

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by Chief Executive

Council meeting: 25th March 2009

Subject: Progress of Best Value Improvement Plan

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report presents an update on the progress of the Best Value Improvement Plan against the priorities identified by Audit Scotland's Best Value Audit work.

2. Background

- 2.1 Audit Scotland in their February 2007 report on Best Value identified 11 immediate and 3 medium-term improvement priorities for West Dunbartonshire Council. A Best Value Improvement Plan (BVIP) was developed to address these priorities.
- 2.2 Audit Scotland subsequently assessed progress against these 14 priorities in their February 2008 Progress Report and a revised Improvement Plan was developed.
- 2.3 The Council agreed in February 2008 that the BVIP be progressed by five workstreams (Organisational Development, Continuous Improvement, Resource Management, Risk & Performance Management and Efficient Government). Each workstream is led by a member of the CMT, supported by a nominated lead officer and trade union representation.
- 2.4 The Council also agreed to set up an 'Improvement & Efficiency Executive' (I&EE) to oversee the progress of the five workstreams. Membership of the Group was agreed to total 8 Elected Members – comprised of 4 Labour, 2 Other Opposition and 2 SNP councillors. The group is supported by the Chief Executive, other members of the CMT and led by the Leader of the Council.
- 2.5 The BVIP is reported to Council on a quarterly basis following the quarterly meeting of the I&EE.
- 2.6 The improvements being delivered by the various workstreams are supported by integrated action plans and managed through the Covalent performance management system. A full listing of these actions and progress against respective milestones is shown as Appendix 1.

3. Overall Progress

3.1 Overall there has been steady progress against most areas of activity when considered in the context of other corporate priorities such as the implementation of Single Status and significant inspection activity by the Housing Regulator, SWIA, INEA and Child Protection. It is important that Elected Members understand and recognise the wider context within which we are trying to manage our resources to deal with all of the challenges that face us.

3.2 Actions are actively managed by the workstreams using the Covalent Performance Management system. Appendix 1 lists 55 actions under the 14 priorities.

- 27 actions (49%) are complete
- 17 actions (31%) are on track – 6 show progress >75%, another 6 with 50-75% progress and 5 showing less than 50% progress
- 9 actions (16%) are showing a delay (Amber) – where a milestone due date has not yet been achieved. – 3 show progress >75%, another 3 with 50-75% progress and 3 showing less than 50% progress
- 2 actions (4%) are noted as overdue (Red) where the action due date has been exceeded. Both of these however show 90% progress

3.3 Key Achievements

3.3.1 Programme Management

The five workstreams are now delivering day-to-day improvement activity and the Executive Directors champion and steer the required change and improvement agenda with the support of lead officers. The Improvement & Efficiency Executive meets on a regular basis and is recognised as a meaningful forum for Elected Member involvement and scrutiny prior to submission to Council. The introduction of collective meetings between lead officers and the Corporate Management Team, prior to the I&EE meeting, has been a valuable forum to discuss overall progress and cross-cutting issues that require a strategic approach. Executive Directors have provided a focus for driving the priorities of the workstreams but ownership of key improvement areas is now integrated within services and led by key officers at a range of levels.

3.3.2 Leadership

Considerable work has been undertaken in developing a new approach to strategic leadership and improving member-officer relations. Following on from a comprehensive consultation exercise reports on the way forward have been submitted to Council in November 2007 and November 2008 and more recently in February 2009. Facilitated

briefing sessions by the Improvement Service have been carried out with Elected Members in February 2008 and January 2009. This resulted in agreement of a number of recommendations which provide a sound foundation for improvement and new ways of collective working. In terms of strategic leadership and Member/Officer relations, the approved February report is a major step forward. The report detailed a series of recommendations to support improvements in this area and highlighted the critical links between strategic leadership, improved member-officer relationships and the organisational culture. Further improvements in decision making and scrutiny processes have been underpinned by changes to the role and remit of the Audit & Performance Review Committee.

3.3.3 Capacity

The Brodies recommendations on managerial and political structures has been implemented – and a further review by Brodies on Community planning structures is being implemented following the successful recruitment of a new Community Planning Manager. Other restructures that have improved our capacity include that proposed for Organisational Development and the new Heads of Service in Social Work. Further work in reviewing structures, in particular, for support service functions, and the proposal for a Change Management Team is planned for 2009. The CMT was increased in size in early 2008 and it now comprises 4 Executive Directors and the Chief Executive. Where appropriate consultants have been deployed to assist with such developments as strategic leadership, community engagement, corporate and service planning and culture change.

3.3.4 Employee Relations

Although set against a background of the single-status negotiations; solid progress has been made on responding to the recent staff survey. The 11-point action plan developed by the Employee Survey Working Group has been subsumed within the Organisational Development workstream. All the Phase 1 recommendations have been taken forward and progressed through an action plan, including the development of an organisational communication strategy, implementation of management development programmes, and the introduction of a new dignity at work policy. Much background work has been undertaken in consulting with managers and staff to facilitate their involvement and feedback in the development of key improvements to our people management practice and strategies. Phase 2 will focus on implementation with the support of targeted training programmes and the development of cultural change to embed and strengthen these improvements. In addition, plans are underway to implement a further Employee Survey in April 2009 to gauge staff perceptions on key changes and improvement within the organisation, in terms of communication, leadership and dignity at work, as well as

gaining feedback which can inform our next steps and plans for improving employee satisfaction and engagement.

3.3.5 Efficient Government

The Efficient Government initiative – although not explicitly part of the Best Value Improvement agenda - has been successfully integrated into this framework and key actions have been included under the immediate priority relating to the culture of Best Value.

3.3.6 Strategic Planning & Performance Management

A new Community Plan was launched and has been followed by a new Single Outcome Agreement, developed through consultation with the Senior Management Network. Corporate and Service Planning has been improved and performance management has benefited significantly from the successful implementation of the new Covalent system and a new reporting framework. Whilst improving accountability, Covalent is a tool that has provided a focus for Managers to assess risk in a structured way and much progress has been made on setting up risk registers and integrating them into the planning and performance frameworks.

3.3.7 Consultation & Community Engagement

West Dunbartonshire Council's Community Engagement and Consultation Strategies were agreed through the Community Participation Committee in September 2008 and subsequently by Council in October 2008 by approval of the CPC Minute.

3.3.8 Continuous Improvement

Every service has completed a 'Service Performance Assessment' – based on the Public Services Improvement Framework (PSIF) resulting in an improvement plan for each service as a pre-cursor to full PSIF roll-out. The full PSIF model has been piloted in 5 services and a pilot Kaizen-Blitz exercise has been carried out on the Sold Property Section.

