

West Dunbartonshire Council
Report by Acting Chief Executive
Council Meeting : 24 September 2008

Subject: Best Value Improvement Plan

1. Purpose

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

2. Background

- 2.1** The Council has agreed the BVIP be progressed by five workstreams – each being led by an Executive Director, supported by a nominated lead officer(s) and having trade union representation.
- 2.2** The Council also agreed to set up an 'Improvement & Efficiency Executive' (I&EE) to oversee the progress of the five workstreams and report to Council. Membership of the Group was agreed to total 8 Elected Members – comprised of 4 Labour, 2 Other Opposition and 2 SNP councillors. The group would be supported by the Chief Executive, other members of the CMT and led by the Leader of the Council.
- 2.3** The first meeting of the I&EE was held on 23rd April – where it considered the first draft of an updated BVIP. The report was subsequently submitted to the April Council meeting. A further meeting was held on 13th June where it considered a progress report, which was submitted to the June Council Meeting. The latest meeting of the Executive was held on the 5th September.
- 2.4** The BVIP will be reported to Council on a quarterly basis and the I&EE will meet quarterly some 2 or 3 weeks before the relevant Council meeting.

3. Main Issues

- 3.1** The latest version of the BVIP is shown as Appendix 1. Actions have been entered into the Covalent system and milestones have been developed to provide evidence of delivery. Actions are also part of Departmental Service Plans and link with objectives developed in the Corporate Plan.
- 3.2** Trade Union representatives have now attended a number of Group meetings
- 3.3** Progress under each of the eleven immediate (IP) priorities and three medium-term (MP) priorities as identified by Audit Scotland is shown below:

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

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

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

A report on budget implications for the next two years was submitted to Council in August. Work to produce a strategic financial plan for the Council has commenced –albeit somewhat behind schedule.

The annual guidance to departments on priority-led budgeting has been issued.

The Improvement Service is now taking a lead in the overall approach to workforce planning for all Local Authorities in Scotland and an initial seminar has been held.

Tenders for a new HR system have been received from possible suppliers. The Project Team and Board are continuing to review the tenders. In the interim, the in-house system will be used to manage HR data and the existing payroll system will continue to operate

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

Work has concentrated on developing the role of the A&PRC in scrutinising SPI performance. Each report to the A&PRC reminds Members of their responsibility to request any further information on poorly performing indicators. The A&PRC now has a revised remit and new lay members. Further options for decision-making scrutiny are being reviewed as part of the work on member-officer relationships.

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

Organisational Culture

Four strategic priorities have been identified to facilitate improvement in meeting the principles of best value. These are (a) strategic leadership, (b) organisation culture (c) corporate capacity and (d) community engagement and consultation. For each of these priorities there has been a mapping exercise undertaken to link these to the improvement plan and specific recommendations of the best value team. This mapping exercise has identified the key issues and

challenges facing the Council in relation to these matters and the specific actions that require to be taken to address these.

Project leaders have been identified and are developing a detailed project plan (beyond that which currently exists) to facilitate a discussion in relation to linkages between projects, critical dates and barriers to delivery where these exist. It is likely that the outcomes of this discussion may result in some adjustments to project plan and an identification of where additional resources may be necessary to achieve goals. The overall aim is to ensure that the linkages between projects and their dependencies are identified at an early stage to ensure that the projects being progressed are delivered in a cohesive manner.

Work is progressing on exploring the issue of culture across the organisation and promoting cultural change. The “culture web” identifies 6 inter-related elements that make a model of the work environment. By analysing the factors in each it will be possible to see the bigger picture of culture within the organisation; what is working and what is not and what needs to change. The broad aims of this will be to gain evidence of what elements are influencing the culture within West Dunbartonshire Council, assess the impact this has on what staff believe about the organisation and to provide an opportunity to challenge perception and test aptitude for change.

A framework against which we could role out this model through highly participative facilitated forums involving staff at all levels across the organisation is being developed.

