

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by Chief Executive

Council: 26 May 2010

Subject: BV Improvement Plan 2010/11

1 Purpose of Report

1.1 This report presents the Best Value Improvement Plan (BVIP) for 2010/11. At the Improvement and Efficiency Executive on 13 April 2010 members requested that the BVIP be reviewed and refined to facilitate more effective scrutiny and increase the pace of change. This is outlined more fully at section 3.1.3. The plan has therefore been streamlined to focus attention on the key actions which will deliver strategic improvement. Milestones will be developed at the June Business Day for members.

2 Background

2.1 On 30 September 2009, Council agreed the establishment of 4 new workstreams to progress the key priorities emerging from the latest BV Audit¹. Progress on developing the Plan has been overseen by the Improvement & Efficiency Executive Working Group (I&EE) at its monthly meetings. Progress in developing the plan was reported to Council² in October 2009 with the finalised Plan being agreed by Council³ in December 2009. Progress reports have been considered on a monthly basis by the I&EE and Council during January⁴, February⁵ and March 2010⁶.

2.2 Audit Scotland produced a progress report which it submitted to the Accounts Commission on 18 February 2010. This was the subject of a separate paper submitted to Council on 24 March⁷. This was followed by a meeting with the Accounts Commission on 15 April which was attended by the Chief Executive and Councillors, Agnew, Robertson, R. McColl and McBride.

3 Main Issues

Reports from the Four Best Value Workstreams

3.1 Strategic Leadership

3.1.1 At the group's most recent meeting on the 20 April 2010, the Chief Executive led a robust, free and frank discussion on how the improvement agenda is being taken forward. There was significant discussion around the remits and formats of the Strategic Leadership group itself, the BVIP, the Improvement and Efficiency Executive and the Business Days.

3.1.2 The following actions were agreed:

- The Chief Executive to provide details of Accounts Commission letter and findings for 2009 and 2010, the remit of the Strategic Leadership group and the agenda for the 16 June 2010 Business Day
- All members of the group to provide comment on BVIP actions for 2010/11 and consider whether they will deliver the success required
- Directors to consult wider Management Teams about BVIP and feedback results to the Manager of Quality
- All members of the group to comment on what the strategic priorities should be in 2010/11 and feedback results to the Manager of Quality
- All members of the group to identify areas of best practice from their own Departments which could be implemented across the Council
- Ideas for discussion with members at the June 2010 Business Day were also requested to be submitted to the Manager of Quality
- A report on all responses to be available for consideration at the next meeting
- The suggestion of a Challenge Panel to be pursued

3.1.3 Role of Improvement and Efficiency Executive

At the meeting of the Improvement and Efficiency Executive on 13 April 2010 the Working Group agreed to note the following which was approved at the Meeting of West Dunbartonshire Council on 24 March 2010:-

This Council recognises the positive comments received within the Best Value Progress Update report on the good levels of performance across a wide range of services, including education and social work.

Council also recognises that whilst the Best Value Improvement Plan addresses the Accounts Commission findings there are still serious concerns about the Council's pace of change and its ability to demonstrate progress.

It further recognises that the Accounts Commission welcomes the Council's arrangements for external support for both elected members and senior officers and that they recommend that Council takes urgent steps to make the most effective use of this support.

Council agrees that the Best Value Improvement Plan is reviewed as a matter of urgency to ensure that its priority and focus delivers the increased pace of change to meet the Accounts Commission's findings.

It also agrees that the Improvement and Efficiency Executive Working Group considers a change to the Working Group format to encourage a more pro-active participation of all elected members in the drive for improvement, whilst recognising its scrutiny role.

The Improvement and Efficiency Executive Working Group should address these issues at its next meeting on 13 April 2010, and this meeting should be open to all elected members to ensure the widest range of ideas and views.

Furthermore, the Council seeks clarification from the Accounts Commission and Audit Scotland on the comments regarding member officer relationships. This can be explored during the Council's follow up meeting with the Accounts Commission on 15 April 2010.

