

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by Chief Executive

Council Meeting: 16 December 2009

Subject: Best Value Improvement Plan

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report presents the new Best Value Improvement Plan (BVIP) for approval by Council.

2. Background

- 2.1 Following a report in August on the conclusions of the BV Audit the Council agreed on the 30th September to the establishment of 4 new workstreams to progress the key priorities emerging from the latest BV Audit. In addition a refreshed Improvement & Efficiency Executive Working Group (I&EE) was set-up. Progress in developing these processes was reported to Council in October. The new workstreams have now had a number of meetings where they have refined their remits, established membership and set up new action plans – which are now presented here.
- 2.2 In addition there has been some further discussion about the nature of the external support that the Accounts Commission have recommended that we engage and also on Elected Member involvement in the four workstreams.

3. Main Issues

3.1 Reports and action plans from the Best Value Workstreams

The reports from the 4 workstreams are presented in Sections 3.2 to 3.5 and each workstream has prepared a detailed action plan which has been input to the Covalent performance management system. A summary version of the combined Action Plan is shown as Appendix 1.

These workstream action plans mainly focus on the period until the end of 2009/10. Action plans will be reviewed and updated for 2010/11 as part of the work ongoing to develop the 2010/11 Departmental Service Plans – of which these actions will be a part.

3.2 Strategic Leadership

- 3.2.1 This workstream is led by the Chief Executive and includes the CMT and all Heads of Service. It has had three meetings to date. The major focus

for this group is the development and delivery of the 8 strategic priorities for 2009/10, confirmed by Council in June 2009. These are:

- Financial / Budget Planning,
- Provide school resources fit for purpose in the 21st century
- Models of integration with NHS & CHP
- Meeting the Scottish Housing Quality Standard by 2015 / Stock Transfer
- Waste Management Targets
- Managing resources / assets
- Clyde Valley CPP – Shared Service Developments and NSS Diagnostics – Shared Service Developments
- Adult care provision

More detailed progress reports on these priorities are presented to appropriate service Committees on a regular basis and a combined summary will be included in a future report on the BVIP to Council.

3.2.2 The development of this approach will allow the Council to address the wider issues which were identified in the Best Value Audit follow up report such as:

- Improving decision making and scrutiny, including the continued implementation of the action plan for Strategic Leadership & Decision Making and improving the scrutiny process for poorly performing services
- Improving relations with, and between, members
- Improving financial planning and the continued development of linkages with the strategic finance working group
- Supporting these developments through the rollout and implementation of the Public Sector Improvement Framework (PSIF) in selected service areas and agreeing and implementing a plan for strategic PSIF reviews
- Overseeing the organisation and use of external support

3.2.3 Specific actions have been developed to address these issues – these have been currently organised under the headings of:

- develop strategic leadership by the CMT
- Improving decision making for the strategic priority areas and scrutiny of organisational performance
- Lead continuous improvement through self assessment
- Develop a long term financial planning framework

3.2.4 Performance indicators for Strategic Leadership are under development. While a number of indicators exist, many focus on issues such as 'reports to Council' or 'numbers of activities carried out'. While these measures have a role to play, we also need to address the 'so what?'

question. This will mean providing indicators which assess the outcomes of Strategic Leadership activity. This will be a next major focus for the group

