have also been extended, including a project in partnership with universities in Glasgow and New York.

Schools Regeneration Programme

In 2004/5, a report about the regeneration of the schools' estate was prepared for elected members detailing costing and building conditions. The Council prepared consultation documents and completed the first round of formal consultation, with the second round ending in October.

The Council's revised business case is awaiting approval by the Scottish Executive. This will be followed by the preparation and acceptance of tenders with invitations to negotiate likely to start in June 2006 and building likely to commence in July 2007.

Corporate Priority: Develop our children and young people

Our focus has been on raising standards of achievement and attainment in learning; increasing accessibility to mainstream education for children and young people with a disability; supporting vulnerable families and children aged under 5; supporting families where addiction is an issue; and engaging children and young people in the democratic decision making process.

Raising Standards of Achievement and Attainment in Learning

Vocational Qualifications

The Council offers a number of two year vocational qualifications to prepare young people in third and fourth years at high school for work. The qualifications started in August 2004 with two subjects, construction and hospitality. Ninety-six pupils registered for the courses and 68 pupils are still participating. Due to high demand the range of courses on offer was expanded to include tourism, sport and recreation, motor vehicle engineering and early education and childcare. To date, 153 pupils are participating in the six courses. The courses are funded by Glasgow City Vision, European funding and a grant called Determined to Succeed which is provided by the Scottish Executive.

Active Schools

The Council promotes the benefits of an active lifestyle through its Active Schools team. In its first year, the team has been developing programmes within the curriculum and the community for secondary schools and each of their cluster primary schools. Linking with the Youth Sports Trust, the Active Schools team has offered training on their TOPS programme, designed to enhance the PE curriculum and out of school activity opportunities. This will be offered to all 300 primary school teachers in the coming months. There is also a playground programme to enhance the playground environment and activity opportunities. As part of this, an Active Schools Games Pack has been produced and distributed to all primary teachers. This pack compliments the TOPS training offered to all primary teachers. In addition, 165 senior pupils have trained to become games leaders for younger age groups, as well as 57 learning assistants and 6 other staff.

Personal Learning Planning

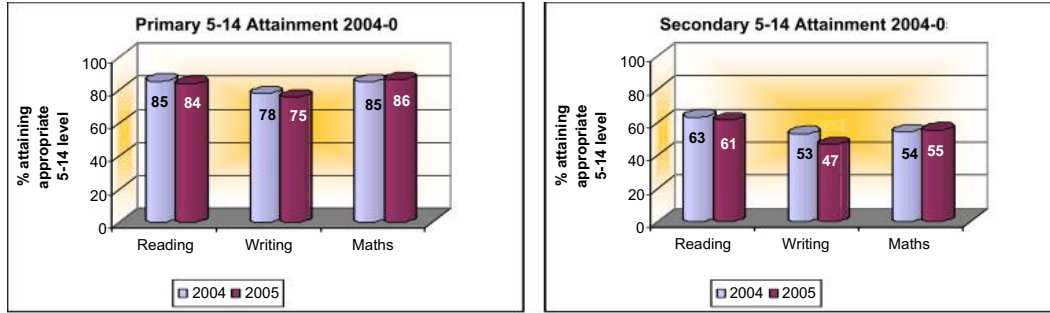
The Curriculum for Excellence aims to ensure that all children and young people have the opportunity to develop four "capacities" to become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors to their community and society. The development of personal learning plans for all pupils is part of this process as the new curriculum (from 3-18 years) provides opportunities for children to make appropriate choices that suit their individual interests and needs.

Academic Achievement

The 5-14 national guidelines are non-statutory guidelines for Scottish local authorities and schools. They cover the structure, content and assessment of the curriculum in primary schools and in the first two years of secondary education. Pupils follow the national 5-14 programme in which performance in reading, writing and mathematics is measured using National Tests. Testing takes place at various times throughout the school year.

