

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCILCABINET25 April 2019Report by Chief ExecutiveBEST VALUE ASSURANCE REPORT – ACTION PLAN UPDATE**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. To update Cabinet on delivery of the action plan arising from the Council's Best Value Assurance Report (BVAR), published in November 2017, following an audit of Best Value carried out by Audit Scotland on behalf of the Accounts Commission. Progress against the plan was previously reported to Cabinet in April 2018.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. It is recommended that Cabinet scrutinises and approves the Best Value action plan update as at April 2019 (Annex 1), noting the completion of the actions in the plan.

BACKGROUND

3. Councils' statutory duty to secure best value was introduced under requirements set out in the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 and accompanying statutory guidance. Best Value is defined as '*continuous improvement in the performance of a local authority's functions*'.

4. In 2017 East Renfrewshire was subject to its second Audit of Best Value by Audit Scotland. This covered:

- The Council's vision
- The process and results of self-evaluation
- Financial management
- Financial planning
- Workforce and asset management planning
- Community Engagement
- Plans for achieving transformation, including establishment of East Renfrewshire Culture and Leisure Trust and the development of areas of shared services
- Overall assessment of outcomes/ performance and the reporting of these.

5. East Renfrewshire's Best Value Assurance Report (BVAR) was considered by the Accounts Commission on 12 October 2017 and published thereafter by Audit Scotland on 7 November 2017. Overall the East Renfrewshire BVAR was very positive and provided assurance to residents, communities and the Accounts Commission that the Council is continuing to achieve best value. The report concluded with a set of five recommendations for the Council to take forward as part of its ongoing approach to continuous improvement.

6. The Council considered the BVAR on 13 December 2017 and approved an action plan to address the report's main recommendations. A progress update on the delivery of the action plan was scrutinised and approved by Cabinet on 26 April 2018 where the completion of some actions and good progress made against other longer term areas (e.g. reviewing our approach to service planning and improving reporting on our Transformation Programme performance) were acknowledged.

UPDATE

7. Evidence has been listed against each of BVAR recommendations in Annex 1 to demonstrate how the Council has completed the actions specified in the plan. These include: supporting elected member scrutiny via training and the recruitment of an additional temporary officer to further enhance the work of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee; clarifying our longer term approach to financial planning and demonstrating the integration of our strategic plans. The specific actions against longer term areas such as reviewing service planning, implementing participatory budgeting, progress on City Deal projects and demonstrating the use of option appraisals have also all been progressed and will be taken forward as part of day to day business

EXTERNAL AUDIT

8. Our progress will be checked by the external auditor team in May/June as part of their annual audit process. The auditors have indicated that the Best Value related audit work in 2019/20 will examine the Council's approach to equalities; carrying out options appraisals focusing on the Council's Transformation Programme as well as looking at key performance reports.

FINANCE & EFFICENCY

9. There are no specific additional costs associated with delivery of the action plan, although considerable officer time has been required to deliver the actions.

10. As highlighted in the April 2018 action plan update, the recommendations associated with financial planning have been addressed. The Council also approved in March 2019 its second long term financial plan.

CONSULTATION

11. The outcome of the audit was reported nationally and locally in the press, on our website as well as being disseminated to local community groups across East Renfrewshire. The latest updates to the action plan will also be placed on the Council website.

PARTNERSHIP WORKING

12. There has been very good progress in addressing the recommendations relating to Community Planning in particular taking forward locally Community Choices budgeting and the development of locality plans.