3.3 Competitiveness

- 3.3.1** The Group has been established – and has had three meetings to date. All departments are represented as well as the Trade Unions.
- 3.3.2** A ‘Competitiveness Framework’ document has been drafted and has been considered by the CMT and the I&EE. It will now be submitted to the Corporate & Efficient Governance Committee in January. The main reason for such a document is to set-out a methodology, list some key policy statements and outline the process for prioritisation and assessment.
- 3.3.3** A significant amount of work has been undertaken to prioritise service reviews. It is important that scarce analytical resources are focussed on services where competitiveness needs to be most demonstrated. The four main Departments have each identified 5 priority services – these are not ‘targets’ for possible out-sourcing but a short-list for initial detailed indicator development, assessment and benchmarking – prior to option appraisal. The priority services were initially identified in March 2009 but there have been some subsequent modifications from Educational and Corporate Services Departments. The list of priority services has since increased with addition of one service area from Chief Executives Department. Initial ‘position statements’ have been prepared and fuller competitiveness and benchmarking progress reports on these services will be presented to the four main service committees in May 2010. The Competitiveness Group will ‘peer’ review the results prior to submission.
- 3.3.4** Updated benchmarking guidance for managers has been developed and is due to be ‘launched’ at a future Senior Managers Network along with an overview of the work of the Group. A series of departmental meetings is being set-up to identify specific future training requirements for managers.
- 3.3.5** Detailed work has commenced on identifying and verifying key cost and efficiency indicators for the priority service areas. Accountancy staff throughout the Council are currently being involved in identifying and developing appropriate cost-based indicators and ensuring that these are robust. These will be entered into the Covalent system and appropriate benchmarking activities will be identified. Benchmark data from external databases has commenced import into Covalent.
- 3.3.6** KPMG issued a report on ‘Arrangements to Ensure the Competitiveness of Services’ in early October. A response to their appended action plan was submitted back to KPMG and the Group intend to review progress regularly and report to the I&EE.

3.4 Organisational Culture

- 3.4.1** The Council has already undertaken a significant amount of work in relation to diagnosing its existing culture in order to identify the areas which require to be addressed in building a future culture that positively engages and motivates staff to deliver Best Value and continuous improvement. This workstream is building on the organisational analysis undertaken using the Culture Web diagnostic tool, feedback from the Audit Scotland Best Value Progress Report and the 2009 Employee Survey by setting out a prioritised programme of work to support wide-scale organisational change in behaviour, attitude and belief systems. It recognises that culture change is not a “quick fix” but aims to ensure key activities are aligned with Council strategy to accelerate transformation and encourage success.
- 3.4.2** In taking forward the work commenced by the previous Organisational Development Group the membership of the group has been revised to include managers, with responsibilities clearly linked to organisational development and continuous improvement themes, and trade union representation. Since its initiation the group has undertaken a development session to develop a shared understanding of the group’s role in facilitating organisational culture change, establish its remit within the wider Best Value framework, and develop a strategic programme of work which is targeted to address the issues within culture change.
- 3.4.3** The Best Value progress review in July 2009 highlighted that the Council had an improved understanding of the culture and the barriers to change that this brings. However this was balanced with concerns that progress in addressing cultural issues has been slow, staff morale is low and the culture of the council remains a barrier to moving the council forward. Whilst Audit Scotland recognise there is a strong high level commitment to addressing cultural change the pace of this programme needs to increase and demonstrate a tangible impact across the organisation.
- 3.4.4** The key objectives of the group are to:
- Review diagnostics from the Culture Web Project, Employee Survey and Audit Scotland Reports to identify key priorities for focus in initiating culture change
 - Outline a programme of work which addresses key areas of activity required to facilitate culture change
 - Outline key behaviours and values required to address shift in culture
 - Establish a leadership programme to support cultural change
 - Organise a programme of events through which staff can engage directly with the cultural change programme and understand how their role in this change will support future success
 - Develop a communications strategy which supports culture change, outlines the organisation’s values and promotes alignment to the Council’s strategic direction

- Implement an employee development framework which anchors cultural change and supports service improvement
- Revise and align people management practices with cultural change programme
- Adjust systems processes and procedures to reinforce the required culture
- Develop a tool to impact assess organisational activity to ensure it supports culture change and is aligned with Council strategy
- Review and evaluate progress and adapt as required

3.4.5 The group has established three core development themes as a focus for these objectives and the related action plan:

- Facilitating a comprehensive approach to developing management practice and behaviour
- Supporting development of strategic leadership
- Development of systems and technology to support change

3.4.6 In addition the Corporate Management Team have agreed three immediate priority areas for focused attention by the group which have been incorporated into the planned programme of activity:

- Development of the Senior Manager's Network
- Leadership style
- Personal Development Plans

3.4.7 Many of the issues highlighted within the staff survey results correspond with the outcomes of the organisational culture diagnostics and will be positively influenced by the planned development programme. As such the Group will address the results and recommendations generated by the staff survey and incorporate this within the overall cultural change programme rather than addressing this in isolation.