3.4 Delayed Actions

3.4.1 Financial Planning

The long term strategic financial plan, which was originally planned to be completed in August 08, was delayed to incorporate up to date forecasts in relation to the Pay Modernisation Programme, the Standard Delivery Plan and the General Services Capital Plan. This document is now complete and following consideration by the Corporate Management Team will be presented to the Corporate & Efficient Governance Committee in April.

3.4.2 Workforce Planning

Reliable and up-to-date employee information is a critical component of improving workforce planning arrangements. This project was delayed in order to investigate opportunities for shared services and as a consequence of the immediate priority to address Single Status Implementation. However, good headway has been made in that the initial scope was expanded and the tendering process for the procurement of an integrated HR and Payroll Information system has now been completed. It is anticipated that this will be fully operational by April 2010. Nonetheless significant improvements have been made in capturing employee information and a bespoke system “Rembrandt” was developed in-house to support Single Status implementation. This will provide a robust platform on which to implement the new system more quickly and take forward workforce planning on an interim basis.

3.4.3 Competitiveness & Option Appraisal

Corporate approaches to competitiveness and option appraisal are still at early stages. The next step is to fully integrate key initiatives such as PSIF, the Shared Services Strategy, the Diagnostic Pathway business cases, activity-based costing and benchmarking into a systematic project plan.

3.4.4 Elected Member Development

Elected Member development has focused on the introduction of a continuing professional development (CPD) framework in partnership with the Improvement Service. This framework is based on the principles of self-assessment and 360° assessment, and it was originally anticipated that relevant development programmes would be implemented by early 2009 to support the required development needs. Following an unsuccessful tender process a revised approach has now been adopted by the project board towards provision of development programmes and this will incur some delay in the implementation of the planned development solutions. However as our Elected Members are currently involved in the personal development planning process, and plans are underway to develop the recommendations of the strategic leadership action plan, it is anticipated this delay will not impact highly on our plans moving forward.

3.4.5 Continuous Improvement

Reporting to the CMT of the conclusions of the PSIF and Kaizen pilots and plans for full roll-out has been delayed due to competing resource demands from other external scrutiny processes and the resignation of

a key staff member. Plans for PSIF roll-out are being considered by the CMT.

4. Progress against the Immediate Priorities

4.1 Establish arrangements and working practices which demonstrate openness and accountability in strategic decision making processes

4.1.1 Following the revision of the Best Value Improvement Plan structures, this work was developed through the Organisational Development workstream. Openness and accountability in decision making was the subject of a report by the Improvement Service. Following an initial report of the findings to Council in November 2007; a member seminar was facilitated by Colin Mair in April 2008 to explore these and wider issues surrounding Strategic Leadership and Decision Making. The outcomes from this seminar and other activity were collated as part of a report and action plan to Council in November 2009. Council agreed the need for additional discussion on the detail of the action plan, and a further seminar, again facilitated by Colin Mair, was arranged in January 2009. The seminar focused on, new ways of working more collectively, developing our strategic focus & planning, members and senior managers demonstrating a combined approach to improvement, and providing increased support and development for Elected Members

4.1.2 Open discussion within the seminar facilitated a strong debate on the key issues which influenced our ambition to work more collectively, followed by smaller mixed group work to consider the priorities and practicalities of implementing such recommendations.

4.1.3 The seminar achieved a consensus for the recommendations put forward which were subsequently approved at the February 2009 Council meeting. An action plan is now underway to facilitate development and implementation of the proposals.

4.1.4 Recent changes to the Council's Standing Orders support the implementation of the new approach to Strategic Leadership and Decision Making, and also demonstrate a general improvement to the business processes of the Council. On 28th January 2009, Council approved a number of changes, which included – among other things - the arrangements for dealing with motions, powers and duties of conveners, deputations, approval of committee minutes, declarations of interest, alteration of Council decisions. All changes are designed to clarify and improve the arrangements for managing the business and conduct of meetings. In particular, the agreement to issue papers not less than nine days in advance of meetings ensures that members have sufficient time to raise any issues with officers in advance of the meeting itself – which ensures that decisions are informed by the fullest

possible information. In addition, the decision to start Council meetings at the slightly earlier time of 6.00 p.m., and to set a time limit of 10.00 p.m. for the last item of business, (reconvening the next day if necessary), ensures that the decision making process does not continue to a point where the quality of decisions might be compromised.

4.2 Develop and implement medium to longer-term strategies to ensure effective management of resources, including financial planning and workforce.

4.2.1 Priority-led Budgeting

The annual planning and budget guidance for departments was issued in early September 2008. This contained improved guidance for departments on creating and evidencing linkages between prioritisation of budgets and annual service planning. There will be a review of completeness once the budget process is completed – this is due to be carried out by June 2009.

4.2.2 Workforce Planning

Workforce Planning is a strategic and continuous process that creates the links between the Corporate Plan, Service Planning and HR Strategy to ensure the Council has the workforce capacity and capability to deliver on its organisational objectives. The recent “golden thread review” highlighted the requirement to ensure our workforce strategy is fully aligned with and supports strategic and service planning across the Council. This will be particularly critical in addressing issues arising from the implementation of the Single Status Agreement.

While our overarching workforce strategy is still under development significant progress has been made in ensuring the building blocks are in place to capture, analyse and address workforce requirements in the following areas:

- **Workforce Information**
An extensive tendering and procurement process for an integrated HR and Payroll Information system has been concluded with the purchase of Frontier which is scheduled for full implementation in April 2010. An interim solution to support improvements in workforce information was developed in-house; “Rembrandt” and a significant data capture exercise was undertaken to populate the system with comprehensive and up-to-date employee information. This exercise was critical to support Single Status Implementation and will provide a robust platform for taking forward workforce planning.
- **Recruitment**

Effective recruitment processes are a critical component of any workforce strategy and therefore significant improvements have been targeted in this area in the last year with the introduction of the national Recruitment Portal. The Portal was implemented across Scotland on a phased basis during the latter half of 2008 enabling an online application process for all vacancies. WDC was one of the first 6 Councils to participate and the Portal is already enabling a more strategic approach to recruitment and selection and is proving a popular choice (some 91% of applications for jobs at the Council are made on the Portal - a much higher rate than anticipated taking into account the low percentage of households in the area with internet access). In time, the Portal will be aligned to the new HR and Payroll Information system to provide a full candidate tracking system enabling contract management, establishment control, promotion profiles etc to be seamlessly managed as one process.

- Workforce Planning Model

During 2009/10 the Council will develop a strategic Workforce Plan which is clearly aligned with and supports the Corporate Plan. In order to support this approach Corporate HR is currently developing a Workforce Planning Model which is flexible enough for use across the various Departments of the Council. It is initially proposed to pilot the Model within Social Work and Health over the first quarter of 2009/10 and consultancy support has been engaged to take this forward and build knowledge and skills in this regard into the Council. The first phase of the pilot will also focus on developing knowledge and expertise within the Council to support workforce planning as a key component of service planning.

