

West Dunbartonshire Council
Report by Chief Executive
Council : 25 June 2008

Subject: Best Value Improvement Plan

1. Purpose

- 1.1** This report discusses the progress of the Council's Best Value Improvement Plan (BVIP).

2. Background

- 2.1** The Council has agreed the BVIP be progressed by five Groups each being led by an Executive Director, supported by a nominated lead officer(s) and having trade union representation. The Groups are as follows:
- Organisational Development (OD) Group
 - Continuous Improvement (CI) Group
 - Resources Group
 - Risk & Performance Management (RPMG)
 - Efficient Government (EG) Group
- 2.2** The Council also agreed to set up an 'Improvement & Efficiency Executive' (I&EE) to oversee the progress of the five Groups and report to Council. Membership of the Executive was agreed to total 8 Elected Members – comprised of 4 Labour, 2 Other Opposition and 2 SNP councillors. The Executive would be supported by the Chief Executive, other members of the CMT and led by the Leader of the Council.
- 2.3** The first meeting of the I&EE was held on 23rd April – where it considered the first draft of an updated BVIP. The report was subsequently submitted to the April Council meeting. A second meeting of the Executive was held on 13th June.
- 2.4** It was agreed by Council that an update of the BVIP would be reported to Council on a quarterly basis thereafter.

3. Main Issues

- 3.1** The latest version of the BVIP is shown as Appendix 1. All actions have been entered into the Covalent system and milestones are being developed to provide evidence of delivery. The progress percentage is calculated from the milestone completions – work may be underway to achieve a milestone but this will only be reflected in the overall action progress when the milestone is completed. Overdue milestone(s) will result in the Action moving from Green to yellow status. An action completion date missed will result in a Red status. Planned start dates have been entered.

- 3.2** The BVIP actions are also all part of respective Departmental Service Plans held in the Covalent system. Regular review by of these Plans by departmental management teams and respective service committees offers a further level of scrutiny.
- 3.3** Future I&EE Meetings are being timed to coincide with the quarterly reporting of the BVIP to Council. The next I&EE Meetings are being planned for 6th September 2008, early December 2008 and mid March 2009. Group meetings are being timetabled to fit with this quarterly cycle to enable accurate and timely update of action plans.
- 3.4** Some overlapping/cross cutting issues require some joint meetings to progress. One such issue is the corporate approach to competitiveness – involving the Efficient Government (EG) and Continuous Improvement (CI) Groups.
- 3.5** Trade Union representatives have not attended any Group to date. The Council leader has written to invite representation in future group meetings.
- 3.6** Progress Updates

The BVIP comprises actions that are part of meeting the 11 immediate priorities (IP) and 3 medium-term priorities (MP) identified by Audit Scotland.

IP01: Establish arrangements and working practices which demonstrate openness and accountability in strategic decision making processes.

The Improvement Service has facilitated discussion with Elected Members in relation to the outcomes of the member/officer relations review. Options have been highlighted for including Elected Members in decision-making processes at an early opportunity and development of this will progress through an action plan in collaboration with the Improvement Service.

IP02: Develop and implement medium to longer-term strategies to ensure effective management of resources, including financial planning and workforce planning. These arrangements should also be integrated with the service planning process.

Work to produce a strategic financial plan has commenced – best practice examples are being reviewed and a Council report is due in August.

Work is about to commence on refining the annual guidance to departments on priority-led budgeting. This is a joint project involving the Resources Group and the Risk & Performance Management Group

Work is due to commence on developing a workforce planning strategy statement (due in September). The HR system is a crucial part of this – and a report is close to being finalised for the Tender Committee.

IP03: Ensure robust and effective scrutiny arrangements, including the involvement of opposition Elected Members, covering the council's decision-making processes as well as service performance, are put in place.

The Risk & Performance Management Group (RPMG) is overseeing the development of performance scrutiny arrangements and has concentrated on developing the role of the Audit & Performance Review Committee (A&PRC) in scrutinising SPI performance and the mechanics of the interaction between it and Service Committees.

