

Action points for Councils

Ref	Councils need to:	Response provided by	Assessment
1.	Demonstrate that they have tested the long-term impact and equalities aspects of workforce reduction plans (paragraph 44).	Corporate Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All change programmes are equalities impact assessed and the process has recently been evaluated by the Equalities and Human Rights Commission.
2.	Provide assurance that they are not being compromised by a loss of experience from those staff (particularly long-standing staff) that they release (paragraph 44).	Corporate Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Line managers are responsible for ensuring that the requirements of effective succession planning, handover plan, and the implementation of training and development programmes are included within any release of experienced staff.
3.	Carefully balance the cost of retaining physical assets against the short-term expediency of selling them, to ensure that the achieve Best Value (paragraph 56).	HEED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council has developed and adopted a Corporate Asset Management Strategy (October 2010.) This acknowledges the importance of robust plans for 6 key asset bases i.e. property, housing, open space, fleet, roads, street lighting and ICT. Asset plans exist for housing and property and will be completed for the remaining areas by December 2011. These plans will inform future disposal and investment decisions to be made by the Council. The corporate asset management strategy acknowledges the importance of having an asset base appropriate to support the current and future delivery of services. The Council is currently considering creative uses for its asset base to support future required investment including Securitisation of rental income from its non-operational portfolio. The Council is making wider use of option appraisal to support effective and transparent decision making.

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In considering disposal of assets the Council takes full account of the 2010 guidance on disposal below market value and undertakes appropriate option appraisal to assess Best Value.
4.	Do more to fully integrate the planning of the use of all types of council assets, including property, roads, ICT and vehicles (paragraph 57).	HEED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council has in place a Strategic Asset Management Group comprising Chief Officers from each directorate to oversee the delivery of the strategy. • The strategy clearly articulates the links between asset bases. • The strategy has been communicated to all senior managers. • Plans for all asset bases will be considered through this group to ensure that key linkages are made. • The Council is investing time and resources developing capacity to ensure that managers have the necessary skills to consider the asset management implications of key decisions. • In addition the Council has created a dedicated corporate resource to support delivery of asset management priorities as well as ensuring that linkages between key areas are robust e.g property investment requirements & ICT. • A key role of the Asset Management Group will be to bring a corporate overview to future planning in key asset areas.
5.	Continue progress in demonstrating Best Value in procuring goods and services (Paragraph 65).	Corporate Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WDC is reviewing procurement and will establish a target operating model to improve procurement and focus on developing an action plan to improve the procurement capability assessment. • An action plan with target dates and responsible officers for the “Quick Wins” is now in place will be reviewed and

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			approved by Committee (CEGC) on 22 nd June.
6.	Regularly review financial plans to take account of changing national budgets and local actions (Paragraph 66).	Corporate Services	<p>WDC have formed a cross party / officer working group (Strategic Finance Working Group) to address financial challenges in advance of setting budgets. The working group receives a variety of information to allow cross-party discussions to take place - for both general services and HRA. During 2010/11 this included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information on draft budget timetables and deadlines, which lead to changes in the way in which the Council communicated with stakeholders and prepared the 2011/12 budget. • Individual departmental budget current and forecast pressures (e.g. demographics, environmental taxes, economic demand pressures), incorporated within detailed budgetary control information. • Updated information on the monitoring of savings and actions taken to meet historic savings targets - monitoring areas of risk and action to mitigate/minimise. • Information on the draft 10-year financial strategy, covering capital and revenue forecasts and gaps. • Information to allow discussions on savings options prior to final reporting at Council. • Updates from the CIPFA Directors of Finance of likely national challenges which the Council will be affected by - such as the financial settlement position going forward. • General finances of the Council, including earmarked balances, un-earmarked balances, modernisation and spend to save funds held, etc <p>During 2011/12, this is expected to include similar updated</p>