Dignity at Work

Consultation continues on the revised Dignity at Work policy and a Council report will be prepared by December. Manager training is being planned.

Internal Communications Strategy

Consultation on the draft strategy and action plan is taking place and implementation planning continues.

Public Services Improvement Framework (PSIF)

All services have completed a customised mini Service Performance Assessment (SPA) questionnaire based on the Public Services Improvement Framework (PSIF) to evaluate their performance and identify targeted areas requiring improvement. The SPA was designed to take an initial broad look at how we do things; and broadly examine if services have the basics in place to deliver best value. Services which completed the SPA also participated in PSIF Challenge and Validation Meetings, which presented an element of challenge to the process. The agenda for meetings involved an evaluation of self-assessments, a review to ensure the service can prove they are competitive and delivering best value and the identification of areas where improvement activity is most required. As a result a short term Improvement Plan was developed for each service, with guidance to

ensure continuous improvement is embedded in strategic and operational planning and performance management processes.

In collaboration with partners from the Improvement Service, Quality Scotland and Investors in People Scotland, five West Dunbartonshire services have successfully participated in the national PSIF pilot- these were Sports Development, Cultural Services, Leisure Service, Welfare Rights and Forward Planning. Preparation for the programme involved two Council Officers participating in an intensive 6 day validated EFQM Assessor Training which led to both being granted the EFQM licence, which is required to facilitate internal PSIF self evaluations. A further twelve senior members of staff from services participating in self evaluations completed a two day PSIF Assessor course delivered by Quality Scotland. All staff involved in self-evaluation participated in a half days introduction to the PSIF delivered by the WDC EFQM Assessors. The pilot involved service teams taking part in a 4-day facilitator led PSIF self evaluation and improvement programme where they compared performance against PSIF and challenged the way of designing and delivering services. Results of the pilots are being analysed and Improvement Plans developed. It is expected that interim results of one pilot will be available by the end of September 2008, with full analysis of the pilot completed by November 2008.

A Continuous Improvement strategy is being prepared which outlines the approach and operational requirements required for full implementation of PSIF across the Council. It is proposed that self-evaluation is phased across the Council over a three-year period, the Corporate Management Team will evaluate the performance of the Council, extended Directorate teams will evaluate the performance of their Departments and Section Heads will evaluate the performance of their services. This hierarchical approach will ensure that all Council functions and services are comparing, challenging and reviewing their performance. A methodology will be designed to ensure members views are incorporated into the process.

Kaizen Blitz

West Dunbartonshire Council, G2 Consultancy and Quality Scotland are working together to pilot the use of Kaizen rapid improvement technique on the processes used to deliver the Sold Property Service. The workshops commenced on 19 August 2008, including staff from the sold property service, legal services and finance. The first two days of the Blitz has involved staff walking the process and developing an 'As Is' process map, which provides a step-by-step account of all activities in the process. The remainder of the time will be used to eliminate waste (referred to as '*muda*') and to develop a new lean process, which will only include those steps which add value. Workshops will be completed by end of September 2008. The results will include an analysis of the cost and time used to deliver the current process and the cost and time which will be saved with the new process, which will form the basis of a case study that can be shared with other Scottish Local Authorities. A walk through presentation of the 'As Is' and new process will be held at the end of October 2008

National Excellence Standard (previously known as Chartermark) and Investor's in People Programmes

PSIF implementation across the Council has provided a corporate approach to continuous improvement and the route to certification of other quality management frameworks like Investors in People, the National Excellence Standard (NES) and ISO 9000:2000 series. Following the PSIF pilot services will concentrate on roll out of PSIF which will provide an assessment of compliance against other quality standards. However, services that have already certification against NES and IIP and are preparing for external review have been provided with advice and guidance to ensure they retain certification.

