

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Chief Executive

West Dunbartonshire Council: Wednesday 17th January 2007

Subject: Accounts Commission Consultation – Review of the Audit of Best Value and Community Planning

1. Purpose

- 1.1** This report presents Members with a draft response to the Accounts Commission consultation paper entitled 'Review of the Audit of Best Value and Community Planning'. It requests that Members consider the draft response, and agree any additions or amendments which they might wish to make before making the Council's submission.

2. Background

- 2.1** In November 2006, the Accounts Commission issued a consultation paper which will form part of a review of the effectiveness of the Audits of Best Value and Community Planning. The review process will also include an independent external evaluation by Cardiff University's Centre for Local and Regional Government Research.
- 2.2** This review has begun at a time when half of the 32 local authority areas have undergone the audit process. The Accounts Commission has noted that the audit process will not be changed for the remaining authorities in the current round of audits, but that the results will inform the next round of the process.
- 2.3** The Accounts Commission requested that the consultation document be circulated to all political groupings in each Council, and in West Dunbartonshire this was done on 22nd November 2006. Members were informed that each grouping had the opportunity to comment individually, and that the deadline for comment was 12th January 2007. Members were also offered the opportunity to submit comments to be included in the Council response. In addition, Community Planning partners in West Dunbartonshire were informed of the consultation at the Board meeting on 27th November and were also offered the opportunity either to comment individually, or to contribute comments to the Council response. No comments were received, either from Elected Members or from Community Planning partners.
- 2.4** Due to the timescales involved, it was noted that it would not be possible to allow time for comment and then get Council agreement before the deadline of 12th January 2007. It was therefore *initially* proposed that an interim response would be submitted to the Accounts Commission to meet the deadline, and that this would be subject to Council consideration as early as possible in the new year. Subsequently, when the current Council meeting

was arranged for 17th January, we asked the Accounts Commission for an extension of the deadline to allow submission of the response after consideration by Council. The response will now be submitted on the 18th January, incorporating any changes agreed by Council.

2.5 The draft response is attached as an appendix to this report.

3. Main Issues

3.1 The Accounts Commission findings on the Audit of Best Value and Community Planning in West Dunbartonshire noted that the submission to the Hearing at the end of November “made a number of criticisms of the way in which Audit Scotland carried out and reported on the audit,” and that some of these criticisms were “appropriate for inclusion in our current review of the Best Value audit process”. These comments are noted in the draft response attached.

3.2 In addition, the draft response provides comment on the specific questions posed by the Accounts Commission in its consultation.

4. Personnel Issues

4.1 There are no personnel issues.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 There are no financial implications associated with the consultation response.

6. Conclusions

6.1 This report provides members with the opportunity to consider, add to, and/or amend the comments proposed in response to the Accounts Commission consultation on the Audit of Best Value and Community Planning.

7. Recommendations

7.1 **Members are requested to consider the draft response, and agree any additions or amendments which they might wish to make to the Council’s submission.**

David McMillan
Chief Executive
Date: 11 January 2007

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Background Papers: Review of the Audit of Best Value and Community Planning – Accounts Commission Nov 2006
Accounts Commission findings on the Audit of Best Value and Community Planning in West Dunbartonshire, (14.12.06)

Wards Affected: All Council Wards.