

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Chief Executive

Council : 27 October 2010

Subject: Roles and Working Relationships

1. Purpose

1.1 To advise Members of the Audit Scotland report on Roles and Working Relationships: are you getting it right? This report, at Appendix 1 is the first in a new 'how councils work' series of reports.

2. Background

2.1 The purpose of this new series of reports is to stimulate change and improve performance. Audit Scotland have select topics based on the recurring themes and issues from the Best Value audit work, the work of local auditors and their annual overview report. It is mainly drawn on their existing audit work but supplemented with new audit work and other information.

3. Main Issues

3.1 The report looked at how well councillors and officers work together in local government and in particular:-

- How well councillors and officers understand their respective roles and responsibilities
- How roles, responsibilities and relationships between councillors and officers contribute to achieving best value (improving services, better outcomes for local people and value for money)
- Areas of improvement for councils to achieve better practise and performance.

3.2 Audit Scotland have drawn on the Best Value audit work in all 32 councils and other published audit reports. They have reviewed various council documents and have spoken to council officers and representatives from relevant national organisations. They have also interviewed a sample of 60 councillors from across six councils of varying size, geography (urban/rural) and political control. Although no councils are named, some scenarios will be familiar to members and officers of WDC.

3.3 The report highlights areas that work well and where improvement may be required. Audit Scotland expects it to stimulate discussion among councillors and officers that will lead to change and improvement.

3.4 The principles of good leadership and governance remain the same for all councils, regardless of size, geography and political control. The report aims to support all councils by signposting readers to sources of information and guidance, and by providing illustrative examples from their Best Value audits, including the recent BV2 pathfinder audits. They have also included tools and checklists that councillors and officers may find helpful (Appendices 1-4 of the report).

4. People Implications

4.1 There are no people implications.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 There are no financial implications.

6. Risk Analysis

6.1 The roles and working relationship between officers and members has been highlighted as a specific risk in WDC's Assurance & Improvement Plan and Best Value reports. There are significant risks to the Council in not dealing with and resolving these issues.

7. Equalities Impact

7.1 No significant issues are identified at this stage regarding potential equality impact of this report.

8. Conclusions and Recommendations

8.1 It is recommended that Members consider the contents of Part 2 of the report: Key Points for Action and the tool for checking progress before the Members' Business day on 17 November 2010 where completion of Appendix 2 of the Audit Scotland report will be the purpose of the Development Session.

8.2 It is recommended that the Strategic Leadership Workstream consider this report and complete Appendix 3 of the report.

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Date: 5 October 2010

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Appendices: Audit Scotland Report : Roles and working relationships

Background Papers: None

Wards Affected: All