As testing may not be complete until the end of the school session (in June), data for a session is not normally reported until the start of the next session (in August). This means that our data for 2005-06 will not be available until the schools return in August.

Our 2003-04 and 2004-05 data is shown in the two charts below.



Our primary level target for session 2006-07 is to achieve 85% in reading, 77% in writing and 86% in mathematics. The secondary level target is to achieve 63% in reading, 49% in writing and 56% in mathematics.

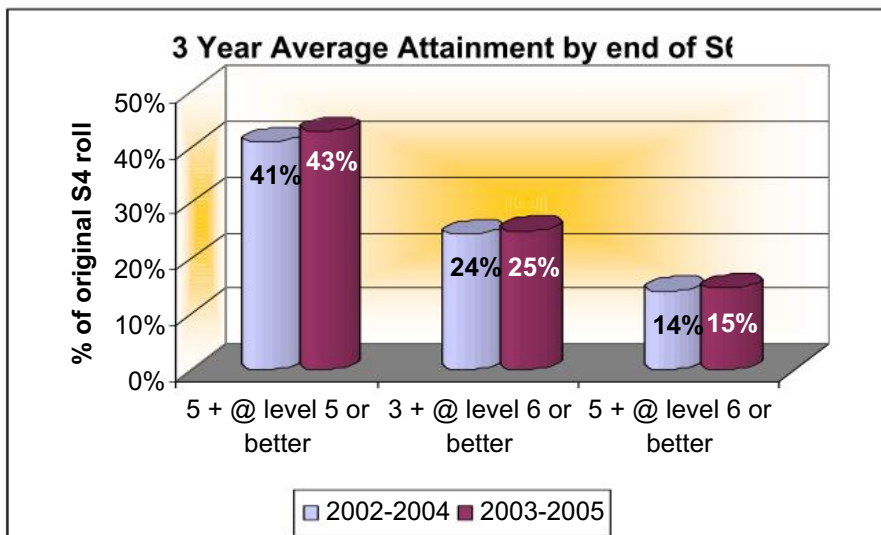
SQA Examinations

There are various examinations administered by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA), including Standard Grades, Intermediate 1 and 2 and Highers. This has led to the creation of a Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) to map all levels of all qualifications into a single framework. For instance, achieving a 1 or a 2 at Standard Grade is equivalent to SCQF level 5, achieving A-C in a Higher is equivalent to SCQF level 6.

The National Priorities in Education have specified methods of measuring performance in SQA exams. Three standard measures are:

- the percentage of the original S4 roll who have passed 5 or more exams at SCQF level 5 (or better) by the end of S6, averaged over 3 years;
- the percentage of the original S4 roll who have passed 3 or more exams at SCQF level 6 (or better) by the end of S6, averaged over 3 years; and
- and the percentage of the original S4 roll who have passed 5 or more exams at SCQF level 6 (or better) by the end of S6, averaged over 3 years.

Exam results are not made available to us from the SQA until August each year, so we will not be able to calculate the 2004-06 indicators until August 2006. Data for 2002-04 and 2003-05 is shown in the chart below.



Our target for 2005-07, for 5 or more passes at SCQF level 5 is to be between 40 and 45%, for 3 or more passes at SCQF level 6 to be between 24 and 26% and for 5 or more passes at SCQF level 6 to be between 15 and 17%.

Increasing Accessibility to Mainstream Education for Children and Young People with a Disability

Children and Young People with Severe and Complex Difficulties

A number of approaches have been implemented to raise staff awareness of the needs of children and young people with severe and complex learning difficulties. This has included training for all senior staff from primary and secondary schools, the production and distribution of information leaflets to all teachers and learning assistants and further training for 21 secondary and 36 senior primary staff and 80 principal teachers in secondary schools. As a result of awareness raising and staff development, a number of primary age children with severe and complex learning difficulties were successfully included in their local schools. This is, of course, in addition to the many children with a range of disabilities who already attend mainstream schools.