Ultimately the strategic workforce plan and associated processes will better enable the Council to forecast resource and capability requirements across each department, thereby allowing for an overall understanding of resourcing needs and the ability to focus HR activity on managing, developing and mobilising employees as needed across the Council as well as support and inform key national workforce initiatives.

4.2.3 Financial Planning

Following the financial overview presented to Council in August 2008, the draft revenue estimates were prepared in accordance with the annual planning and budget guidance issued to departments in September 2008. The position was scrutinised by the Budget Working Group which met regularly throughout the budget process, with the resultant budget approved by Council on 12 February 2009. Council was also presented with an indicative budget for 2010/11 and agreed, subject to government support continuing, to freeze the Council tax again in 2010/11. Council also agreed to the development of a "robust financial framework" and a report will be presented to Council on the 25 March 2009 outlining proposals for the remit, membership and frequency of a full committee of the Council consisting of the conveners and shadow spokespersons of each department.

Council also agreed the 2009/10 annual treasury strategy and prudential indicators on the 25 February 2009 which were revised to take account of the current economic situation. A draft capital plan will be presented to the Council on the 25 March 2009. This plan has been delayed to allow up to date information to be incorporated in relation to the acceleration of government funding from 2010/11 and the availability of capital receipts. Indicative plans have previously been submitted to Council in both August and November 2008.

A draft financial strategy has been prepared covering the period 2009/10 to 2018/19 and this document is currently under consideration by the Corporate Management Team and will be presented to the Corporate & Efficient Governance Committee in April.

4.3 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.

4.3.1 Decision-Making Scrutiny

Scrutiny of decision-making is the focus of the revised A&PR Committee. Four lay members joined the Committee in the spring of 2008 which has further enhanced the accountability to the community.

Elected Members were provided with training on their strategic role in January 2008, and this included a session on their scrutiny role. Further training needs of elected members are being developed as part of the CPD approach. Lay members received scrutiny training in September 2008.

The action plan for developing strategic leadership and decision making will enhance the range of opportunities for the involvement of *all* elected members in the scrutiny processes. In particular the action plan highlights the need to complete the review of the scrutiny function and to provide further development sessions with members in this area. The Improvement Service has offered assistance with this work and a further seminar will be arranged to consider additional options for improving the scrutiny function. It is envisaged that development sessions for members will take place as part of the on-going Continuing Personal Development (CPD) arrangements.

4.3.2 Performance scrutiny

The scrutiny process in service committees is working more effectively, with good involvement from members. The use of the Covalent system has enhanced the information available to members and other stakeholders and allows more effective scrutiny. Training in the use of the system is ongoing. Service action plans and key corporate and departmental indicators are now in Covalent. A revised Performance Management Framework is being implemented with progress being

monitored by Departmental Management Teams, Service Committees as well the Audit & Performance Review Committee.

Performance scrutiny by the Audit & Performance Review Committee is developing well and showing some success. In particular the scrutiny of Statutory Performance Indicators (SPIs) on a regular quarterly basis is now well established; a process has been put in place whereby the Committee can request that a particular Service Committee consider a report from officers on a particular indicator(s) that are of concern.

The Committee's remit now also includes new arrangements for scrutiny of the Councils Corporate Plan and Council's role in Community Planning – including scrutiny of the Single Outcome Agreement.

The A&PRC is chaired by the Leader of the Opposition and is composed of 3 Administration, 4 Opposition and 1 Independent member. In addition, four lay representatives have been members of the committee since April 2008, (representing the business community, Community Councils, Tenants & Residents organisations and the voluntary sector).

4.4 Develop a culture to support Best Value and continuous improvement across the organisation.

4.4.1 Organisational Culture

Significant progress has been achieved in assessing and understanding the impact of organisational culture in delivering services and meeting our aspirations in terms of Best Value. A series of diagnostic workshops were facilitated during January involving over 150 staff and managers from across services in exploring the issues which reflect the current culture within the Council (using a tool known as the Culture Web).

The outcomes of these workshops have been collated to create a 'cultural lens' of how events within West Dunbartonshire are interpreted and will be the foundation for developing a future desired culture. Whilst the diagnostics highlighted key cultural themes it also recognised a number of positives to build on; these include pockets of good practice within services and departments, recognition of the Council as being a good employer, our staff's motivation and goodwill to improve services, and an appreciation that management is seeking feedback as part of moving forward.

The perceptions of the current culture have now been presented to the Corporate Management Team. As well as facilitating a diagnostic process this approach has the dual purpose of engaging senior managers in collectively developing and managing organisational change. Two workshops are now planned for March and April involving the Senior Manager Network in developing a clear picture of the future

culture, assessing the readiness for change, and agreeing a joined-up approach to transforming the culture.

The diagnostic outcomes strongly highlight the need for a joined-up approach to cultural change, and the role of managers in facilitating such transformational change will be crucial. A number of development initiatives such as the core briefing, management development programmes, and performance and personal development planning, have been or are moving towards implementation phases, and the impact of organisational culture will be powerful in determining how successful these frameworks fully embed within the organisation.

There is a danger that enthusiasm to address the culture perceptions and resolve the 'problems' by plunging into further improvement initiatives will cause greater confusion and flux, and in doing so, deeply reinforce current signals within the culture. Therefore adopting a joined-up change approach which develops, engages, and supports our senior managers in bringing about transformational change will be essential.

4.4.2 Employee Survey

Design and development of the employee survey is underway and scheduled for issue in April 2009. The survey has the broad aims of evaluating employee perceptions and engagement in the organisation; how this position compares against other public sector organisations and an assessment of changes in perception since the 2007 survey. IBP Research will conduct the survey and the follow-up questionnaire will ensure that all relevant issues are addressed and that appropriate comparisons can be made with the 2007 survey.

The survey has been designed following a review of staff surveys carried out by other Scottish Councils to allow West Dunbartonshire Council to benchmark survey results. Feedback from the Core Brief to the senior manager network in January highlighted issues in relation to confidentiality and how this may influence the response rate. As a result, a number of recommendations have been proposed and agreed with IBP Research to maximise response rates and provide reassurance to employees.

The follow-up Employee Survey is part of a wider programme of employee engagement and will be closely aligned with the outcomes of the Culture Web diagnostics, to assess the impact of improvement plans and the cultural change required to support such programs.

4.4.3 Employee Communication

Feedback received as part of the Employee Survey (2007) and employee & manager forums operated by Organisation Development in 2008, identified a need for regular and frequent face-to-face contact between line management and employees. A review of current departmental communication practice was also completed and

confirmed that the absence of a Corporate Core Brief resulted in departmental communication with no strategic focus.

