

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by Chief Executive

Council Meeting: 27 January 2010

Subject: BV Improvement Plan & External Support

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report presents the progress of the Best Value Improvement Plan (BVIP) for discussion. It also reviews progress towards engagement of external support.

2. Background

- 2.1 On 30th September, Council agreed the establishment of 4 new workstreams to progress the key priorities emerging from the latest BV Audit¹. Progress on developing the Plan has been overseen by the Improvement & Efficiency Executive Working Group (I&EE) at its monthly meetings (the last was held on 19 January). Progress in developing the plan was reported to Council² in October with the finalised Plan being agreed by Council³ in December 2009. The new workstreams have now had a number of meetings where they have refined their remits, established membership and set up new and revised action plans in the Covalent system.
- 2.2 There has been some further discussion about the nature of external support and Elected Member input to the four workstreams
- 2.3 The Chief Executive has had a recent meeting with Audit Scotland regarding their future audit work and their progress report to the Accounts Commission.

3. Main Issues

3.1 Reports from Four Best Value Workstreams

The updates are as follows:

- **Report from Strategic Leadership Group**
- **Report from Competitiveness Group**
- **Report from Organisational Culture Group**
- **Report from Community Engagement Group**

The action plans developed by the Groups mainly focus on the period until the end of 2009/10 and an integrated Action Plan is shown as Appendix 1.

3.2 Strategic Leadership

3.2.1 The Strategic Leadership Group is led by the Chief Executive and includes the CMT and all Heads of Service. Following the Council decision in December, elected members have now been appointed to the workstreams. The Leader of the Council will now be joining the Strategic Leadership workstream, however Labour members have thus far declined the place which had been agreed for them.

3.2.2 In October, Council confirmed that the major focus for this group would be the development and delivery of the 8 strategic priorities for 2009/10. These were agreed by Council in June 2009. These are:

- Financial / Budget Planning,
- Provide school resources fit for purpose in the 21st century
- Models of integration with NHS & CHP
- Meeting the Scottish Housing Quality Standard by 2015 / Stock Transfer
- Waste Management Targets
- Managing resources / assets
- Clyde Valley CPP – Shared Service Developments and NSS Diagnostics – Shared Service Developments
- Adult care provision

3.2.3 It was also noted that the development of this approach will allow the Council to address the wider issues which were identified in the Best Value Audit follow up report, and are now part of the remit of the Strategic Leadership Group. These are:

- Improving decision making and scrutiny, including the continued implementation of the action plan for Strategic Leadership & Decision Making and improving the scrutiny process for poorly performing services
- Improving relations with, and between, members
- Improving financial planning and the continued development of linkages with the strategic finance working group
- Supporting these developments through the rollout and implementation of the Public Sector Improvement Framework (PSIF) in selected service areas and agreeing and implementing a plan for strategic PSIF reviews
- Overseeing the organisation and use of external peer support

3.2.4 The second meeting of the Group was held on 10th November. This focussed on arrangements for prioritising and progressing the 8 strategic priorities, and in particular, ensuring that effective project management and decision making processes were in place. These arrangements were finalised and progress with project plans was reported and assessed at the third meeting on 8th December. The meeting on 8th December also took responsibility for assessing and proposing priorities

for the work to develop the Clyde Valley Review of Joint Working and Shared Service Opportunities, (Arbuthnott Report). The results of this work are the subject of a separate report to Council in January 2010.

3.2.5 The Group has reviewed the progress with the areas outlined in paragraph 3.2.3 in the context of the 8 strategic priority issues. At present, this work is all categorised under the general 'priority' of 'Strategic Leadership', with specific actions organised under the headings of:

- Develop strategic leadership by the CMT
- Improving decision making for the strategic priority areas and scrutiny of organisational performance
- Lead continuous improvement through self assessment
- Develop a long term financial planning framework

This approach can be refined as required as the BVIP develops.

3.2.6 Performance indicators for Strategic Leadership are under development. This will mean providing indicators which assess the outcomes of Strategic Leadership activity.

3.3 Competitiveness

3.3.1 The Group has been established – and has had four meetings to date. All departments are represented as well as the Trade Unions. Following the Council Meeting on 16th December, 2 Elected Members (1 Administration, 1 Labour) have been invited to attend future meetings.

3.3.2 A 'Competitiveness Framework' document has been drafted and has been considered by the CMT and the I&EE. It has now been formally submitted to the Corporate & Efficient Governance Committee for consideration and approval in January. The main reason for such a document is to set-out a methodology, list some key policy statements and outline the process for prioritisation and assessment.

3.3.3 KPMG issued a report on 'Arrangements to Ensure the Competitiveness of Services' in early October. A response to their appended action plan was submitted back to KPMG and the Group intend to review progress regularly and report to the I&EE. The Report and Action Plan were included in the above report to Corporate & Efficient Governance Committee.