Additional Support Needs Act

The Council and its partners are raising awareness of the implications of the new Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 through multi-agency training. So far, training has been provided for 160 people from departments and agencies including school boards and parents groups, management and staff in secondary, primary and early years sectors, psychological services, all principal teachers and learning assistants, social work, both health boards and Careers Scotland staff. In addition, a total of 104 people attended two awareness raising events.

Additional Support Needs Co-ordinator

A member of staff has been seconded as the Additional Support for Learning Development Officer and targets already in place for this year include further multi-agency training, preparing a coordinated support plan, preparing parents' leaflets, and establishing procedures for mediation and dispute resolution.

Supporting Vulnerable Families and Children Aged Under 5

Co-ordinated Services

The Pupil and Family Support Service was developed to co-ordinate support services for our most vulnerable young people who are considered to be at risk of exclusion, poor attendance, under achievement and health problems. It was piloted in two school clusters where it was effective in reducing risk in the majority of cases. Following this success, the service was rolled out across all school clusters in 2004/05. To date 504 referrals had been made to support teams across all school clusters, with referrals coming from every year of primary and secondary school.

Concurrently, Pupil and Family Support was set up in Social Work for children and young people who were experiencing difficulties in the family and community or were affected by poor parenting skills, neglect, drug or alcohol misuse. To date 358 referrals have been received by the support teams. Practical support has been delivered to families enabling them to progress and support the development of young people.

Vulnerable Families

The Young Families Support Project, a partnership between education, health and the voluntary sector, has proved successful in supporting vulnerable families and in preventing family breakdown. In 2004/05, 180 families were supported and a further 165 in 2005/06. This brings the total number of referrals since the project started in 2003 to 521. The drop in the number of families supported between 2004/5 and 2005/6 is due to an increase in the level of support required by particularly vulnerable families. The project moved on to phase two in 2005/6 and is now delivering an outreach service. Four outreach workers have now been appointed.

Physical Activity

The Sports Development Unit provides all schools in West Dunbartonshire with free sports coaching sessions with pupils participating in over twenty specific sports festivals held at local sports centres,

secondary schools and outside parks. The festivals are designed to allow young people to show their newly developed skills, mix with children from other areas and enjoy the sporting experience. The emphasis is on participation rather than competition with the focus on acquiring new skills.

Local sports clubs also provide the potential for ongoing support to young people giving them the opportunity to increase their social skills and personal development, and in providing a pathway or discipline for life. Individual achievements include: number one Scottish Under 16 hockey goalkeeper; progressing in athletics to compete for Scotland; becoming U13 Scottish 800m champion; and being selected for the Scotland swimming squad. In addition, several athletes from the football programmes are now with professional clubs; several swimmers have competed for their country; young athletes have progressed from participant to part-time coaching; some have the intention of becoming physical education teachers or being involved in Sports Development.

Supporting Families where Addiction is an Issue

The specialist team for children and families where addiction is an issue has supported around 278 children, young people and families in 2005/06, exceeding the previous year's figure of 242 and the target of 200 set for 2005/6. The team works closely with our fieldwork teams to provide support to children, young people and families.

Engaging Children and Young People in the Democratic Decision Making Process

Local Dialogue Youth Agreement

Dialogue Youth is a national initiative promoting the involvement of young people in the decision-making processes of the Council, including the development of policies and the design and delivery of services. In West Dunbartonshire, Dialogue Youth has been integrated in the Youth Strategy which is a highly effective partnership between the voluntary and statutory sectors. A number of mechanisms are in place to enable open dialogue to take place including pupil councils, youth action groups and youth forums as well as a Pupil Council Congress - consultation event with 8 pupil councils now operating in secondary and special schools. As a result, 415 children and young people participated in Dialogue Youth initiatives in 2005/6, up from 45 the previous year.