The start of a new approach to employee communication was implemented during the implementation of Single Status with a move towards greater face-to-face interaction between Senior management, line management and employees. An employee roadshow programme was launched to enable employees to meet with the Chief Executive and CMT to discuss implementation issues and challenges face-to-face. A week-long programme of briefing sessions with managers was also implemented to ensure that critical information and support was provided to employees direct from line managers.

A new internal communications policy has been developed and stipulates a clear commitment to employee engagement. The policy provides guidance and best practice for Services to develop and embed robust communication structures to support the needs of individual workgroups with emphasis placed on a Corporate Core Brief. This was approved by the Employee Survey Working Group, Trade Unions and Council in 2008. A great deal of work has taken place between Corporate Communications and Organisational Development to integrate the communication objectives and associated management behaviours within ongoing management development to ensure line managers have the skills required to deliver the Policy in full.

A joint report from Organisational Development and Corporate Communications was presented to the Organisational Development workgroup in October 2008 to recommend prioritising the implementation of the Core Brief and the development of Performance Objectives in order to place communication at the heart of day-to-day management practice. Communication modules have been incorporated within the Management Development Programme.

The Policy has been presented at the Corporate Management Team, at Senior Management meetings within directorates and at sessions with individual Heads of Service to examine how the Policy will be implemented within each Service. Directorates have now been tasked with full roll-out from April 2009, including the development of bespoke communication plans for remote workgroups.

A full revision of the Senior Managers Network in December 2008 has allowed the Briefing process to begin. The group now meets monthly to participate in development sessions and receive Core Brief information. To date Briefs have included Single Status, Budget 2009/10, Employee Survey, Shared Services and changes to the Strathclyde Pension Scheme. Whilst the new format is proving to be successful in reaching 4th tier managers and above, there needs to be greater commitment to delivering the brief to all employees following the SMN from April. At present there is limited evidence to indicate that this is happening in accordance with the Policy.

The Culture Web activity has highlighted that Cultural change is required before the Policy can be successfully implemented and affect

a sustained change to the internal communication process. Further work is now required to fully embed the Policy within individual services. An initial evaluation of its effectiveness will be carried out within the Employee Survey in April 2009.

4.4.4 Dignity at Work

Positive steps have been taken to address dignity at work issues initially through the appointment of an external agency (People Resolution Group) who met key stakeholders to explore improvements to the existing policy and supporting arrangements with a view to developing and embedding best practice in this area. A new policy and supporting procedure was introduced in October 2008.

Three key in-house posts have been introduced to support the policy namely: Confidential Contact Officer, Internal Investigator and Mediator and these individuals have all been trained to undertake these key roles. A Managers Training brief has been developed arrangements are currently being taken forward for Departmental HR Officers to roll out this training to Managers within their service area.

The revised policy and supporting arrangements will be subject to evaluation and review through the Employee Survey and later in November 2009.

4.4.5 Continuous Improvement Plans for every service

All Council services have participated in a Service Performance Assessment (SPA) process – based on the Public Services Improvement Framework - and have developed their own improvement plans from this assessment. A total of 318 improvement actions have been identified. The latest update shows that 26% of actions are complete but that 23% of the actions have not yet started

As outlined in the guidance, services have included these improvement actions in their Operational and Departmental Plans and included them where appropriate in the Covalent performance management system to ensure regular performance monitoring in line with the Council's performance management framework.

A number of actions identified by services during the SPA process are common across the Council (eg benchmarking, option appraisal, operational planning and qualitative performance measurement) which will require corporate support for successful implementation and harmonisation of approaches across the Council.

4.4.6 Public Service Improvement Framework (PSIF)

Results of the 5 service-area pilots (Welfare Rights, Sports Development, Homelessness, Leisure and Forward Planning) have been analysed and Improvement Plans are nearing completion. Self

evaluation teams participated in an evaluation of the pilot using Servqual Gap Analysis. The findings indicate that ratings were very good for skills and responsiveness of facilitators. However, there was general consensus that the PSIF question set contains an element of duplication which increased the gap scores for the reliability dimension of the review. However, clearer information could have been supplied to services prior to the facilitation workshop sessions which may have reduced the time taken to complete the self evaluation. The results of the pilot were briefly discussed at the PSIF National Board and it was agreed that the results would be taken into account when designing and providing advice to other Scottish local authorities planning to roll out the framework.

A report was circulated to CMT in early March 2009 which outlined the progress made with the pilots and outlined an approach and operational requirements required for full implementation of PSIF across the Council. There has been some delay in consolidating the pilot results and developing a project plan for full implementation. The timescale of services participating in implementation will be based on current levels of performance gained from the Service Performance Assessment and statutory external review activity. A further report is being prepared for the Corporate Management Team which will detail operational and financial requirements for full roll out of the framework as well as project plan which integrates the PSIF with other frameworks such as competitiveness assessments.

There has been some delay in evaluating the pilots and reporting progress due to time pressure from other inspection regimes, the trial of Kaizen and the resignation of a key corporate support post.

4.4.7 Kaizen Blitz

A 'Kaizen-Blitz' study was carried out recently covering the Sold Property function. This was chosen because it was seen as complicated, involved several departments, was geographically disparate and not well perceived by customers. The analysis involved all members of the team in analysing the various processes and identifying 'wasteful' activities. An action plan to implement the recommendations in the report and realise the identified efficiency savings is now being prepared. A process champion and process owners have been identified to ensure future ownership and accountability of the new processes.

Further utilisation of rapid improvement tools like Kaizen will be identified using the Public Service Improvement Framework (PSIF) in the future. A case-study has been prepared by G2 Consultants and Quality Scotland in conjunction with the Council to help promotion of this methodology by other public and private sector organisations.

4.4.8 National Excellence Standard and Investor's in People

A total of six internal support services have Investors in People (IIP) certification. (ICT, HR&OD, Social Work Quality Assurance and Strategy Sections, Legal and Administration, Chief Executive Policy and Public Relations). ICT and HR&OD have successfully completed their 3 yearly review and some areas of best practice were identified across the services. The Chief Executives Policy and Public Relations sections and Legal and Administration are due to take part in reassessments in March/April 2009.

Services continue to successfully pursue Customer Excellence standard certification, a total of twenty two frontline services have achieved this and retained certification at the reassessment periods

4.4.9 Efficient Government

Work is underway in relation to the preparation of the Annual Efficiency Statement for 2008/2009. Meetings have taken place with each of the service departments in order to agree items from the 2008/2009 budget savings options package which can be claimed in the Efficiency Statement.

The Efficient Government Group is considering best practice for a framework to monitor Efficiencies and are reviewing the Efficiency Statements submitted by other Local Authorities for 2007/2008 before deciding on a set of efficiency measures and methodologies which will be input to the Covalent monitoring system.