The A&PRC now has a revised remit and new lay members. The Organisational Development Group will review further options for decision-making scrutiny as part of the work on member-officer relationships.

IP04: Develop a culture to support best value and continuous improvement across the organisation.

Organisational Culture

The recommendations from the employee survey have now been incorporated in an action plan and an operational sub-group will report progress directly to the OD group. This action plan incorporates key themes such as leadership and people management, internal communications, dignity at work and health and well-being. The OD group will also take a lead role in identifying new ways of promoting, branding, and embedding the organisational values. The new Dignity at Work policy has been considered by the CMT and will be submitted to the JCF this month.

Continuous Improvement

All Council services have evaluated their performance against a mini version of the Public Service Improvement Framework (PSIF). The results have been analysed and presented to the Corporate Management Team. A guidance report has been prepared to ensure the PSIF self-evaluations are embedded in Departmental Service and Operational Planning and Performance Management Frameworks.

PSIF sessions are being held with Departmental Directorates to ensure the framework and PSIF improvement plans are being successfully implemented and monitored across the Council. Two sessions have been held and a further two are scheduled in June 2008.

Preparation for the national pilot which involved training all staff from the five pilot services, has been completed. Phase 1 of the formal self-evaluations has already taken place with four of the five pilot areas involved. Phase 2 of the training is in progress and is scheduled for completion in August 2008.

A report is being prepared for the CMT to select the preferred consultants to carry out a Kaizen Blitz. The approach will be piloted in one service area (Sold Property) to highlight the potential quality benefits and cost savings that could be generated from this rapid improvement technique. The workshops will commence in August/September 2008.

Efficient Government

The 2007/08 efficiency statement requires to be completed by mid August and departmental management teams are currently reviewing the efficiency indicators included within the 2006/07 statement, along with further best practice examples that have been identified. Work is on track to complete this statement within the prescribed timescale and the final statement will be presented to the Corporate and Efficient Governance Committee on 27 August 2008.

A number of reviews of best practice are planned to set and monitor Efficient Government targets, including the exploration of a support arrangement with Caledonian University. It is planned to include a framework within the planning and budgeting guidance that will be issued to all departments in September.

The develop a systematic approach to Activity Based Costing will now be progressed by a member of the Accountancy team who has been seconded into this project to review best practice and provide guidance in this area. It is envisaged that a plan will be developed and submitted to the CMT by 31 October.

A planned programme of 88 interviews with managers across the Council has now been completed as part of the Diagnostic Project. These interviews involve collecting contextual information on each function together with an analysis of the full time equivalent resource across 34 standard processes as determined by the Improvement Service. Based on the data gathered to date the project team is now carrying out a gap analysis and prioritisation procedure in relation to the efficiency opportunities that have been identified. The next stage will be to host a series of both departmental and cross cutting workshops to review the opportunities leading to the production a full prioritisation report of the opportunities to the CMT on the 19 August. Following the identification of opportunities arising out of the diagnostic project, it is planned to hold a number of discussions with partner agencies and other local authorities during the last quarter of the calendar year.

IP05: Review political and managerial structures to ensure that they operate effectively and are complementary.

The recruitment of key posts has been completed and the emphasis will now move to ensuring that the revised management structure and roles are effective and embed further through mechanisms such as individual performance management, personal development planning and a structured leadership development programme.

IP06: Provide Elected Members with support and training to discharge their functions

An initial induction programme including key areas such as PSIF, planning, scrutiny and performance management has been completed. Our involvement in the continuing professional development (CPD)

framework pilot commences in September and this will be a valuable steer for developing personal development plans, training programmes, and future development routes.

IP07: Agree and adopt an up-to-date community plan. Continue to drive the community planning partnership with a focus on defined outcomes.

The draft SOA is nearing completion. The process and timetable for monitoring progress of the corporate plan, community plan and the SOA are being reviewed.

IP08: Establish robust action plans for all areas of poor performance identified within the best value report and housing services in particular.