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			<p>items.</p> <p>The SFWG was also the mechanism for financial training for Members. This allowed more information to be presented and discussed with Members on decisions which were being taken and the budgetary impact of these - such as treasury management, zero based budgeting.</p>
7.	<p>Ensure that medium-term financial planning includes evaluating the financial effects of different policy options, backed up by good quality information about service costs and value for money (paragraph 73).</p>	<p>Corporate Services</p>	<p>An updated long term financial plan (10 years) is presented annually to the Strategic Finance Working Group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The financial strategy lists short/medium/long term issues (including demographics, income streams, demands due to economic pressures,etc) and action taken to mitigate/minimise the impact to the Council. • The strategy also looks at strategic risks (including challenges surrounding reduced grant funding, pressures on council tax collection etc) and action taken to mitigate/minimise the impact to the Council. • The Financial Strategy also forecasts required departmental budgets, reviewing likely pressures caused by the issues raised, giving the CMT & Members insight into the Council’s likely financial position over the short to medium term. • Having this information allows the Council to identify/discuss and take action at the appropriate time. • This information is updated on a regular basis.
8.	<p>Continue progress in taking into account environmental and long-term sustainability in financial planning (paragraph 82).</p>	<p>Corporate Services / HEED</p>	<p><u>Financial Planning</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is incorporated into the long term financial plan. • The Council’s budget and forecast budgets within the financial strategy take into account the significant costs of landfill tax (increasing on an ongoing basis). The budget also

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			<p>incorporates costs of recycling and zero waste, where appropriate.</p> <p><u>Environmental and long-term sustainability</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Like all other Councils the Council has clear targets for waste & recycling. • The Council is making good progress in this area. • Financial plans acknowledge the increasing costs of waste disposal and energy costs particularly. • The Council acknowledges the Climate Change targets and has established a Sustainability Strategy. • The Council has developed a Local Biodiversity Action Plan. • The Council has commitments to reduce is carbon emissions and is currently working on a range of projects to support change. • It is acknowledged that there is a significant amount of work still to be undertaken in this area and review of the SOA currently will provide an opportunity to consider appropriate targets in all areas.
<p>9.</p>	<p>Consult fully with citizens and service users on short-term budget considerations, and in the longer term, on reshaping services for local areas, as an integral part of their wider approaches to engaging with their communities (paragraph 86).</p>	<p>Chief Executive's</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Budget consultation</u>: full public consultation was conducted on the Council's budget options for 2011/2012. • The sessions were extremely well attended, and a new approach was taken in terms of genuine engagement with residents working in groups/workshops to consider & prioritise budget options. • <u>SOA development</u>: through the CPP, there have been effective and very well received consultation events on a new SOA (2011 – 2014) for the area. In addition, residents on community planning structures are fully participating with public sector officers in Writers' Groups set up to draft the

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			<p>SOA. This approach demonstrates a commitment to the National Standards for Community Engagement and shows how communities can influence the design and delivery of public services through the CPP.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Engagement Strategy: a new strategy for community engagement in West Dunbartonshire is being delivered through training and development support for community forums; • coordinating the work of partners through a shared community engagement plan; • shared use of the Council’s Citizens Panel of 1400 residents; rolling out a Consultation Toolkit and a range of other measures. <p>We currently evaluate Community Engagement in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizens’ Panel Indicator: a key corporate PI which measures impact of community engagement is carried out via the Citizens’ Panel. We ask Citizens’ Panel members if <i>“the Citizens’ Panel Annual Newsletter provides evidence that the Council and its Community Planning Partners listen to what they tell us in relation to developing and changing the way we provide services”</i>. In 2010 almost three quarters (74%) said the newsletter showed how Community Planning Partners used the Panel to develop and change the way they provide services (based on 979 responses). The target for 2011 is 75%. • We also ask if it provides evidence we are targeting resources at issues of concern (63% agree) and providing information in better ways (68% agree), though this isn’t a corporate PI.
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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation training: more informal evaluation includes examples of how staff are adopting new approaches following Consultation Training. • Community Participation Committee: in addition, we evaluate the Community Participation Committee annually and ask community members of the committee ‘<i>Do you feel that community views, questions and issues are listened to?</i>’ (in 2010 70% agreed) and ‘<i>Do community views expressed at the CPC have influence over decisions taken by Council?</i>’ (50% agreed). • Evaluation measures for Community Forum engagement with Community Planning is currently under development.
10.	In fulfilling their equalities obligations, better understand and demonstrate the impact of their activity on different groups (paragraph 88).	Chief Executive’s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are currently 20 CPP multi agency programmes in West Dunbartonshire. A requirement for funding and approving these programmes was a commitment to conducting equalities impact screening and, where necessary, impact assessments. • A key element of current community engagement activity is to consider how equalities groups and issues can be addressed. Significant resources are being provided for a programme called Tackling Violence against Women (mainly delivered by the Violence against Women Partnership, Rape Crisis Centre, Women’s Aid centres and Strathclyde Police). • Significant resources through community engagement and/or community development work are being provided for youth services, disability and community care, and older people’s services. • Specific grant funding has been provided to support the development of an LGBT network, and the establishment of a BME network.