The Efficient Government Group has five main work streams working to progress the efficient government theme (Customer First, Shared Services, Procurement, Assets and Absence). Detailed progress reports are received from each work stream for discussion at Efficient Government Meetings which are arranged on average every six weeks and consideration is being given to the verification of efficiencies by using existing performance indicators where possible.

The CMT regularly review the 67 Aspirational Targets (the 'Building Blocks') agreed by Council during the process of finalizing the Budget for 2008/2009. Regular updates on achieving these targets have been provided to the Budget Working Group.

4.4.10 Customer First

The Customer First Steering Group has been re-established. The aim of the group is to improve customer experience when transacting with the Council and to improve efficiency by streamlining the associated bureaucracy. Progress on each of the 46 Core Services identified by the Improvement Service is being tracked and this work will establish and prioritise business cases for new services. Some of the main achievements to date are:

- the development of the Contact Centre allowing customer to self serve 24/7, to make online payments and to access multiple services at a single point of contact.
- Pest control service and online form now available from the contact centre
- establishment of a corporate address gazetteer enquiry which provides users with local address details, council tax banding, rateable value and other useful local information.
- integration of two back office functions (Council Tax and Housing repairs)
- e-planning hardware now ordered and work continuing to bring this service online.

4.4.11 Shared services

Involvement in key national and regional shared service initiatives is continuing. A significant number of local and departmental shared service arrangements are also in place throughout the authority. The external shared service strategy was approved by the Corporate and Efficient Governance Committee in October 2008. This Strategy sets the context and defines the decision making process for future shared service development and addresses issues raised in the audit of best value. The Strategy formed a Core Brief to the Senior Management Network in December, and is being discussed with departmental Senior Management Teams early in 2009. This Strategy will be further developed to encompass interdepartmental shared service arrangements. There is a commitment to keeping the list of the current shared service arrangements up to date. Some key examples of shared services include (at a national level) e-procurement and e-planning. At a regional level we have a Criminal Justice partnership and at the local level services such as those for older people and those with learning disabilities, as well as maintenance arrangements for roads services.

Cross cutting workshops have now been completed for the Diagnostic Pathway project and a report for the CMT has been prepared containing detailed business cases and projections in eleven key themed areas of opportunity. It is intended that these will introduce efficient working practices and improve customer experience when using council services. This phase of the work is now complete and the results are being considered and prioritised by the CMT. It will then be necessary to identify capacity within the Council to take forward the key opportunity areas in terms of the detailed project design phase and implementation of the prioritised projects.

4.4.12 Procurement

The We-Buy e-procurement system went live on 1 October 2008 and has processed 494 orders at a total of £137,500 by 334 users/approvers. The next stage is well under way in terms of data

collection and user training throughout the organisation. Other procurement efficiencies arising from the purchase of gas and electricity, contracts for ICT hardware, office supplies, telephones and temporary agency staff have been achieved. Non-cash efficiencies have been identified from the consolidation of individual utility bills into one electronic payment.

Additional procurement efficiencies have been achieved as follows:

- The provision of enhanced information for suppliers on the website has resulted in more effective communication of internal responsibilities and more efficient use of procurement staff time.
- Revised rates have been secured in a new national IT hardware contract which will provide equipment of a higher specification which is energy efficient and has components which can be disassembled and recycled. The new prices represent savings on baseline prices per the Scotland Excel contract.
- An extension to the electricity contract for street lighting and traffic signals has been secured at a lower rate than forecast.

4.4.13 Asset Management

The Standard Delivery Plan (SDP) for housing has been agreed by Council and submitted to the Scottish Government with a response anticipated in February 2009. To date no response has been received and is still awaited. In the context of achieving the SHQS by 2015 should this be delayed beyond spring 2009 then this would cause the Council some significant concern.

Office accommodation and care home condition surveys have been completed and the set-up of the asset management database is progressing. A capital programme for 2009/10 is being finalised. A draft asset disposal and investment programme for non-operational property has been prepared and progress has been maintained on producing Energy Performance Certificates (EPC's) which will be required for large operational buildings with public access, and all properties being sold or changing tenancy from January 2009 onwards. This approach was agreed by the Housing, Environment and Economic Development Committee on 3 December 2008.

With regard to schools' regeneration, the Council achieved Financial Close on its PPP project with its selected contractor, BAM PPP in January 2008. The project, for three new secondary schools with enhanced sporting and community facilities, together with a primary school and an Early Education and Childcare Centre, is on schedule with the three secondary schools timetabled for handover in July 2009. The Council is also planning to construct two new primary schools using conventional funding and the final tenders are due to be received in March 2009. A Member/Officer Working Group has been established to plan for the regeneration of the remainder of the schools estate. A comprehensive public consultation process is nearing completion and a

Report making strategic proposals for the future shape of the schools' estate will be presented to Council in September 2009.

A revised Asset Management Plan (based on the 2006 version) continues to be prepared which will include longer-term strategies and is due to be presented to the HEED Committee in April 2009.

4.4.14 Absence Management

As part of the attendance management pilot training was arranged recently for managers to gain a better understanding of the soft skills required in managing sickness absence cases. 60 managers attended training and feedback indicated that managers have gained greater confidence in managing absence which is a key step in managing the attendance policy effectively.

Promotion of the new Occupational Health and Physiotherapy service has commenced and managers have been encouraged to use the service to manage absence and health issues as well as meeting legal requirements to provide health surveillance to staff.

A comprehensive action plan has been developed following HSE inspection to address stress management issues and two new comprehensive policies which should support health and wellbeing, (Dignity at Work and Alcohol and Substance misuse) have been implemented.

All departments are now successfully using the revised Statutory Performance Indicators and this has supported improved and more detailed performance reporting. This is a critical step in ensuring effective attendance management and in targeting interventions to support improved attendance.

4.5 Review political and managerial structures to ensure that they operate effectively and are complementary

The recruitment of key posts was completed throughout 2008 and revisions to departmental managerial structures are ongoing to maximise organisational capacity and embed a culture of continuous improvement across all tiers of management. A number of structure reviews have taken place including the review of community planning governance and staffing arrangements in 2008, the current review of Chief Executive's department to drive forward the improvement agenda, and the outcomes of the diagnostic pathway project leading to such changes as the forthcoming restructure of Organisational Development.

Creating new posts and structures alone will not deliver organisational improvement; this will depend on sustained cultural change, management development and the ability of the Corporate Management Team to convince managers of their vital role in driving forward and managing change. Further time, support, and development

will be required to fully evaluate the effectiveness and harmonisation of these structural changes.

The proposals now being developed following the strategic leadership report have the potential to create a strong partnership between members and officers in collective development and working together, and equally, the organisational culture change initiative provides opportunity to bring about transformational cultural change particularly in our leadership and management behaviours.