Efficient Government

The 2007/08 efficiency statement was signed off and submitted to Cosla on the 21 August 2008. Cosla is now consolidating the statements received from all 32 Councils into one submission to the Scottish Government which will confirm that Local Government has in 2007/2008 more than achieved the level of savings required within the financial settlement for that year. The statement summarises that West Dunbartonshire Council was successful in achieving £4.4m of cashable savings during 2007/08. Although many of these savings were planned within the corporate budget process, the actions detailed within the report made a major contribution towards allowing the Council to absorb a number of the significant budget pressures that arose during the year. A full report on both the statement together with the national overview position will be presented to the Corporate and Efficient Governance Committee on 30 October 2008 and thereafter a copy of the Council's full statement will be published on the Council's website. Following the submission of the efficiency statement work is underway to establish a number of efficiency measures (with targets) that can be calculated during the year, recorded within the Covalent system and reported to Council via the quarterly performance returns.

Monthly updates on additional departmental savings in 2008/09 Budget on are being provided to Council. The last update was provided on the 27 August when information was provided on a number of short to medium term opportunities that were identified by the CMT at a facilitated session and that are currently being investigated.

Progress on the five workstreams of Efficient Government is noted below:

- Customer First

A group has been re established to monitor progress within the Customer First agenda together with the identification and prioritisation of further development areas. The initial agenda will include agreement of the draft group remit, management of the corporate complaints process and opportunities identified during the diagnostic cross-cutting workshop on customer engagement

- Procurement

The e-procurement project commenced on 2 June and comprises a team of three officers with support from the Scottish Government and Capgemini consultants. This project was formally launched on the 30 July by the Minister for Finance and Sustainable Growth. The event was well supported and attended by a number of members of the local business community.

Agreement has been reached on specific commodities and departments, for targeting during phase 1 of the project and actions are on track to achieve the provisional go live date for this phase of the project of 25 September.

A draft corporate procurement plan has been drawn up identifying a number of areas of work for 2008/09. This plan will cover efficiency savings, assistance with tenders and representing the Council's interests in category A and category B contracts being developed by Scotland Excel and Procurement Scotland

- Asset Management

The Asset Strategy Group (ASG) established in November 2007 provides strategic direction and is responsible for the preparation of the corporate strategy and plan documents. The ASG reports directly to the Corporate Management Team.

Consultants prepared an asset management plan for the Council's housing stock, which informed the Council's draft standard delivery plan, which is currently at public consultation stage. The consultation results will be reported to Council in October.

Condition surveys, which include repair and replacement costs over five years, of the Council's four principal office and administration buildings have been completed. Data in relation to occupancy levels and utility services are now being collated to inform options for the future use of each building.

A Working Group comprising Elected Members, Senior Officers and parent representatives has been established to lead a major consultation process on the next phase of the regeneration of the schools' estate. An initial informal consultation meeting was held on 28 August with parent, staff and church representatives from Faifley, Bellsmyre and Haldane/Jamestown to explore the possibility of co-locating denominational and non-denominational primary schools in these areas. The Working Group will analyse the results of this consultation and decide on the next steps in the consultation process.

Feasibility studies are in progress for all Care Homes to consider the possibility of adapting them to meet or come closer to the national care standards. The result of this work will be incorporated into an option appraisal regarding the future provision of residential care for older people.

- Shared Services and the Diagnostic Project

A first draft of an overarching strategy for shared services has developed for discussion with the CMT.

Following the data gathering phase of the Diagnostic Project, the 'Gap Analysis' and prioritisation process has now been substantially completed. Data has been collected at the interview stage and has been evaluated. Service specific feedback sessions have been held with management teams across all Council departments and a series of eight cross-cutting workshops have been held which were attended by representatives from all Council departments. From each of the service feedback sessions and the workshops, opportunities have been identified and prioritised on the basis of level of benefit and ease of implementation. Outline business cases are being prepared for the main opportunities (12-14) to allow them to be taken forward with many of the others being passed to the relevant departmental management team for consideration. The emerging opportunities will include Customer Engagement, Workforce Scheduling, Workforce Planning, Property, Procurement and Streamlining the IT estate

- Absence Management

Corporate HR will be working closely with the new Occupational Health Provider on the implementation of the new service commencing 1st October 2008. Guidelines for managers will be issued shortly outlining the new service and Awareness Workshops will be organised.

