

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Chief Executive

Council: 26 May 2010

Subject: An Overview of Local Government in Scotland 2009 : Report by Audit Scotland

1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update members' following the recent Overview of Local Government in Scotland 2009 report by Audit Scotland. The report includes at Appendix 1, a list of questions elected members, it is suggested, may wish to ask to help identify how West Dunbartonshire Council is dealing with the issues raised in the report. This report was issued to all members with a report to the Improvement and Efficiency Executive on 13 April 2010. At that meeting members requested that it be brought to Council together with updates to the questions posed at Appendix 1.

2. Background

2.1 Each year the Accounts Commission asks the Controller of Audit to produce an overview report on issues arising from local authority audits nationally.

3. Main Issues

Key Points from the Commission findings

3.1 The report notes evidence of areas in which councils are providing good quality outcomes for citizens. Paragraphs 68 and 75 specifically note the positive high quality of service being delivered in Social Work and Education in West Dunbartonshire.

3.2 The report welcomes the serious consideration being given to shared service developments in a significant number of councils.

3.3 However, despite these positive developments the report is very clear that councils must focus on the challenge ahead. Projections made as at April 2009 show real term reductions in the Scottish budget of between 7 and 13% between 2009/10 and 2013/14. The scale of the budget challenge demands radical thinking about service design.

3.4 Councils urgently need to ensure that they have comprehensive baseline data on service outcomes and costs and are able to integrate this within performance management systems. In doing so, councils are urged to examine and draw on evidence of service improvement and good practice. More effective workforce planning and management, and further progress on asset management and procurement, are also essential.

3.5 The 2009 report shows that there is still considerable room to standardise, simplify and streamline services so that councils can demonstrate to their taxpayers that they are delivering value for money.

4. People Implications

4.1 There are no personnel issues.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 There are no financial implications.

6. Risk Analysis

6.1 There is a risk that failing to take on board the issues raised in this report will leave the Council vulnerable, not only to continued criticism from Audit Scotland, but more importantly may mean that the challenges we face are not adequately identified and managed.

7. Equalities Impact

7.1 No significant issues were identified in a screening for potential equality impact of this report.

8. Conclusions and Recommendations

8.1 Given the difficult financial outlook, the emphasis for Councils must be on improved outcomes which provide value for money, with a focus on managing costs, long term planning and seeking the most effective methods of service delivery.

8.2 Members are asked to consider the contents of the report, in particular the questions and answers at Appendix 1.

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Date: 14 May 2010

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Appendix: Completed Appendix and Answers from Appendix 1 of An Overview of Local Government in Scotland 2009 - Report by Audit Scotland

Background Papers: An Overview of Local Government in Scotland 2009 -
Report by Audit Scotland

Wards Affected: All