Whilst the outcomes from Brodies review of our managerial structures were embraced, the report emphasised the need for this to be accompanied by significant and high profile investment in organisational development. Many of the improvement initiatives (e.g. internal communication strategy, leadership and management development, individual performance management, Kaizen, PSIF etc) cannot be fully implemented until managers are supported by leadership and management training, currently in its early stages.

4.6 Provide Elected Members with support and training to discharge their functions

Within the pilot project for the Political Skills CPD framework, the self-assessment and 360° assessment stages have now been completed and those Elected Members participating have been issued with a personal profile providing overall skills ratings and reviewer feedback. There are six Councils participating in the pilot project and West Dunbartonshire has the highest number of participants engaged in the 360° feedback process. The personal development planning process is now underway with Elected Members participating in 1-2-1 meetings to discuss the personal profile outcomes and develop a personal development plan. A similar invitation has been extended to those Elected Members not participating in the project as a means to implementing personal development plans for all members.

Following an unsuccessful tender exercise (as part of the project) to secure a training provider to develop the required programmes, the Improvement Service has now provided alternative resources for this development and will also implement a Masterclass Series (built around five interconnected modules) to engage and develop Elected Members on current issues relevant to Scottish local government. At a local level, the report to Council on strategic leadership and the outcomes of the personal development planning process, will play a key part in providing planned development forums linked to strategic priorities and improvement frameworks and developing a collective development plan for Elected Members.

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

A new Community Plan 2007/17 was agreed and adopted in September 2007. An update on progress of the indicators and targets in the Plan was reported to the Community Planning Strategic Board in November 2008.

Based on the results of an independent review, revised governance and staffing structures have been agreed (May 2008), and are in the final stages of implementation. It is clear that there is real enthusiasm among Community Planning partners in the context of this new approach

A new Single Outcome Agreement based on the Council's Corporate Plan and the new 2007-2017 Community Plan was submitted to the Scottish Government in June 2008. A progress report on the 2008 SOA was prepared and presented to Council, the A&PRC and the Community Planning Board. Eight planned partner workshops to develop the 2009 SOA have taken place. A seminar/workshop for senior Community Planning Partners, CMT and Elected Members on the SOA took place in January and a first draft of the 2009 SOA was submitted to the Scottish Government on 3rd March.

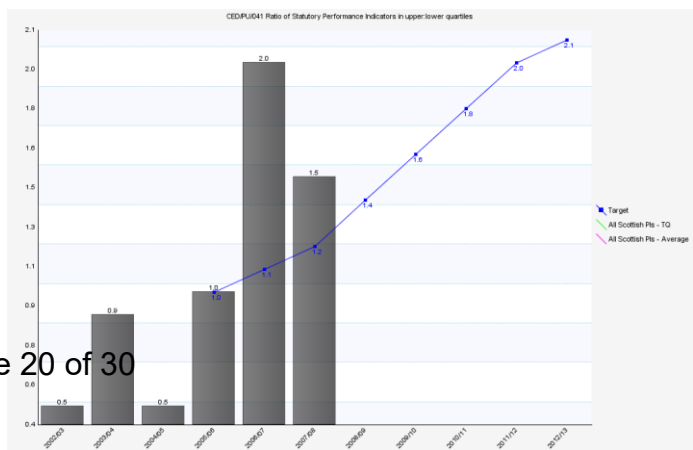
New CPP thematic groups are being established to drive the actions and monitor progress against the local outcomes and targets in the SOA. The relevant lead agencies and thematic groups are now taking responsibility for a programme based approach to the delivery of the SOA themes and the allocation of the Fairer Scotland Fund budget. Programmes of activity to deliver on each theme will be developed by the end of June 2009. It is envisaged that the programme approach will be implemented by November 2009.

4.8 Establish robust action plans for all areas of poor performance identified within the Best Value report and housing services in particular

4.8.1 Performance Indicators and Action Plans

This phase comprised the setting up of the Statutory Performance Indicators in the new Covalent performance management system and linking them to action plans which had been variously developed in other systems. The indicators and their 'linked' actions were scrutinised by Departmental Management teams as part of their 'QPR' processes and reported quarterly to respective Committees and the A&PR Committee on a quarterly basis. The latest report (11 March 2009) described in Appendix 2 the performance of 22 poorly-performing SPIs; 18 of the indicators show long-term improvement and 4 have worsened.

In 2004/5 there were 11 SPIs performing in the upper quartile and 22 in the lower quartile nationally (as defined in Audit Scotland's Council



Profiles). This is a ratio of 0.5. In 2005/06 this ratio had improved to 1.0 (16 in upper, 16 in lower quartile) and in 2006/07 had dramatically improved to 2.0 (22 in upper, 11 in lower). Although the ratio has declined slightly to 1.5 in 2007/08 (21 in upper, 14 in lower) this is evidence of improved overall service performance.

The next phase comprised including the SPIs and other key indicators in the respective service plan 'score-cards' in Covalent where the indicators and related improvement actions are linked to departmental or corporate objectives. Part of this work includes the development of better departmental and operational plans using the newly developed Service Planning Template.

4.8.2 SOLACE 'Golden Thread' study

To help improve the Council's approach to service planning (and hence improve service performance) a consultant from SOLACE was engaged to carry-out a 'Golden Thread Health Check' of current planning and performance management arrangements. The review concentrated on the quality and consistency of our plans and checked the linkage between service plans and higher level plans. Results were reported to the CMT and to the A&PR Committee.

The study confirmed that the Corporate Plan was easy to read, clear and concise and set out numerical targets. It linked well with the Community Plan, but future versions would benefit from better prioritisation, better links to resources and improved articulation of major projects. The study concluded that Departmental Plans varied widely in quality and content and that they needed to be simplified and conform better to an updated standard template. The new 'scorecards' in Covalent are ensuring a consistent approach to the selection of indicators for departmental plans and to show complete linkages back to the Corporate Plan / Community Plan / SOA. The study also concluded that more remains to be done to improve approaches and indicators relating to efficiency, customer satisfaction, equalities and sustainability.

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

This priority has been addressed in two parts – the development of a new Performance Management Framework and the procurement and implementation of a new Risk and Performance Management computer system (Covalent).