CONCLUSION

13. The Council has shown its ongoing commitment to achieving best value for East Renfrewshire's residents and communities. A robust monitoring process is in place, and the action plan (Annex 1) demonstrates the Council's progress and strong culture of continuous improvement and modernisation. There will be ongoing annual scrutiny of the Council's arrangements for Best Value as part of the yearly external audit process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

14. It is recommended that Cabinet scrutinises and approves the Best Value action plan update as at April 2019 (Annex 1), noting the completion of the actions in the plan.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Financial Planning 2019- 2025, Council, 28 February 2019
- Best Value Assurance Report – Action Plan Update, Cabinet, 26 April 2018
- East Renfrewshire Council – Best Value Assurance Report, Council, 13 December 2017
- Audit of Best Value – A New Approach, Cabinet, 1 September 2016
- Best Value Audit: Report on East Renfrewshire Council, Council, 26 October 2005
- National Audit of Best Value, Cabinet, 23 December 2004.

KEYWORDS

This report gives an update on East Renfrewshire Council's best value action plan. Keywords include: best value; audit; assurance; Audit Scotland; Accounts Commission; performance; risk.

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Best Value Assurance Report Recommendations	What are our proposed actions?	What are our timescales?	Who is leading on this?	2019 Update
<p>1. Councillors should take a more transparent and active role in scrutiny. They should have greater oversight of the transformation of the council.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and deliver a new programme of essential scrutiny skills training for elected members Where appropriate officers to present reports to Cabinet/Committees allowing opportunity for questioning by Members Look at ways to increase officer support for Audit Committee 	<p>Mar 2018</p> <p>Jan 18</p> <p>Jan 2018</p>	<p>Director of Corporate and Community Services (with input from elected members)</p>	<p>Completed at time of last report – April 2018</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More frequent reporting on the Council's transformation programme to allow Councillors more opportunity to scrutinise progress. 	<p>Apr 2018</p>		<p>Completed Separate report on today's agenda gives an update on MAP, including the development of Strategic Programme Reporting. A more structured approach to reporting on the various programmes of change, both within the Council-wide programmes (e.g. MAP and also City Deal and Early Years) and at departmental/HSCP level has been developed. This facilitates reporting key project information at various levels, with a focus on 'Get to Green' (i.e. actions or decisions taken so that project status remains on track). Issues escalate to the appropriate level for action.</p>
<p>2. Adopt a more strategic & coordinated approach to planning & managing corporate resources & transformation programmes, to encompass financial strategies & plans; workforce plans; asset management; procurement; & 3-year budget planning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Financial Plan 2018-2022 will be brought to Council in February 2018 and will ensure that the links between the key corporate plans and strategies are clearer. 	<p>Feb 2018</p>	<p>Corporate M'gmt Team</p>	<p>Completed at time of last report – April 2018</p>

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2. continued	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Co-ordinate our approach to the development of key corporate plans on the use and management of our finances, resources, assets and workforce and incorporate this into our future strategic planning and budgeting arrangements. 	Dec 2018 (for plans for 2019 onwards)	As above	<p>Completed Council considered a report on strategic planning on 31 October 2018. The report outlined the key long and medium term strategies that direct the work of the Council and how they are linked strategically. Link to report here</p> <p>This was followed by the Chief Executive hosting a session with the CMT and Heads of Service on Our Vision for the Future on 27 November 2018 setting out the strategic direction for the Council and demonstrating how our corporate plans are integrated.</p> <p>The Community Planning Partnership Board approved the Community Plan (incorporating Fairer East Ren (our Local Outcome Improvement Plan) at the meeting on 25 June 2018. Link to Plan here. The Outcome Delivery Plan 2018-21 was approved by Cabinet on 24 May 2018. Link to report here The Council workforce plan was considered by CMT in May and approved at Cabinet on 21 June 2018. Link to report here. The workforce plan is shaped by the requirements of the above strategic plans and aligning with Council's long-term Financial Plan, which was approved at Council on 28 February 2019. Link to report here.</p> <p>The next key focus for strategic long-term planning will be Local Development Plan 2 and our 10 year Vision for the Future, an early draft of which will be considered by Council in May 2019, with finalisation taking place when LDP 2 is complete.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review our approach to service planning 	As above		<p>Completed A pilot of the new business focussed approach to service planning was carried out from March to October 2018. Six services, from across Departments and HSCP participated and produced more comprehensive meaningful plans. These plans provided a good foundation and learning on which to further develop the approach and extend to a wider range of services in 2019/20.</p>