3.3.4 Work is underway within each Department on the 21 agreed priority service areas. Initial meetings have taken place with relevant service managers and departmental accounts and policy staff. The initial focus is on identifying and verifying key unit-cost and efficiency indicators. The aim is to progress these competitiveness and benchmarking studies and to present progress reports on these services to the four main service committees in May 2010. The Competitiveness Group will 'peer' review the results prior to submission.

- 3.3.5** The new cost indicators are being entered into the Covalent system. Benchmark data from external databases (such as APSE Performance Networks) is also being imported into Covalent. The latter is virtually complete (for Building Cleaning, Street Cleaning and Grounds Maintenance) and further work is planned to import the Catering indicators and update all indicators with the 08/09 data. Data from the Scottish Housing BVN is also planned to be imported to help with benchmarking studies for Housing Management.
- 3.3.6** Updated benchmarking guidance for managers has been developed and is still due to be 'launched' at a future Senior Managers Network along with an overview of the work of the Group. A series of departmental meetings is planned to identify specific future training requirements for managers but these arrangements have yet to be made.

3.4 Organisational Culture

- 3.4.1** The group's work has focused on progressing development within the key areas of developing the Senior Manager Network, developing a comprehensive approach to strategic leadership development and the development of a performance and personal development planning framework.
- 3.4.2** Senior Manager Network: The meeting in December focused on reviewing the format and purpose of the Senior Manager Network in an effort to ensure it drives forward the required cultural change. A preliminary programme has been issued for 2010 and the group will further define the development themes during January and re-launch this within the February forum with a focus on the theme of leadership.
- 3.4.3** Employee Survey: The outcomes and recommendations from the Employee Survey have been integrated within the action plan and communicated to all staff through the Core Brief framework during December. A communication strategy facilitating wider face-to-face feedback and interaction with remote groups is proposed for early February in an endeavour to communicate the outcomes and test the planned approach to improvement through staff feedback.
- 3.4.4** Leadership and management development: The introduction of leadership development will be crucial to ensure there is organisational capacity at the highest manager levels to drive forward the required change programme. Following a tender exercise, prospective providers for developing and delivering a leadership development programme have been identified and the development of this programme will focus on progressing a comprehensive approach to strategic leadership including values, behaviours and leadership styles. Commencement of this programme is planned for early February.
- 3.4.5** Building on the initial approach to management development, West Dunbartonshire now has accreditation status (as part of the Clyde Valley Shared Learning group) with the Chartered Management Institute (CMI) to deliver accredited management development programmes in-house. The launch of the Introduction to Team Leading programme took place in December and the delivery of four programmes in-house will commence

February onwards. These programmes are specifically targeted at new or front-line managers and will form part of an induction framework for manager roles.

3.4.6 Systems development: Underpinning development in the above, progression of the workforce management system project and development of the intranet will facilitate stronger approaches to people management and communication systems ensuring that information is accessible and flexible. A redesigned Council intranet will launch early April and, to support this, a short term project will commence during January addressing development of the HR&OD intranet pages to facilitate a reliable communication platform for people management policies and procedures.

3.5 Community Engagement

3.5.1 The Group has extended its work beyond input from Council officers to reflect the importance of a Partnership approach to Community Engagement by holding additional meetings of link officers representing key partners. These meetings have now been established.

3.5.2 Trade Union involvement in the workstream has now been confirmed with Union representation at the third and fourth meetings on 1st December and 5th January.

3.5.3 Community input to the Community & Consultation Strategy and the partnership approach to Community Engagement has been developed through a number of structures, including the Community Participation Committee, (CPC), the Community Planning Partnership (CPP) Strategic Board, the Tenant Participation Liaison Group, and other Service User Groups.

3.5.4 Elected members have now joined the workstreams, and Cllrs Jim Brown and George Black attended the meeting on 5th January 2010.

3.5.5 The Group has now reviewed the detail of the Community Engagement Strategy Action Plan. This forms the core of the BVIP Community Engagement activity.

3.5.6 Activity to develop Community Engagement has been categorised as follows:

- Promoting Community Engagement opportunities (which includes ensuring that there is the chance for community involvement at a range of levels.)
- Improving the effectiveness of Community Engagement & Consultation activity, (which includes ensuring that staff have the appropriate skills and training)
- Promoting a partnership approach to Community Engagement, (which includes joint planning, training and resourcing)
- Improving support for the community and voluntary sector, (which includes a more effective approach to 'capacity building' for community representatives)

- Improving public information provision, (which includes improving the content of information, ensuring that information is appropriately targeted and that it meets the needs of all stakeholders).

3.5.7 The BVIP action plan focuses on key strategic elements of the corporate approach and includes items from departmental service plans which contribute to this. It is not a full list of all community engagement activity which is undertaken across the Council and with partners. This latter work will continue to be monitored through the service planning processes as at present.