4.9.1 Performance Management Framework

The key aspects of the new framework are as follows:

- Monthly exception and full quarterly monitoring of Service Plan actions and indicators by departmental management teams
- Twice-yearly reporting of Corporate Plan progress to the CMT
- Quarterly reporting of SPIs and Strategic Risks to CMT
- Quarterly performance reports from one department at a time to the CMT
- Twice yearly formal reporting of Departmental Performance to Service Committees
- Quarterly reports on Strategic Risks and SPIs to A&PR Committee
- Twice-yearly reports on Corporate Plan progress to A&PRC and once per year to Council
- Annual SOA and Community Plan progress report to A&PRC and Council

Following extensive consultation the Framework was approved by the CMT and the A&PR Committee in March 2009. The SOLACE Golden Thread Study also commented on aspects of the performance management framework noting that reporting of progress to members and the public was overall very good and balanced but could be improved by reporting more on achievements. The study also reviewed the culture of performance management. Some differing approaches were noted with levels of embedded-ness varying across and within departments.

4.9.2 Covalent Risk & Performance Management System

Following a competitive tendering exercise the Covalent system was procured in late 2007 and went live in April 2008. It is being utilised for management of performance indicators, risks and associated action plans. The system also includes 'scorecards' which represent the Council's strategic and operational plans and allows linkage of actions, indicators and risks to the various priorities and objectives.

Training in the Covalent System is progressing well. Since February 2008 146 staff have undertaken introductory training, 35 have been on the intermediate course and 10 on the advanced. Covalent staff carried out the first tranche in February-March (68 staff) with subsequent sessions being run by WDC staff. Two monthly sessions continue to be programmed – with eight places per session. Further senior manager/Elected Member sessions will be set-up.

The number of log-ins per month to Covalent is increasing overall although the increase has been less than the rate originally anticipated. This implies that users are being trained but not fully using the system. A user questionnaire is being planned.

A revised methodology for assessing the 'traffic-light' status of an indicator has been introduced using the Covalent system. The status is now based on target achievement rather than ranking unless a target has yet to be set. To be 'Green' a PI needs to have achieved (or

exceeded its target), whereas missing the target by 15% of the target value will result in a 'Red' status. Just missing the target (0-15% below) will result in an "Amber" status. The main reason for changing the 'traffic-light' methodology is to switch the emphasis onto good target setting.

Performance Indicators in Covalent are being individually assigned to users who are encouraged to use any comparative information to build a target profile for management agreement and also to include comments on good/poor performance, reasons, improvement actions and ranking in the performance notes for each PI.

Discussions are on-going regarding the use of Covalent to monitor actions arising from audits (internal and external) as well as Committee Actions. These initiatives will result in more officers having actions 'assigned' to them and further increases individual accountability for improvement and performance.

4.10 Establish robust arrangements from which the Council is able to demonstrate the competitiveness of Services

Following the Best Value Audit, in response to specific concerns raised over the Council's approach to competitiveness SOLACE were commissioned to examine the Council's approach to managing competitiveness and to make recommendations as to how this should be progressed. A report was produced for the Council in September 2007 which highlighted a number of areas of concern which were focussed on the following broad issues:

- The Council has demonstrated a willingness to expose some of its services (such as Housing Repairs and Planned Maintenance) to competitive tendering.
- Only some services reviewed in the report could be considered competitive
- The Council has not always been able to demonstrate that it has carried out a robust Best Value review when determining the future of services
- The approach to Best Value Reviews has not been consistent or project managed to meet agreed timescales.
- The Council needs to improve its approach to benchmarking.
- A culture of performance management needs to be instilled into all levels of management.
- The personal development planning process needs to be reviewed to make it more performance related, particularly for managers and supervisors.
- There needs to be a change in the way competitiveness is addressed and therefore a change towards a culture of performance management and continuous improvement.

In addition, the report made 52 recommendations of specific issues that the Council should address in taking forward and progressing the competitiveness agenda.

Progress in relation to developing robust arrangements for managing competitiveness as an independent area of work has been limited and in late 2008 it was considered that more focussed work required to be undertaken in examining the area of competitiveness. A short life working group was established to consider progress to date and to develop a framework and action plan for how the organisation could approach this issue and the work of this group was reported in draft format to the CMT in early February 2009 and is currently being reviewed in light of comments from each of the Corporate Directors.

Key findings of the group were that while only limited progress had been made in implementing the specific recommendations of the SOLACE report real progress had been made in key areas impacting on competitiveness through the Best Value improvement process, particularly in areas such as performance management, personal development planning, the development of PSIF, management development, financial & resource planning etc.

Although the number of significant trading operations has reduced from 5 to 2, weaknesses remain in relation to some trading/former trading operations particularly in respect of consistent utilisation of benchmarking, business planning arrangements and the degree to which services have responded to changing customer expectations. However, the opportunity to market test both grounds maintenance and building cleaning services through the Councils PPP project has provided a valuable opportunity for these services to compete directly with private sector providers with contracts for the services to the new schools being won by the in-house teams.

Whilst acknowledging progress and the strong foundations being established in key areas, the group concluded that the Council is not in a strong position to demonstrate competitiveness of its services and proposes a structure around which the issue can be progressed by focussing activity on 6 key areas that have a significant bearing on competitiveness, including:

- Improvement Frameworks
- Planning and Performance Management
- Resources
- Leadership
- Trading Operations
- Policy

The overall aim is to ensure that competitiveness is enshrined within the improvement framework i.e. PSIF and within other relevant policy development activity combined with a recognition that specific activity is required in the short to medium term in relation to trading operations.

The proposed action plan recognises that specific actions are necessary across the 6 key areas referred to above to directly address specific matters at an accelerated pace given the priority placed on this issue by Audit Scotland.

4.11 Develop and embed a risk management culture across the council

The aim of embedding risk management is to ensure that it is not seen as an additional set of layers and processes but to become part of the way the Council conducts its business. The risk management process has been implemented as a top-down approach starting with a high-level review of the risk management strategy and the strategic risk register.

There is now a Risk Analysis section in CMT and Committee Reports; there has been some criticism that reports to Council were still not properly reflecting risk issues under the risk section on the reports template. Directorates are making efforts to improve on this.

A Risk Management working group has been set-up with each department nominating a 'Risk Champion'. Training of these key staff, CMT and Elected members as well as training for the members of the Senior Manager's Network in the risk assessment methodology has been undertaken.

All the previous risk registers have been transferred to the new Covalent system and reviewed. They have been set up at three levels - the Strategic Risk Register, Departmental Risk Registers and Operational Risk Registers. This aligns the risk registers with the corporate plan, departmental plans and operational plans respectively.

The development of actions by accountable staff in Covalent to reduce risks (those with a score of 8 or higher) is included in service planning guidance as is part of the development of the new 09/13 plans. This will increase the embedded-ness of risk management as these actions will appear in the relevant Departmental or operational plans as well as being explicitly linked to the risk assessment. These actions (along with other documents etc) are part of the evidence required to re-assess (and reduce) the risk.

The progress of the strategic risk register is now reported quarterly to the CMT and the A&PR Committee and Departmental risks to regular departmental management team meetings.