3.4.8 Cultural change is complex and any shift cannot be expected immediately however it's anticipated the Council would be able to measure some level of transition within six months. Since the core programmes will mainly involve managers from the outset, either through leading change or development initiatives, it is likely the early indications of a cultural shift will be more apparent within these roles and more obvious within mainstream staff over an eighteen month timeline. The group will develop and implement tools to chart progress and assess the impact of change aligned with delivery of the Council's strategy.

3.4.9 Through the diagnostics work completed early in 2009, staff and managers provided feedback which represents a picture of the current culture and a desired future culture. Since culture change focuses on changing perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours, much of the required change is elusive however the action plan aims to facilitate a

positive shift in the direction of culture change focused on the following outcomes:

- Everyone working towards a shared vision and understanding the key priorities linked to the Council's strategic direction
- Clear behaviours and values are communicated and managers set a good example and role model these
- Staff are engaged, consulted, and understand the reasons for change and the progress being made
- Consistent and positive leadership and management practice is promoted and evident through our work practices, systems, and processes

3.5 Community Engagement

3.5.1 The major focus for this group is the delivery of the Community Engagement Strategy action plan and extending the work to reflect the importance of a Partnership approach to Community Engagement. Three meetings have been held, Trade Union representation has been secured and a mechanism for partner involvement has been established.

3.5.2 Community input to the Community & Consultation Strategy and the partnership approach to Community Engagement has been developed through a number of structures, including the Community Participation Committee, (CPC), the Community Planning Partnership (CPP) Strategic Board, the Tenant Participation Liaison Group, and other Service User Groups. Progress will be discussed and reported through these structures on a regular basis.

3.5.3 Activity to develop Community Engagement has been categorised as follows:

- Promoting Community Engagement opportunities (which includes ensuring that there is community involvement at a range of levels)
- Improving the effectiveness of Community Engagement & Consultation activity, (which includes ensuring that staff have the appropriate skills and training)
- Promoting a partnership approach to Community Engagement, (which includes joint planning, training and resourcing)
- Improving support for the community and voluntary sector, (which includes a more effective approach to 'capacity building' for community representatives)
- Improving public information provision, (which includes improving the content of information, ensuring that information is appropriately targeted and that it meets the needs of all stakeholders).

3.5.4 The action plan focuses on key strategic elements of the corporate approach and includes items from departmental service plans which contribute to this. It is not a full list of all community engagement activity which is undertaken across the Council and with partners. This latter work will continue to be monitored through the service planning processes as at present.

3.5.5 Performance indicators are under development. While a number of indicators exist, these often focus on issues such as ‘numbers of people involved’ or ‘numbers of activities carried out’. While these measures have a role to play, others will need to address the ‘so what?’ question and therefore assess the outcomes of Community Engagement activity.

3.6 External Support

External support falls into a number of categories. These include:

- Support for the I&EE
- Support for the Chief Executive and CMT
- Support for individual elected members and party groupings

3.6.1 Support for the I&EE

Colin Mair of the Improvement Service has agreed to attend meetings of the I&EE to offer advice on the general direction being taken and to suggest examples of good practice where these might be relevant. The Improvement Service has a particular role to play in advising on whether the Council’s proposed actions will address the concerns which have been raised in the Audit follow up report. They have previously indicated that the revised workstream approach, combined with a refreshed role for the I&EE, would seem to set the right direction; however their direct involvement in discussions will further support this process. In this context, they may also have a particular role to play in advising the Strategic Leadership Group. Colin Mair attended the I&EE meeting on the 8th December – and records will be maintained of input by the Improvement Service.

3.6.2 Support for the Chief Executive and CMT

The Chief Executive and members of the CMT have identified options for ‘one to one’ professional support, and have made contact with counterparts in other local authorities. It is envisaged that these will specifically provide support for the corporate / strategic role which is the responsibility of the Chief Executive and Executive Directors. Arrangements have been established and meetings are taking place – and a full evidence trail of these meetings will be kept for future audit. In addition, the Strategic Leadership workstream provides the opportunity for the CMT to meet with Heads of Service, and again focuses on the corporate and strategic role. This internal support will provide back up for the CMT, and will allow them to concentrate more on the key, high level issues.