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3. The council should identify why its revenue budget is consistently underspent, and introduce more realistic budgeting policies and practices which reflect actual spending levels and patterns more closely.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have carried out a detailed analysis of underspends on expenditure and levels of income recovery and this has already been factored into the 2017/18 and 2018/19 budget setting exercises. 	Aug 2017 and Dec 2017	Head of Accountancy	Completed at time of last report – April 2018
4. The council should continue to enhance its engagement with its communities and partners; progress the City Deal; and work with the CPP to implement the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to progress our programme of community engagement jointly with our communities and partners with oversight by the Community Planning Board and the Performance and Accountability Review (PAR) members 	On-going through Community Planning Board, PAR and locality steering groups. April 2018	Community Planning Partners through the PAR	Completed at time of last report – April 2018

Best Value Assurance Report Recommendations	What are our proposed actions?	What are our timescales?	Who is leading on this?	2019 Update
<p>4. Continued....</p> <p>The council should continue to enhance its engagement with its communities and partners; progress the City Deal; and work with the CPP to implement the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bring forward a report on participatory budgeting to Cabinet with proposals to further develop our approach in line with Scottish Government and CoSLAs' agreed Framework. 	<p>On-going through Community Planning Board, PAR and locality steering groups. April 2018</p>	<p>Community Planning Partners through the PAR</p>	<p>Completed Cabinet considered a report on our approach and progress for Community Choices Budgeting in April 18. Link to report here. The focus has been on growing and developing the PB approach in locality plan areas and piloting mainstream PB opportunities. In March 2018, a successful Better Barrhead PB event was held resulting in £102,000 being allocated to over 32 local groups, decided by a community vote. Local volunteers helped deliver the event and in 18/19 we are further building capacity in East Renfrewshire to deliver PB. In 2018 the parks service worked closely with the local community in Neilston to plan the investment of £80,000 locally, after extensive consultation, the community were provided with 3 options to vote on. Positive feedback was received. A Linking Communities (LC) Steering Group has been formed, with community representation from across the 4 locality plan areas. LC is responsible for running events in four locality plan areas to allocate funds through a PB approach. 3 events took place in March 2019 and resulted in a further £100,000 being invested across all 4 locality areas. An Information and Consultation with elected members and Community Planning partners on Community Choices Mainstreaming will take place on 11 September. The session will draw on the learning from the participatory budgeting events to date, to shape future work in this area.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drive forward our City Deal projects, highlighting the significant economic and community benefits. 	<p>Annual reporting to Cabinet on progress with City Deal projects & benefits. April 2018</p>	<p>Director of Environment</p>	<p>Completed Council report provided update on progress with all City Deal projects. This was considered at Council on 31 October 2018. Link to report here City Deal project updates will be reported to Cabinet on a regular basis with next report scheduled for April 2019.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arrange an elected Member briefing on City Deal projects in the new year. 			<p>Completed An Information and Consultation session for elected members took place 31 October 2018. The session on the local economy and the environment included an update on City Deal projects Further details can be accessed here.</p>

Best Value Assurance Report Recommendations	What are our proposed actions?	What are our timescales?	Who is leading on this?	2019 Update
5. To ensure Best Value, the council should include a wider variety of options appraisals as part of its approach to business transformation and service review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Departmental Change Boards will ensure, where applicable, service redesigns will consider all suitable options for future service delivery as part of the redesign process. 	Ongoing.	Corporate Management Team and PMO	<p>Completed Option appraisal is ongoing as part of service redesigns and the budget and Capital Appraisal processes.</p> <p>Key examples of option appraisals since the BV Audit include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Core Systems Programme (here) Future of leisure provision in the Eastwood area (here) Future primary school provision for Neilston (here) <p>Example as an ongoing part of change programmes includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council Tax & Benefits ICT system provision & billing options

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