Young Scot Programme

Dialogue Youth incorporates Young Scot initiatives such as the development of a local youth website and smart cards. By December 2005 all secondary pupils were able to be issued with a Young Scot Smartcard to use as a national discount card and cashless catering in schools. In time, it will give access to a wide range of services including the Passport to Leisure scheme and library services. It can also be used as photographic proof of age. Information about the Smartcard and other services can be accessed through a new web portal that has already received over 2,713 enquiries from young people.

Young People and the Community Participation Committee

The Council is developing ways of involving young people in the work of the Community Participation Committee and other Council decision-making structures. In August 2005, two members of the committee volunteered to act as the link for young people so they could raise issues and have representation at the committee. As a result of this initiative, the Community Participation Committee is organising a 'Youth Focus' event in 2006/7 to find out young people's views on a range of issues including anti-social behaviour.

Leisure Services Youth Forum

A Leisure Services Youth Forum, meeting twice a year, was established to develop service provision through consultation. Following consultation with the Youth Forum, 12-13yr olds have been admitted into the main site gyms. A postal survey of all 12-13 year olds who have used the Cosmopolitan gym following the introduction of the new juvenile scheme in July 2005 was completed in October 2005. As a result of this survey, 12-13yr olds can now use the gym when accompanied by a responsible adult outside of juvenile sessions. Further consultation is planned with Student Councils in 2006/7.

Corporate Priority: Create a better environment

This covers a range of issues including anti-social behaviour, waste management, an attractive environment, transport and roads.

Anti-social Behaviour

Tackling Anti-social Behaviour

Throughout 2005/6, tackling anti-social behaviour continued to be one of the Council's priorities with £1.7 million invested in a range of initiatives:

- A responsive community warden service was provided in 6 local communities as well as a mobile warden service for West Dunbartonshire as a whole. These services responded to 1,757 calls from members of the public in 2005/6.
- Legislative and non legislative measures continued to be used to deal with anti social behaviour. In 2005/6, the Anti-Social Investigation and Support Team (ASIST) dealt with 184 cases and secured 7 Interim Anti Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) and 5 full Anti Social Behaviour Orders. The rate of ASBOs granted per 100,000 households is higher in West Dunbartonshire than in Glasgow, Edinburgh, East Dunbartonshire, South Lanarkshire, Falkirk and eleven other local authorities.
- Part of the ASIST function is to educate secondary school children in the prevention of anti-social behaviour. In 2005/6, officers delivered presentations to over 1200 secondary schools pupils across West Dunbartonshire.
- The Neighbourhood Mediation Service was launched and made available free of charge to all West Dunbartonshire tenants and residents. Referrals to the service have risen by almost 300% in the past year, from 36 in 2004/5 to 106 in 2005/06.
- The Anti Social Behaviour Task Group was established in May 2005 with the Community Safety Partnership. Chaired by Strathclyde Police, the group meets monthly and brings together a range of partner agencies including representatives from the Council, Housing Associations, Fire Service, Procurator Fiscal, and Children's Reporter to deliver and oversee activities relating to anti social behaviour.
- Our first annual Anti Social Behaviour Outcome Agreement report was produced for the Scottish Executive.
- The links between Strathclyde Police and ASIST and the community wardens were strengthened and improved. Representatives from ASIST/community wardens now attend Strathclyde Police's fortnightly tactical tasking and co-ordinating meetings. This allows for improved information sharing and helps both the police and the community wardens to prioritise actions for the next period.
- We supported partner agencies in their efforts to tackle anti social behaviour. For example, Strathclyde Police received funding of £133,000 to provide additional resources to target identified anti social behaviour hotspots and fund a Police Analyst post. Funding has also been provided to Clydebank CCTV Trust (£40,000) and Victim Support (£10,000).
- A sustained promotional and publicity campaign was carried out in 2005/6 to promote our services to tenants and residents. We sponsored the local radio station for a 6 month period to promote our anti social behaviour helpline. We also sponsored "news space" in the Council Newspaper to promote initiatives undertaken by our community safety partners. We have also used more traditional methods of publicity including local press, information leaflets, and other promotional items such as key rings and calendars to help raise awareness of our services. A range of community events were also used to promote our services including Community Day , Civic Forum, Institute of Housing Conference and posted information on the Council's and Scottish Executive's anti social behaviour website.
- A range of information leaflets on anti social behaviour were produced and updated.
- In September 2005, we carried out the largest anti social behaviour survey in West Dunbartonshire. The data from the survey allows partner agencies to focus on the main anti social behaviour issues that are of concern to the public.