3.5.8 The meetings with Partnership Link Officers have a focus on joint arrangements such as:

- Implementation and monitoring of the use of the National Standards for Community Engagement
- The development and delivery of accredited training to support the National Standards for Community Engagement
- The development of a Partner Consultation Calendar
- The development of a Partner approach to the use of consultation mechanisms such as the Citizens' Panel
- The development of induction materials to support community involvement in Community Planning processes
- The review of West Dunbartonshire Community Day

These issues will be developed and monitored by the Link Officers and progress will be reported through the Group to the I&EE and to Council.

3.5.9 Performance indicators are under development. This will mean providing indicators which assess the outcomes of Community Engagement activity. This was a major focus of the workstream meetings in December and January.

3.6 External support

Support falls into a number of categories. These include:

- Support for the I&EE
- Support for individual elected members
- Support for Leader/Chief Executive

3.6.1 Support for the I&EE

Colin Mair of the Improvement Service attended the last meeting of the I&EE on the 8th December and it is envisaged that he will attend some future meetings of the Group.

3.6.2 Support for Elected Members

The previous meeting of the I&EE discussed the possibility of some form of involvement with the Improvement Service and it was agreed that they would pilot a series of workshops/training seminars with Members which could be rolled out to other Councils in order to promote examples of

sharing best practice. It is proposed that the seminars cover such issues as 3-year financial planning, corporate governance, performance management, prioritisation (of outcomes and delivery options), scrutiny and governing through partnership. Details of this have yet to be finally completed.

3.6.3 Support for Leader/Chief Executive

Colin Mair has offered to set-up regular (6-monthly) meetings with the Chair of Cosla, two other Council leaders and two other Chief Executives. This is under development.

3.7 Elected Member Involvement in Workstreams

The Council Meeting of 16th December agreed that Elected Members could attend workstream meetings as follows:

- **Strategic Leadership** – Leader of the Council + 1 Labour Member
- **Competitiveness** – Cllr Craig McLaughlin (SNP) + 1 Labour Member
- **Community Engagement** – Cllr Jim Brown (SNP) + Cllr George Black (Ind)
- **Organisational Culture** – Cllr Denis Agnew (Ind) + 1 Labour

3.8 Meeting with Audit Scotland

The Chief Executive met with Fraser McKinlay and Martin Walker of Audit Scotland on Monday, 18 January 2010. At this meeting he was advised that a short progress report was being prepared for consideration by the Accounts Commission on 18 February. It should be noted that this report will not be published in the normal way.

The draft report will be made available for comment in the week commencing 25th January.

The key message is that progress has been made, however, the pace of change is still slow.

Audit Scotland also advised that WDC will no longer be part of the Shared Risk Assessment pilot and that the development of the Assurance & Improvement Plan will be taken forward as part of the BV2 process along with all other Councils. This means that the Assurance & Improvement Plan will be finalised around March/April.

The Chief Executive has asked for a meeting to be arranged between the Improvement & Efficiency Executive and Audit Scotland's Local Area Network Team mid to end of February 2010.

4. Personnel Issues

4.1 There are no personnel issues.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 There is currently a budget of £105,000 set-aside for funding the BV Improvement plan. As at Period 8 total spend was £55,438. The remainder has been substantially committed for the following:

- External scrutiny training for Elected Members
- Management Development
- Senior Managers Network development

6. Risk Analysis

6.1 Strategic Risk SR012 (Poor reports from external sources) currently has a score of 9 (significant impact, very high likely likelihood of occurring). The target is to reduce the overall score to 4. Scrutiny by the Council of the new BVIP is a key component of meeting this risk reduction target.

7. Conclusions & Recommendations

7.1 Reports on the progress of Best Value Improvement plan have been produced by the four BV Workstreams and have been scrutinised by the Improvement & Efficiency Executive.

7.2 Members are asked to review and comment on:

- external support arrangements
- progress of the action plans.

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David McMillan
Chief Executive
Date: 20 January 2010

Persons to Contact: David Webster, Manager, Improvement & Performance. Telephone 01389 73714
Email: david.webster@west-dunbarton.gov.uk

Liz Cochrane, Head of Service, Policy & Performance. Telephone 01389 737271
Email: liz.cochrane@west-dunbarton.gov.uk

Appendix 1: Progress of Best Value Improvement Plan

Background Reports

¹ [**Audit Scotland** \(July 2009\): The Audit of Best Value and Community Planning: West Dunbartonshire Council – A Progress Report](#)

² [**West Dunbartonshire Council** \(October 2009\). Report to Council on Progress of Developing BV Improvement Plan](#)

³ [**West Dunbartonshire Council** \(December 2009\). Report to Council on BV Improvement Plan](#)

Wards Affected: All