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These initiatives all contribute to an improved understanding of the needs of communities and individuals covered by Equalities Legislation.
11,	Better meet the requirements of Public Performance Reporting (paragraph 89).	Chief Executive's	<p>Through our service planning and performance reporting mechanisms the Council has made real improvements in performance reporting including our public performance report. WDC meet the following requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established systems and procedures to ensure that information is gathered; • Undertaken checks to ensure that information gathered for publication is accurate and complete; • Placed the performance information in the public domain by 30 September following the year end (i.e. achieved by 30 September 2010 for 2009/10). <p>PPR publishing arrangements for 2009/10 and subsequent years have been reassessed in view of the current financial restrictions. Previous years included distribution through the Council's newspaper however limited financial resources has required using alternative methods such as the internet to publish '<i>Measuring Up? West Dunbartonshire Council's Performance Report for 2009/10</i>' for performance information in respect of SPI 1 and 2.</p> <p>Going forward, the Council will take on board suggestions within paragraphs 89 to 91 of the report and the areas of good practice for public performance reporting as detailed in Exhibit 15.</p>
12.	Consider more transparent ways of reporting their accounts and financial performance (paragraph 91).	Corporate Services	<p>This is reviewed annually and there has been significant development with the implementation of Internal Financial Standards. The Council's financial statements provide an</p>

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			<p>overall position for the Council within the ‘Finance Directors foreword’ and highlight any major variances and main points worth noting in the accounts e.g:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the overall general services position (the cost of services provided to the public, how it was funded, the year end over or under spend and how it affects the overall reserves position); • the HRA position; • the assets position; • the pensions position; • trading operations – and whether they have managed to break even; • level of long term borrowing & in-year capital expenditure; • future financial challenges – from within the financial strategy. <p>The Financial statements for 2010/11 are being prepared in line with International Financial Reporting Standards, which expands the current Directors foreword, giving additional detail to the reader.</p>
13.	<p>Work with their community planning partners to recognise the potential of community planning structures in setting out the shape of future provision of services in their local areas (paragraph 93).</p>	<p>Chief Executive’s</p>	<p>The West Dunbartonshire CPP Partnership Agreement, signed off in 2010, captures the active commitment of all partners, in particular the Council, to utilise the community planning landscape to drive forward public sector reform.</p> <p>Between November 2010 and January 2011 Council made a series of decisions to transfer services to the Chief Executive’s Department subject to community planning processes of performance management, financial controls and partnership working models.</p>

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			<p>The key services affected are Advice Services, Employability, CL&D and Community work. The rationale behind these decisions is to reduce duplication, improve service delivery and maximise the impact of working collaboratively within the Council and with CPP partners.</p> <p>These transfers, allied to the Budget allocated to the CPP for investment in its programmes, underpin a significant commitment to working in new and innovative ways to address the financial, strategic and operational challenges the Council faces.</p>
14.	<p>Get better at showing how various options of models of service provision are properly evaluated (paragraph 97).</p>	<p>Chief Executive's</p>	<p>Differing options have been considered as part of each department's redesign and restructure programme and the impact at a corporate level is assessed and considered more widely within Corporate Management Team (CMT) discussions.</p> <p>Since many service redesigns are in the early stages of implementation it is premature to fully evaluate the impact of each model however progress monitored through each departmental team and the CMT have made commitment to fully evaluate the impact of service redesign later within 2011/12.</p> <p>An options appraisal toolkit is currently being developed and will be rolled-out to managers through a development programme later in 2011/12.</p>