3.6.3 Support for Elected Members

Three types of Elected Member support are suggested for consideration and it is proposed that all three types are deployed here.

- Continuation of existing network support such as regional meetings of political group leaders, Cosla leaders meetings. These structures provide significant scope for sharing of common

issues and learning best practice. It is proposed that these be evidenced for future audit purposes

- Development by the Improvement Service of a generic Elected Member support programme – piloted by West Dunbartonshire – and eventually rolled out to other Councils. Sessions should be focussed and directly practical and could cover topics such as financial planning, corporate governance, performance management, prioritisation (of outcomes and delivery options), scrutiny and governing through partnership. This would thus be a development and ‘fast-tracking’ of the existing CPD framework (Continuing Professional Development) which is already being piloted with the Improvement Service. This would involve extending the existing collaborative work with the Council’s Organisational Development team (who have started developing an Activity/Learning programme).
- Setting up of a local Elected Member discussion forum group to meet every six months or so chaired by Cosla to act as a critical friend.

3.7 Elected Member Involvement in Workstreams

The four new BVIP workstreams currently involve a range of Council officers, and invitations have been extended to TU representatives. In the case of the Community Engagement workstream, additional arrangements are also in place to involve Community Planning partners. Elected members on the I&EE had suggested that they may also have a role to play in the workstreams in addition to the role as members of the I&EE itself. It was agreed that the Chief Executive would report back on this proposal.

3.7.1 It has been agreed previously that it is good practice to involve elected members at early stages of strategic planning. While members have a very clear role to play at the I&EE, both to set the overall strategic direction of the BVIP and review progress, there could be merit in Elected Members developing closer relationships with the workstreams.

3.7.2 Following discussion at the I&EE it was proposed that this might be organised most effectively by an elected member(s) taking on a flexible ‘link’ role of for each of the four workstreams. This would allow the workstream lead officers to work closely with a nominated elected member(s) and would ensure that these members were fully briefed and had the opportunity to input to the more detailed planning of the relevant activities. Nevertheless, the wider scrutiny role for Elected Members is also seen as critical. It is not envisaged that the structure proposed would inhibit this.

4. Personnel Issues

4.1 There are no personnel issues.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 There is currently a budget of £105,000 set-aside for funding the BV Improvement plan. Spend to date is as follows:

PSIF	
Quality Scotland Support/fees	£9,200
Kaizen support (from 08/09)	£600
Performance Management	
Golden Thread study (from 08/09)	£1,200
Competitiveness	
APSE Benchmarking data transfer to Covalent	£2,500
Organisational Culture	
Employee survey	£10,800
Senior Managers Network	£5,400
Culture Web	£4,700
Workforce Planning	£6,000
Star Awards	£3,000
TOTAL	£43,400

Future plans include for further expenditure include:

- A further £2,000 for benchmarking data transfer
- The 09/10 costs (from December-March) incurred in the initial setting-up of the new Quality Manager post in Chief Executives Department (approx £22,000). This post will form part of the main Departmental budget in the future
- External scrutiny training for Elected Members (£350 to date)
- Management Development – a total of £20,000. The latest phase commenced in November but is not yet invoiced
- Senior Managers Network – a further £15,000 is anticipated (total of £20k)
- Star Awards – a further £2,000 not yet invoiced.

6. Risk Analysis

6.1 Strategic Risk SR012 (Poor reports from external sources) currently has a score of 9 (significant impact, very high likely likelihood of occurring). The target was to reduce the overall score to 4 by 30/9/09. The agreement by the Council of the new BVIP is a key component of meeting this risk reduction target.

7. Conclusions & Recommendations

7.1 A new Best Value Improvement plan has been produced by the four BV Workstreams

7.2 Members of the Council are asked to review and comment on

- External support arrangements for officers and Members
- elected member linkages to the workstream groups, and
- the draft action plans.

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Date: 10 December 2009

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Appendix 1: Best Value Improvement Plan

Background Papers: Report to Council on Best Value Audit Report August 2009

Report to Council on Developing the new BV Improvement Plan September 2009

Report to Council on Developing the new BV Improvement Plan October 2009

Wards Affected: All