A review of the strategic risk register is planned for 2009 along with further focussed training and more awareness-raising sessions with departments and specific services.

5. Progress against the Medium-Term Priorities

5.1 Ensure robust review and option appraisal is undertaken on all Services

Work in this area has not progressed since the last progress update. However 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.

The implementation of the Shared services strategy and the development of the diagnostic project business cases will involve the use of option appraisal.

5.2 Implement a leadership and management development programme

5.2.1 Management Development Programme

The programme, accredited by the Institute of Leadership and Management, and developed in partnership with Clydebank College, was launched in January. Three pilot programmes, aimed at front-line to middle managers, commenced in early March providing work based development programmes at differing levels. These programmes introduce a model for management development of combined theoretical learning with work-based development which facilitates the implementation of learning and change in people management practice, through assignments and reflective assessment. Each programme differs in complexity and purpose however they address similar management themes including managing people, communication, managing performance, managing change, and leadership. The Organisational Development team and Clydebank College have worked in close partnership to develop a model which focuses on key people management concepts but also combines development of management practice and frameworks relevant to the Council's systems and culture.

The development of a similar approach for the leadership programme, targeted at senior managers, is continuing and has now progressed to a tender process. Following this it is expected the programme will launch mid-April.

5.2.2 Senior Managers Network

The launch of a revised format to the Senior Manager Network (SMN) in December has led to a planned programme being well established, and the monthly forum recognised as a valuable structure for communicating organisational information and developing our management and leadership capacity. In response to feedback from managers, a planned and managed approach was introduced with the aim of establishing ownership of our internal communication strategy and also creating development opportunities which built leadership capacity, increased our strategic awareness, and developed collaborative working between senior managers. These events have been incredibly successful and facilitated strong change in the way senior managers are now engaged, involved, and collectively

developing on a range of organisational issues. To date the programme has included communication and development on key areas such as:

- Development of the Single Outcome Agreement
- Shared Service Strategy
- Single Status implementation
- Budget Setting process 2009/10
- Management Development programmes
- Employee Survey 2009
- Child Protection
- Alcohol & Substance Misuse Policy
- Organisational Culture Change

Each event incorporates the opportunity for managers to network, gain an update on recent Council business, and also provide a strong platform for the Chief Executive and Executive Directors to engage face-to-face with the most senior managers in the Council. Each bi-monthly forum is extended to include a development session linked to current organisational and strategic themes facilitating the wider involvement and development of management levels from across the Council. These sessions are highly interactive and stimulate wider debate and participation between managers from differing perspectives and services.

Evaluation feedback (both formally and informally) has acknowledged the welcome change in purpose, content, and style, and it's evident this forum will be a key mechanism for steering and leading the required change in organisational culture. The SMN will take forward the outcomes of the Cultural Change diagnostics and will have a lead role in developing a clear picture on the desired future culture and identifying the key change catalysts.

5.3 Review community engagement activity for efficiency and effectiveness.

The Community Engagement and Consultation Strategies were approved by the Community Participation Committee (CPC) in September 2008, and subsequently by Council. Both strategies are currently being published in a single document and are publicly available through the Council's website. A major focus, with appropriate financial investment, has been given to establishing the support needs of staff responsible for development and delivery of community engagement mechanisms throughout the Council.

The role of the CPC has developed, both in relation to the range of issues identified for the agenda by community representatives, and in relation to the opportunities for community involvement in key policy

developments. Recent examples of this include recycling developments and the regular reports on the regeneration of the schools estate

The training needs of staff throughout the organisation are being addressed. An initial Consultation Scoping Workshop took place in September 2008, with around 24 staff in attendance – facilitated by the Consultation Institute. The purpose of this was “To understand current and future requirements for public engagement and consultation in West Dunbartonshire, so that priorities can be set for investment in skills and processes”. Around thirty employees took part in follow-up Effective Consultation Workshops sessions in December. This provided further information to allow the development of appropriate systems and training. Accredited training is now scheduled during March 2009 along with development of an action plan for ongoing developments.

The annual Budget Consultation was co-ordinated to inform the budget setting process for 2009/10. The outcomes were included in a report to Council on 12th February 2009. The results of this process will be reported to the Community Participation Committee in March 2009. As in previous years, opportunities to improve the process have been identified and these will be developed in consultation with community representatives. Links between council and partner community engagement processes are being developed through the current review of CP community support structures.

6. Personnel Implications

- 6.1. There are no personnel implications at this stage

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1. A budget of £108,500 has been set up for 2008/09 for items specific to the BV Improvement Plan.
- 7.2. Spend to date totals £29,237 – comprising the following projects Kaizen Blitz (£9,468), Dignity at Work (£12,726), Culture Web project (£1,642), PSIF pilots (£1,379) and the SOLACE ‘Golden Thread’ project (£4,023).
- 7.3. Projected end-year outturn is estimated to be £93,578 with further expenditure committed on Absence Management (£8,000), Culture Web project (a further £3,000), the SOLACE ‘Golden Thread’ project (a further £11,000) and the Management Development Programme (£30,000).

8. Risk Assessment

- 8.1. 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. This would increase the reputational

risk for the Council, increase the potential risk of ministerial intervention as well as increase concerns over leadership issues.

9. Conclusions

- 9.1** The five workstreams have developed detailed action plans and milestones to manage progress on improvement actions and improve scrutiny. Each workstream is focused on the improvements required in terms of providing Best Value, and whilst positive steps forward have been made on our improvement journey, it is acknowledged that significant improvement is still required, and will continue, to enable robust organisational change.
- 9.2** New Programme Management arrangements have been successfully implemented. Considerable work has been undertaken in developing a new approach to strategic leadership and improving member-officer relations. Management capacity has been increased with new structures and new management development programmes. A good start has been made on improving employee relations and community engagement. Good progress has been made on strategic planning and performance management and the Efficient Government initiative and some innovative steps made on a corporate approach to self-assessed continuous improvement.
- 9.3** Corporate approaches to competitiveness and option appraisal are still at early stages. The long term strategic financial plan was delayed to incorporate up to date forecasts and a corporate approach to workforce planning is now making progress. There have been some delays in the implementation of the planned Elected Member development and in formulating the next stages in the roll-out of the Public Services Improvement Framework.
- 9.4** Notwithstanding this, the Council has made steady and significant progress in addressing all the main points for action in the Best Value Audit Report. Moreover, the Council is not only aware of the further work required, it is also addressing issues of capacity and culture to enable it to continue its journey of improvement.

10. Recommendations

- 10.1** That the Members of the Council review and comment on the progress of the Best Value Improvement Plan.

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Date: 16 March 2009

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Appendix 1: Best Value Improvement Plan – Progress Report

Background Papers: [Report to Council on Best Value Improvement Plan December 2008](#)

Wards Affected: All Wards