Following a report to the Chief Executive the attendance pilot is about to be launched. A working group has been set up and an action plan created which has key priorities such as delivering management development training, improving communication, reviewing existing processes/procedures.

A working group will be set up to review the Maximising Attendance policy and a review of the training will be done to offer more flexible training for managers.

A Steering Group has been established to take forward priorities and actions outlined in a 3-year action plan to tackle stress in the workplace. Interest in this project has been considerable, with over 40 members of staff from all departments and from all levels within the Council volunteering to participate. This has allowed the Steering Group to establish 11 different sub-groups, each with a specific focus.

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

The recruitment of key posts has been completed and the emphasis

will now move to ensuring that the revised management structure and roles are effective and embed further through mechanisms such as individual performance management, personal development planning and a structured leadership development programme.

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

An initial induction programme including key areas such as PSIF, planning, scrutiny and performance management has been completed. Our involvement in the continuing professional development (CPD) framework pilot commenced in September with a presentation by the Improvement Service at the Council meeting.

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

The Single Outcome Agreement for 2008-09 was submitted to Council in June and has been signed off by the Scottish Government. Plans are being formulated to report on the indicators for 2007/08 and draft the next version of the SOA.

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

The monitoring of action plans for poorly performing service areas is being achieved through implementing and embedding of the new Covalent system. The reporting of SPIs and their improvement action plans to Committees is becoming more embedded as the data is entered and refined in Covalent

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

A short-life sub-group have completed a first draft of a revised Performance Management Framework. This work built on the work commenced by K3 consultants last year. A member consultation exercise is being planned.

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

A member of the Accountancy team is reviewing best practice and provide guidance in developing our approach to activity-based costing. A report on our corporate approach to competitiveness was considered by the CMT on the 2 September – a senior officer from HEED is to lead on further developing our approach and a report is being prepared for Corporate & Efficient Government Committee.

To ensure that Council services are competitive, benchmarking will also be used to establish the services position in the market, determine if the service has the ability to provide services of the required quality at a price people are willing to pay and compare performance with other local authorities. Benchmarking will also compare performance against best practice local authorities and the private sector to gain a different perspective of service design and delivery and focus on the comparison of indicators, which measure both efficiency (*costs versus outcomes achieved*) and effectiveness (*levels of customer satisfaction*). Performance against the Public Service Improvement framework scores will also be compared.

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

The development and implementation of risk management throughout the council is also being achieved using the Covalent system. Strategic and Departmental Risk registers have been input to the system. The Risk Management Working Group are progressing the updating of these registers and integrating these with corporate, departmental and operational plans.

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

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

MP2: Implement a leadership and management development programme

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

MP3: Review community engagement activity for efficiency and effectiveness.

Consultation on the Community Engagement Strategy has been completed and the Strategy has been adjusted to take account of the findings. The Consultation Strategy has been revised accordingly. Reports for both the Community Engagement Strategy and the Consultation Strategy will be submitted to Council via the September meeting of the CPC.

A scoping workshop has taken place to provide information towards developing a programme of training. The workshop will be followed up with sessions on assessing organisational capabilities with a wider number of employees.

4. Personnel Issues

4.1 There are no personnel issues at this stage.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 A budget of £108,500 has been set up for 2008/09 for items specific to the BV Improvement Plan. £65,000 has been committed to date.

6. Risk assessment

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

7. Conclusions

7.1 The 5 workstreams are meeting regularly and detailed action plans and milestones have been developed to improve scrutiny.

8. Recommendations

8.1 That the Members of the Council review and comment on the progress of the Best Value Improvement Plan

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Date: 18 September 2008

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Appendix 1: Best Value Improvement Plan – Progress Report

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

Wards Affected: All Wards