Noise Pollution

Noise pollution is a major source of anti-social behaviour complaints within West Dunbartonshire. Surveys show the most common noise complaints are caused by neighbours and relate to loud music/televisions, DIY, barking dogs, audible intruder alarms and laminate flooring.

With funding provided by the Scottish Executive, the Council launched a reactive night-time noise service in partnership with Strathclyde Police in November 2005. Noise Enforcement Officers can issue £100 on the spot fines and confiscate noise making equipment. Failure to pay a fine may result in prosecution. The introduction of this new service will enable more complaints to be dealt with on the day the complaint is received and lead to an expected improvement in the performance of our Noise Enforcement Service.

In 2005/6, the Environmental Health Section received a total of 519 complaints about noise. They settled 70% of those that were able to be resolved at first contact with the complainant and 90% of those that required further action, within 14 days.

Waste Management

The Waste Services Section has played a key role in the creation of a more eco-friendly environment through its progress in the development and implementation of a comprehensive Waste Minimisation and Recycling Strategy for West Dunbartonshire.

The Section is receiving staged payments totalling over £19 million from the Scottish Executive's Strategic Waste Fund to continue its kerbside green waste and kerbside dry recyclate collection services and assist the redevelopment of civic amenity sites into recycling centres. In addition, this funding will allow the Council to implement an education and awareness raising programme and market development activities. The funding will also allow the Council to implement a support and development programme that will include the 'Waste Aware' brand image, designed to maximise participation rates in various initiatives.

This funding will help ensure many of West Dunbartonshire's residents have access to recycling facilities and provide them with much more sustainable ways of managing their waste. The National Waste Plan, published in February 2003, sets out the Scottish Executive's targets for sustainable waste management to 2020, including plans for segregated kerbside recycling waste collection in nine out of ten Scottish homes. Recycling activity is being increased to achieve a 35% waste reduction target by 2020. The Waste Services Section has developed a Strategic Waste Implementation Plan and the £19 million funding obtained has secured over 20 jobs within the Council and supports over 30 posts in partner organisations.

Major alterations to our Refuse Collection and Disposal Service will ensure that European laws to reduce the quantity of waste going to landfill are met. In the year ending 31 March 2005, the Council's recycling rate was only 11.6%. With the introduction of its kerbside green waste and dry recyclate collection services and the redevelopment of civic amenity sites into recycling centres, the Waste Services Section has already increased the recycling rate of municipal solid waste collected by the Council that it is disposed of by composting, recycling or other recovery methods, as a proportion of total waste managed, to 19% in 2005/6, exceeding the target of 15%.

Attractive Environment

Street Cleanliness

Our Grounds Maintenance Section has responsibility for maintaining public parks and open spaces, care of gardens, play equipment, outdoor recreation, street cleaning and litter.

Implementation of our Litter Control Strategy is ongoing and leaflets and posters detailing the Street Cleaning Service have been published and issued to local tenants and public establishments within West Dunbartonshire.

Since the implementation of the Litter Control Strategy there has been a positive improvement in the cleanliness of the environment. Our statutory performance indicator for the standard of cleanliness has risen from 69 in 2004/5 to 72 in 2005/6, exceeding the target of 70.

Here is a quick summary of our work in this area during 2005/6.

- We received and responded to 522 litter complaints, installed 167 additional litter bins and issued 4 fixed penalty notices.
- We received and responded to 117 dog fouling complaints and issued 3 fixed penalty notices.
- We received and responded to 721 fly tipping complaints. A "Dumb Dumpers" flyer has been produced to assist members of the public to report incidents of fly tipping.
- We received and responded to 1,294 graffiti complaints.