After discussion and having heard the Chief Executive in further explanation and in answer to Members' questions, the Working Group also agreed:-

- (1) to note that the up-to-date Best Value Improvement Plan would be submitted to the Council meeting in May for consideration; and
- (2) to note the importance of ensuring that early engagement took place with Members in terms of driving forward the Best Value and Competitiveness Framework agenda;
- (3) that the Working Group should be opened up to all Members to attend, but that it retain a core membership;
- (4) to note that it was essential that Members scrutinised the key issues involved at meetings of the Working Group and that it was suggested that Members particularly review the content of the Best Value Improvement Plan as a matter of urgency in order to ensure it best fitted the Council's improving performance priorities and focused on increasing delivery of the pace of change in order to address the Audit Commission's findings;
- (5) to review the frequency of meetings of the Working Group in order that it achieved its purpose and was primarily focused on encouraging a pro-active participation from all elected members in delivering the change necessary in terms of improvement, whilst taking cognisance of its scrutiny role; and
- (6) to note that Council had now agreed a revised approach to strategic decision making – which included the development of 'Business Days'. A programme for 6 Business Days in 2010/11 was being developed, however Council had agreed that the first Business Day on 14 April 2010 should focus on a review of the current strategic priorities, and it would also offer an opportunity to consider the options for marketing West Dunbartonshire as a place to live, work and visit. (The note of the meeting held on 13 April is attached to this report - Appendix 1).

3.2 Competitiveness

3.2.1 Progress to date

The Competitiveness Workstream Group has now met on 7 occasions with all departments being represented. Work undertaken thus far includes the production of the competitiveness framework document, selection of services being scrutinised, position statements on benchmarking status to establish clear data for future action plans and the preparation of draft reports to all Service Committees for the May 2010 cycle following a peer review carried out at Meeting No. 6 of the group on 24 March 2010.

3.2.2 Reporting timetable to Service Committees (May cycle)

Service Committees will receive reports outlining status as at the end of 2009/2010, together with action plans going forward for 2010/2011 demonstrating how the 21 chosen service areas will/have demonstrated competitiveness as appropriate.

3.2.3 Action planning arising from benchmarking position statements and peer review

As reported at the I&EE meeting on 9 March 2010, it is evident that there exists a varying degree of benchmarking expertise and service areas also vary considerably in relation to opportunities for benchmarking meaning that services will need to establish their own benchmarking arrangements with partners where relevant. Whilst baseline information has now been gathered to determine opportunities for benchmarking, the pace of progress will vary and be dependent on data available or becoming available. Action plans will be included in the reports to the May Committee cycle outlining plans to address where the gaps outlined above are to be tackled.

3.2.4 Future Areas of work

New actions and milestones will be devised for progress and monitoring activity during 2010/2011 for all 21 service areas. It is still envisaged that each of the 21 Service Managers undertakes a half-day session using the Benchmarking Learning Outcome document and that some work be undertaken on options appraisal which naturally follows on from benchmarking activity outcomes. The group still intends to undertake the specific role of project management for the remainder of 2009/2010 and throughout 2010/2011 where applicable (and beyond for all other services to be considered as appropriate). As noted in previous reports to I&EE, it is hoped that this process will lead to competitiveness becoming embedded in all service delivery.

3.3 Organisational Culture

Leadership Development Programme

3.3.1 The Council's leadership development programme was officially launched on 1 April. The first phase of the 'Progressive Leadership Programme' commenced on 19 April and will be delivered in partnership with a small external consultancy LeadCentric, who specialise in developing leadership programmes for the public and private sectors. The programme will involve approximately 50 senior managers from the Corporate Management Team to Service

Manager level in a structured development programme over the next 9-12 months.

3.3.2 The managers will undertake development in key leadership skills including areas such as strategic planning, managing change as leaders, political awareness, and coaching for performance, and will be delivered through a combination of workshops, coaching and mentoring, and remote learning. It is planned that the programme will gain accreditation through a leading University or College.

Staff 'Pulse' Survey

3.3.3 The first 'pulse survey' will be issued during April. A pulse survey is a short and targeted survey which is used to monitor the internal health and climate of the organisation and support managers in tracking trends in the way staff view the organisation. The April questionnaire will specifically aim to explore issues around staff morale particularly during the current organisational change programme affecting all departments.

3.3.4 The survey will contain approximately 10 targeted questions and will be completed either on-line or via postal return. The questionnaire will be issued to a random selection of staff balanced across all directorates, locations, and roles to ensure a response which will be more representative of the total workforce.

3.4 Community Engagement

3.4.1 In relation to Partnership Link Officers, two recent developments have been:

- A Partner Consultation Calendar for WDC website (partners can link to this from their websites) which is ready for launch; and
- The West Dunbartonshire Citizens' Panel survey plan for 10-11 (with input from Thematic Groups).

3.4.2 The Community Planning Partnership (CPP) community engagement tender process is now at its final stages. A recommendation to award this tender will go to the Council's Tendering Committee on 26 May 2010. The date of the tendering committee was put back slightly to allow for a period of verification and validation. This process confirmed the original scoring of the panel established to assess the tenders. Despite the slight delay in bringing a recommendation to committee, the planned start date to begin the work in early to mid June has not changed.