The reporting of SPIs and their specific linked improvement action plans to Committees is becoming embedded as the data is entered and refined in Covalent. These actions are being input to Departmental Service Plans which will cover other key improvements in all service areas and not just the SPIs.

IP09: Refine and embed the new performance management framework, improve traffic light reporting to better support scrutiny, resource allocation and public performance reporting.

The Covalent system is now set-up and live and plans, actions and indicator data is being input and updated. First reports have been produced for Members and management. Work on refining the Performance Management Framework (mainly in terms of reporting cycles and reporting styles) has commenced which will build on the K3 consultants recommendations produced last year. An initial report is due to the A&PRC in September. A consultation exercise with members to ascertain their views on performance reports is being planned (part of a Strathclyde University research project) and a final report will be presented to A&PRC thereafter. Consultancy assistance from SOLACE is also being considered and a report is being prepared for the CMT later this month.

IP10: Establish robust arrangements from which the council is able to demonstrate the competitiveness of its services.

Guidance for services, an overall benchmarking strategy and benchmarking training will be developed to enable services to participate in formal comparisons with both private and public sector providers who exhibit best practice in their levels of performance. A joint approach involving the Efficient Government and Continuous Improvement Groups to prioritise competitiveness reviews is being reviewed by the CMT and a progress report will be presented to the Corporate & Efficient Government Committee.

IP11: Develop and embed a risk management culture across the council.

This is being progressed through adopting and using the Covalent system. Strategic and Departmental Risk registers have been input to the system. The Risk Management Working Group are progressing the updating of these registers and integrating these with corporate, departmental and operational plans. A report to Members later this year is planned.

MP1: Ensure robust review and option appraisal is undertaken on all services.

Once comparator information is collected via benchmarking, the results will be used to enable each Council service to appraise the options for service delivery. A systematic approach to option appraisal will be developed to include each service with a step by step toolkit and training to enable managers to carry out option appraisal independently.

MP2: Implement a leadership and management development programme

An action plan for increasing our leadership capacity has been developed and frameworks such individual performance management, personal development planning, and the development of a structured accredited programme are underway. The individual performance management process, including a competency framework, has now started within the CMT and will cascade further to other managerial levels. Consultations with managers on skills and behaviour development have been completed and the development of ILM programmes (for first-line and middle managers) is progressing with pilot programmes scheduled for the autumn.

MP3: Review community engagement activity for efficiency and effectiveness.

The development of a training programme to support the revised consultation strategy is now underway and will focus on organisational approaches to consultation.

4. Personnel Issues

4.1 There are no personnel issues at this stage.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 A budget of £108,500 has been set up for 2008/09 for items specific to the BV Improvement Plan. £17,000 has been committed to complete the Dignity at Work project. The costs of assessor training for the next stages of the PSIF project are being assessed.

6. Risk assessment

- 6.1** If the Best Value Improvement Plan is not properly managed, there is a major risk that Audit Scotland will report limited progress in their audit work planned for summer 2009.

7. Conclusions

- 7.1** The 5 Groups are now meeting regularly and detailed action plans and milestones have been developed to improve scrutiny.
- 7.2** A regular quarterly timetable of Executive meetings should be set-up prior to Council Meetings.

8. Recommendations

- 8.1** That the Members of the Improvement & Efficiency Executive review and comment on the progress of the Best Value Improvement Plan.
- 8.2** That updates on the action plan be brought to the Executive for scrutiny on a quarterly basis and then submitted to Council.

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David McMillan
Chief Executive
Date: 16 June 2008

Person to Contact: David Webster, Section Head – Performance Management Tel 01389 737143
E-mail: david.webster@west-dunbarton.gov.uk

Appendix: Best Value Improvement Plan – Progress Report

Background Papers: [Report to Council on Best Value Progress Report February 2007](#)
[Report to Council on Best Value Improvement Structures February 2007](#)
[Report to Council on Best Value Improvement Plan April 2007](#)

Wards Affected: All Wards