Grounds Maintenance

The Grounds Maintenance Section in partnership with Waste Services and the company 55 Degrees have devised an animated education programme to teach primary school pupils about the negative effects of littering and the importance of recycling. The first of its kind in Scotland, it is presented via a new superhero called 'Binman' and promotes classroom discussion about relevant issues. It is currently being rolled out to schools.

Energy Management in Schools

Automatic sensors are being installed in schools to improve water consumption. Examples include sensors for continually flushing urinals and push down taps for sinks. A swimming pool cover has been installed in Our Lady and St Patrick's High along with a variable speed drive valve. Heating control sensors are being installed in three primary schools and automatic lighting control sensors are to be installed in a number of schools.

Transport and Roads

Improving Road Safety

Initiatives to improve road safety include Twenty's Plenty, Travelling Green, Kerbcraft, and Puffin crossings and these have continued in 2005/6.

The Council has responded to the demand for lower vehicle speeds in residential areas by introducing a further 34 Twenty's Plenty sites bringing the total number of sites to 116 by the end of 2005/6. Further sites will be introduced in the remaining residential areas in 2006/7. We are also installing mandatory speed limits of 20mph around all our schools and this will also be completed in 2006.

The Travelling Green Initiative, awarded the National Transport Award for road safety in 2004, aims to encourage children to change the way they travel to and from school by promoting walking. In addition to the health benefits of walking to school, children also have the opportunity to practise their pedestrian skills. Fourteen primary schools participated in Travelling Green in 2005/6, up from 7 the previous year.

In the past year additional Puffin crossings were installed at four locations in West Dunbartonshire. A further two are under construction. Funding has also been identified in

partnership with Sustrans to provide an additional crossing for the National Cycling Route at the west end of Bowling to compliment the crossing installed at the east end.

The Road Safety Team has achieved great success with the Kerbcraft initiative. Kerbcraft is a child pedestrian training scheme that aims to train 5 and 6 year old children in three specific pedestrian skills - finding safe places to cross the road, crossing safely at parked cars, and crossing safely near junctions. Parent volunteers are recruited and trained to train the children. Over the three previous school years we have increased the number of participating schools from 6 to 11 and the number of volunteers from 36 to 90.

All of these measures have helped reduce the number of adults killed or seriously injured in road crashes in West Dunbartonshire, from 47 in 2003/4 to 42 in 2005/6, an improvement on national and local targets. Similarly, the number of children killed or seriously injured has dropped from 13 in 2003/4 to 11 in 2005/6. We will continue to work towards improving road safety in 2006/7.

Corporate Priority: Provide high quality, best value services

Our focus is on providing accessible services; managing and improving our performance; engaging with our stakeholders; and managing our resources.

Providing Accessible Services

Access to Buildings

The Council is committed to making its buildings accessible to disabled people through an ongoing improvement programme. This focuses on buildings which support communities such as community centres, libraries and halls. For example, loop systems have been installed in all of our libraries to help hearing aid users.

In measuring accessibility, the Council has imposed a demanding standard and at March 2005 only 20% of its buildings had reached this. By March 2006, this had increased to 28% and a target of 31% has been set for the current year, that is, 2006/7.

Managing and Improving Our Performance

Best Value Audit

This year the whole Council is being audited by Audit Scotland as part of its 3-year plan to audit every Council in Scotland to assess how well 'Best Value' is being delivered. A report is expected in summer 2006.

Customer First

The Council agreed a 'Customer First' strategy last year. We are now moving forward with implementing the many aspects of this which include the procurement of new customer contact software, reviewing options for one-stop shops and a telephone contact centre, making many services and information available on our website and setting out new customer service standards.