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15.	Consider shared services as one option in an approach which considers the range of options of service delivery (paragraph 102).	Chief Executive's	<p>The Council is committed to and taking a lead role in moving forward in a number of areas as part of the Clyde Valley Shared Services agenda. Outline business cases have been developed in each of the priority areas and the Council continues to actively participate in exploring opportunities which would be beneficial for the Council's future plans.</p> <p>In addition the creation of the CHCP is in itself an example of a shared service between the Council and the NHS Board</p>
16.	Make full use of the relationship with the third sector (paragraph 107).	All areas	<p><u>CPP</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third Sector Interface. Through the CPP, the Council and its partners are developing a framework for future relationships and collaborative work called Third Sector Interface • West Dunbartonshire CVS has completed an audit of voluntary sector and social economy organisations for the CPP, and is currently mapping the links between this data and CPP thematic priorities. • Third sector organisations receive funding through the CPP and are active partners across all 20 multi agency programmes. Key third sector agencies sit on thematic management groups. • In reviewing its SOA priorities, the Council and its partners have highlighted community resilience and involvement as part of the Safe, Strong and Involved Communities priority area. This will be supported through the recent restructuring of the Council's Community Development and CL&D services, and through a stronger relationship with CVS in terms of capacity building and organisational development.

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			<p><u>HEED</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The directorate / Council currently make use of the third sector across a range of activities e.g. Housing, Greenspace, Skills Training etc. • The current economic climate may act as a driver for further consideration of how the third sector may be more widely utilised; • This will require officers/elected members to work more collaboratively with potential partners and communities to identify opportunities; • There is also a requirement for officers to understand more clearly what third sector providers, locally & nationally, can contribute directly and indirectly to key services; • Consideration would require to be given to funding arrangements necessary for such groups to support sustainable services – current 1 year funding arrangements create uncertainty; <p><u>CHCP</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The CHCP is building on a strong history of engagement with the 3rd sector in West Dunbartonshire • Direct involvement with service users, their carers and families and the organisations that represent them is a key feature of our planning and operational structures. • The development of the CHCP has seen us develop that work further by bringing together the structures and process of the council and the NHS and will shortly see changes to the Community Participation Committee to reflect the recent changes
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17.	Provide councillors with better information on service costs and quality, and user satisfaction (paragraph 112).	Chief Executive's	The Council's Performance Management System provides Elected Members with regular reports on service plan performance however it is recognised it would be beneficial to develop further PI measures in Covalent relating to cost, quality of service, and outcomes, and this will be a development areas going forward.
18.	Make better use of comparative performance information and activities such as benchmarking (paragraph 112).	Chief Executive's	A Benchmarking Toolkit and a learning and development programme have been rolled-out to Managers enabling them to participate in phase 1 of a structured programme of competitive benchmarking. However it is acknowledged that further work is required within this area; resources and support for this area are currently being considered within operational changes. It is anticipated this will create specific capacity to further develop this area.
19.	Work with community planning partners to improve their performance management, monitoring and reporting processes of partnerships (paragraph 113).	Chief Executive's	<p>Performance management systems and financial controls are well developed within West Dunbartonshire's CPP, and are measured collectively i.e. performance and financial spend within a project or programme is analysed together, at least quarterly, to better understand the link between inputs and outputs. This has resulted in increased efficiency and reduced duplication of effort.</p> <p>Community residents representing the three community forums in this area have places on all six thematic groups, and three places on the Strategic Board. As a result those representatives have the opportunity to scrutinise and influence progress reports on performance and spend.</p> <p>A comprehensive annual report on progress with the delivery of</p>

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			<p>the SOA and the CPP more generally has been produced and widely circulated, including on the CPP website. This annual report, which was approved by Council and the CPP before submission, has received positive feedback from Scottish Government officials.</p>
<p>20.</p>	<p>Use self-evaluation more routinely and systematically across all council activity, including testing competitiveness and efficiency (paragraph 115).</p>	<p>Chief Executive's</p>	<p><u>Self-evaluation:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council has adopted the PSIF self evaluation model and recently completed a corporate self assessment which highlighted key areas for improvement. • The actions have been developed into a 3 year plan and progress is reported to CMT and Elected Members. <p><u>Competitiveness:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council has established a multi disciplinary working group which has undertaken benchmarking in key service areas and the outcomes have been reported to Service Committees. • A benchmarking toolkit was launched (December 2010) and managers have undertaken training to improve their use of benchmarking as part of the performance management framework. • Members have taken the decision to expose major areas of work to external competition (Housing DLO) to ensure quality and value for money services are delivered. The evaluation was carried out on price quality scoring and the results were verified by external auditors. The in-house bid was successful. • We continue to participate in the APSE performance networks which gives comparator information for what was predominantly the previous direct service groups. • Further work is required in obtaining key performance