3.4.3 In relation to the Petitions Committee proposal, the I&EE recommended that this is referred to the Community Participation Committee for their consideration. A report on this matter has been prepared for the Community Participation Committee⁸ on 14 April in order to gain community feedback on options.

3.5 External support

In order to take forward the arrangements for the provision of external support for:

- Peer Support;
- Development Sessions for Elected Members;
- 'Critical Friend' Support; and
- Strategic Leadership

a report was submitted to the Improvement and Efficiency Executive on 13 April 2010 by the Improvement Service, providing an update on developments since the December 2009 meeting of the Executive and to agree timescales for future work.

Colin Mair of the Improvement Service and relevant officers addressed the meeting and the Working Group then agreed:-

- (1) to note the context of the Accounts Commission's recent update report on the Council and its emphasis on continuing concern about 'member/officer' relations and 'strategic leadership' by elected members;
- (2) to note that the Accounts Commission did, however, endorse the proposals agreed at the December 2009 meeting of the Executive for formalisation of peer support for the political and executive leadership of the Council; development sessions for elected members led by the Improvement Service and a 'critical friend' arrangement for the Executive chaired by the President of COSLA – these now required to be scheduled in and progressed without any delay;
- (3) to note that the Head of Human Resources & Organisational Development would prepare a briefing note for Members on the training and development issues in supporting elected Members to undertake their roles more effectively and with much more focus; and
- (4) to note that the Chief Executive already had in place arrangements in regard to peer support and continuing professional development.
- (5) that the Improvement Service will arrange for Development Sessions with Elected Members to consider '3 year financial planning' and 'setting corporate priorities'. It is hoped that these sessions take place prior to the summer recess.

4. Best Value Improvement Plan

- 4.1** In order to facilitate the review of the plan as indicated at 1.1, it was necessary to work on the plan outwith Covalent. As the plan at Appendix 2 is therefore a Word document and not one generated by Covalent there are no progress bars or 'traffic light' status indicators. Once the plan is agreed as 'fit for purpose' the actions and milestones will be input to Covalent and the updated plan will be presented to the June Council meeting.

5. People Implications

5.1 There are no people implications.

6. Financial Implications

6.1 For financial year 2009/10, a budget of £108,500 was set aside for funding the BV Improvement plan. As at Period 13, total spend was £84,533. This expenditure can be analysed as follows:

	<u>£</u>
Public Sector Improvement Framework	4,112
Performance Management	1,223
Competitiveness	2,500
Organisational Culture	76,698

TOTAL	£84,533
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7. Risk Analysis

7.1 Strategic Risk SR012 (Poor reports from external sources) currently has a score of 8 (critical impact, likely to occur). The target is to reduce the overall score to 4. Scrutiny by the Council of the new BVIP is a key component of meeting this risk reduction target.

8. Equalities Impact

8.1 No significant issues are identified at this stage regarding potential equality impact of this action plan.

9. Conclusions & Officer's Recommendations

9.1 Members of the Council are asked to review and comment on the new Best Value Improvement Plan for 2010/11.

9.2 Members are asked to review the frequency of Working Group meetings in order that it achieves its purpose. It has been suggested that meetings are held quarterly and that meetings would be open to all Elected Members but it would retain its core membership.

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Chief Executive
Date: 17 May 2010

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Appendix 1: Note of the Meeting of the Improvement and Efficiency Executive 13 April 2010

Appendix 2: Progress of Best Value Improvement Plan

Background Reports

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- 1 [Audit Scotland \(July 2009\): The Audit of Best Value and Community Planning: West Dunbartonshire Council – A Progress Report](#)
 - 2 [West Dunbartonshire Council \(October 2009\). Report to Council on Progress of Developing BV Improvement Plan](#)
 - 3 [West Dunbartonshire Council \(December 2009\). Report to Council on BV Improvement Plan](#)
 - 4 [West Dunbartonshire Council \(January 2010\). Report to Council on BV Improvement Plan](#)
 - 5 [West Dunbartonshire Council \(February 2010\). Report to Council on Best Value Improvement Plan](#)
 - 6 [West Dunbartonshire Council \(March 2010\). Report to Council on Best Value Improvement Plan](#)
 - 7 [Audit Scotland \(February 2010\). The Audit of Best Value and Community Planning: West Dunbartonshire - A Progress Report](#)
 - 8 [Community Participation Committee \(April 2010\). Proposal for a Petitions Committee](#)

Wards Affected: All