Significant progress has been made in improving the electronic service delivery aspects of our website. 100% compliance has been achieved for information on-line and one-way interactions. Steady progress has been made in the pursuit of two-way and fully on-line interactions. It is now possible to request some Council services via on-line electronic forms and work is continuing to make more electronic forms available.

The Council has also implemented e-payments in relation to some of its services. Available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, it enables users to make payments via the internet using debit and credit cards.

Statutory Performance Indicators

This year we published comprehensive information on the national Statutory Performance Indicators both in a booklet format and on the Council's website. We have used a new 'traffic light' system to indicate how our performance ranks with other Councils and in which direction it is heading. In 2004/5, 11 of the statutory performance indicators were in the upper quartile and 22 were in the lower quartile, as defined by Audit Scotland. We anticipate a significant improvement in 2005/6 but the figures will not be available until autumn 2006.

Charter Mark and Other Awards

Gaining the prestigious Charter Mark - the Government's national standard for excellence in customer service - recognises that the services are delivering first class customer focused services both internally and externally to meet the needs of the people of West Dunbartonshire. It also recognises the importance of team working.

Five services within the directorate of Housing, Regeneration and Environmental Services have attained Charter Mark award. They are Homeless Services, Grounds Maintenance, Internal Transport, Property Management and Waste Services. These services join Roads and Leisure Services who have already achieved this high profile award. Within Education and Cultural Services, two schools have also achieved Charter Mark status. Information, Communication Technologies & Business Development also gained Charter Mark status in recognition of excellence in customer service.

In addition, they received a bronze COSLA Excellence Award for their commitment to attracting and retaining high calibre employees to local government and a British Computer Society award for the 'Best Newly Implemented Scheme' in recognition of outstanding commitment to their staff's career progression.

Our Legal & Administrative Services and our Policy and Public Relations Section were on track at year end to gain Investors in People status early in 2006/07 (and they were awarded in May 2006). The Strategy Team in Social Work also gained the award during the year and they join Personnel and Information Services who had already achieved this award.

Improving Performance in Education & Cultural Services

During the past couple of years a number of service specific quality systems and frameworks have been implemented to continuously improve our performance. Various functions of the Department of Education and Cultural Services have also been subject to external audit and inspection:

- The HMIE follow up report of the inspection of the education functions of the authority in September 2005 highlighted no further points for action.
- An HMIE follow up inspection of our Community Learning and Development Service in South Clydebank rated the service as very good or good in 4 out of 5 action points.
- Our Library Service was the first in Scotland to pilot the Scottish Public Library and Information Commissions (SLIC) Public Library Quality Improvement Framework. While this was only a pilot, the service was rated as very good or good in all of the seven quality indicators of the new framework.
- St Kessogs Primary School and Clydebank High School have successfully undergone a follow up Chartermark assessment. There were no points for action.
- The Culture Section has achieved 4 stars, an 'excellent' score, from Visit Scotland in recognition of the very high standards of customer care at Clydebank Museum.
- In 2005/6, 16 early years and childcare centre's were subject to integrated inspection. Seven primary schools and 2 secondary schools were also inspected.

Developing our Employees

Education & Cultural Services are committed to providing services of the highest quality. This can only be achieved through suitably trained and developed employees.

Opportunities for development are identified through Professional Review and Development, a process undertaken by all employees. There is an online catalogue of over 400 development opportunities designed to suit a range of needs, from leadership and management courses to experienced staff sharing their expertise with newly qualified teachers and opportunities for online learning. We also work with neighbouring councils to provide further training and development opportunities and share expertise which would not be possible in a small authority.

ICT & Business Development have maintained their "A" status Test Centre accreditation, enabling them to provide a wide range of accredited ECDL training programmes, including advanced ECDL expert qualifications. Over 400 learners have now successfully completed certification via the Council's centre.

Learn Direct status, which was achieved in December 05, has opened up new learning opportunities via the established national learning network. In addition, the centre is in the final stages of ILA accreditation (Individual Learning Accounts) to enable funding to support learners to achieve recognised qualifications.