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			comparator benchmark of services and the SOLACE review will greatly assist this.
21.	Make full use of the Accounts Commission report <i>How council work: an improvement series for councillors and officers – Roles and working relationships: are you getting it right?</i> to explore ways of improving leadership and governance (paragraph 117).	Chief Executive’s	The Council facilitated two development sessions to explore the key issues and challenges raised within the report. The Senior Manager Network (120+ senior managers) discussed the report from an officer perspective through group discussion and feedback sessions. Elected Members completed a similar exercise through the Member’s Business Day. The outcomes have been combined and this highlighted that overall working relationships are considered more positively and should continue to develop through a range of mechanisms recently implemented to facilitate better co-operative working and ensure involve members have opportunity for early engagement and involvement in the development stages of key forward plans.
22.	Make full use of scrutiny and audit to challenge performance and demonstrate value for money (paragraph 122).	Chief Executive’s	Performance Audit is an area for development within the Council and will be prioritised during 2011/12 when internal audit have concentrated resources to address this. Value for money needs to be measured in terms of outcomes and therefore, as a priority, outcome based performance measures need to be developed across all services.

Key questions for Councillors

Ref	Key questions	Councillor Assessment
1	<p>How are decisions made between competing priorities?</p> <p>What will success look like in relation to service delivery on the ground?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statutory provision must be met first • Other decisions may be made based on either political agenda/priority, social need, and public feedback • Better consultation with the public is supporting decision making • Officers and Council Administration present their view of priorities which are then are then consulted on and amended based on either political, public, and/or expert evidence • The right service, at the right time, to the agreed standard, at an acceptable cost • Education: good standards / seen as improving / quality environment etc • Social Work: choice and quality service • Corporate Services: delivering efficient and effective services • HEED: providing better environment / quality housing / tenant satisfaction • Evaluating how we perform against other authorities or similar authorities • Public reaction to services – both factual and perception • Need to educate the public allowing them to understand what we are aiming to achieve
2	<p>Is there sufficiently good information on the cost, quality, and quantity of services to support evidence based priority setting?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of information has improved over the past 4 years • Financial information provided is very good • Engagement between members and officers has allowed detailed and quality decision making • Improved engagement has allowed informed decisions to progress • Reports need to be outward looking in terms of impact on partners • In most cases we have a good degree of information on costs of services however not always able to find appropriate benchmarks. • The quality and value of services is always difficult to measure and often a

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		<p>proxy is used for this (and most proxy measures are very subjective). These will be related to provision of some popular services – schools, libraries, leisure facilities etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowing the value of services will help prioritise resources
3	<p>What needs to be done to improve understanding of the links between spending, activities, performance, and outcomes?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to be more outcomes focused • Performance indicators and relevant SPIs/KPIs need to evaluate the value to the community • Widen the scope of consultation and quality intelligence; utilise our expertise to understand need • Establishing community value is important; what is their view?
4	<p>What contribution beyond 3% efficiency savings can reasonably be expected? What more could be done to improve understanding of productivity in public services as a basis for further action?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate the outcomes (and outputs); improve the visibility; are they the right measures? Councillors should debate on outcomes • Improve the rationale in making decisions; reports need to include how what we are doing is helping to deliver outcomes • More synergies between local and national initiatives; politicians should be more accountable to each other
5	<p>Is the balance right between short-term measures and long term changes?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balance between short to medium term (3-5 years) is getting better; longer term decisions (beyond 5 years) is less evident • Short term measures are driven by costs/budget reducing and political imperatives to drive forward agenda • Through planning process the balance is right • Budget planning process is effective
6	<p>Is enough being done across sector and service boundaries to deliver efficient services that place the needs of users first?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • User needs are being taken into account through improved consultation; allows challenge to what Council priorities are • Level of engagement has improved through more consistent approach to consultation. • Education: small partnerships in place

Key questions for Councillors

		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Social work: Social Work & CHP partnership• Corporate Services: future joint working CVCPP• HEED: more and better housing
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