The centre is exploring ways to open these opportunities to citizens of West Dunbartonshire Council.

Engaging with Our Stakeholders

Reporting Our Performance

Since August 2005, every issue of West Dunbartonshire News has included two pages of articles about the Council's performance, each issue focusing on one of the Council's priorities.

A recent survey of West Dunbartonshire's Citizens Panel evaluated their experience of reading these articles and their value in reporting Council performance:

- just under two thirds of Panel members (62%) recalled receiving a copy of West Dunbartonshire News in the last three months;
- a high proportion (75%) of those receiving a copy of the newspaper said they had read the two pages of articles on the performance of the Council;
- almost two thirds (63%) found the articles interesting, just over half (54%) said they were balanced and 62% felt they were useful; and
- the majority of Panel members (65%) felt that placing articles in West Dunbartonshire News was the most effective way to provide the public with information on the Council's performance.

Following this encouraging feedback, we will continue to report our performance to our external stakeholders in this way.

Council's Website

The Forum, part of the Council's website, is one way the Council interacts with citizens. All departments have nominated staff who receive issues raised via the Forum and who are responsible for co-ordinating replies. The Forum is the second most visited area of the website after the home page.

Community Day

This year's Community Day was a great success. Focusing on the theme, 'Life is for Living', services from across West Dunbartonshire got together with local community groups, voluntary organisations and projects to provide information, seek views, and make new contacts. Over 380 people attended the event.

There were more than 65 indoor and outdoor displays, a display of gym skills from youngsters from St Eunan's Nursery, a demonstration of Shoto Budo martial arts, dance from young people with SPARC Community Arts, line dancing from The Pioneers and an appearance by a talented young band called "Mellifluous", started by members of Dumbarton Youth Forum. The Pulse, a popular initiative offering free arts, leisure and sports activities to 12-18 year olds on Friday evenings, was also re-launched by Inspector David Kirkland.

Shaping Social Work Services

The views of stakeholders are important in helping to improve services. We use them to shape our services to meet the needs of our users. Our Step Up Step Down service is an example of this. Step Up Step Down was developed as a result of consultation with service users, carers, home care, and health partners. It was recognised that to help older people return home after a stay in hospital and to prevent avoidable hospital admissions, they often need a short period of intensive support. Step Up Step Down offers this. The service, which can last a maximum of 12 weeks, brings together nursing, occupational therapy, and home care services to meet the short term rehabilitative needs of the older person to help them to either return home or to obtain alternative suitable housing.

Lottery Funding

Working with its partners, the Council has greatly increased the number of successful Lottery awards made to voluntary and community groups in the area. A total of 60 awards were made in 2005, up from 43 in 2004, amounting to £827,469.

This increase in awards follows a number of successful initiatives run by the External Funding Officer and partner agencies including 'Formathon' events, newsletters on funding sources, training on funders and the application process and one to one support for groups wishing to make an application.

Corporate Address Gazetteer

Information Services recruited temporary staff in April 2004 to create a Corporate Address Gazetteer (CAG) for the Council. This will provide a common property address database which will eventually be used in every Council system.

Funded by an allocation from the Modernising Government Fund, the CAG is being developed in accordance with guidelines issued by the Improvement Service. The Improvement Service has assessed our progress as 'level 1' which means that we have complied with the requisite standards and there are no issues to address.

The first Council system which will use the CAG in a live situation is the new Building and Planning Controls module. This system is scheduled to go live in August 2006.

Council Tax Collection

In 2004/5 we collected 89.4% of Council tax due and this year we improved our collection to 90.4% - which was above our target of 90%. We are still aiming to improve further to 93% by 2008/09.

Staff Absence

Staff Absence improved markedly to 5.6% overall for the year – better than our target of 5.8% and a improvement of 0.5% on the previous year. We are making strenuous efforts to carry-on reducing this and are aiming to achieve 5% by 2007/08