
To: Leadership Board

On: 19 June 2019

Report by: Chief Executive

Heading: Best Value Assurance Report – Progress Update on Improvement Plan

1. Summary

- 1.1 On 31st August 2017, the Accounts Commission published the Best Value Assurance Report for Renfrewshire Council. The report provided an updated assessment of the Council and its performance, following on from its last audit in 2006.
- 1.2 Overall the report itself was positive, providing independent assurance to local residents and businesses on the extent to which the Council is achieving best value. At that time, Audit Scotland also provided direction on the key areas which the Council should focus its improvement activities on going forward. The report specifically included 7 recommendations relating to areas such as cross party working, community engagement, partnership working, financial sustainability, workforce planning and governance arrangements. An action plan which set out the Council's proposed actions to progress these recommendations was approved by full Council in September 2017.
- 1.3 This report provides the regular six monthly update on implementation to elected members, with a full update provided for each recommendation and related activity within Appendix 1 to this report.
- 1.4 In the previous update report to Leadership Board on 9 December 2018, it was noted that the recently published Annual Audit Report for 2017/18 prepared by Audit Scotland, found that the Council is making good progress in addressing the recommendations from the 2016/17 Best Value Assurance

Report. The Annual Audit Report also recommended that the Council continues to support elected members to have personal development plans in place, and also opportunities to enhance public performance reporting. Actions to address these suggested additional areas of focus are also included within Appendix 1.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that members note the progress achieved in terms of implementing the best value improvement plan as detailed at appendix 1.
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3. Background

- 3.1. The statutory duty of Best Value was introduced in the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003. The audit of Best Value is a continuous process that forms part of the annual audit of every council. Audit Scotland reviewed the methodology used to audit best value in 2015, and introduced a new approach based on a 5 year programme of engagement and audit, intended to provide greater reassurance to citizens on the extent to which **all** local authorities are achieving best value. Audit Scotland were appointed as the Council's external audit team for this purpose.
- 3.2 Renfrewshire Council was the second of six Councils selected to receive a Best Value Assurance Report in Year 1 as part of the new approach, with the subsequent report published by the Accounts Commission in August 2017. The report included 7 specific recommendations, as set out in Appendix 1 to this report.

4. Progress Update – Improvement Plan

- 4.1 Within the Council, progress in terms of implementing the recommendations is monitored on a regular basis by the Corporate Management Team, with six monthly updates provided to the Leadership Board. Appendix 1 provides a full progress update for each of the related activities being undertaken.
- 4.2 In the previous update report to Board on 9 December 2018, it was noted that the recently published Annual Audit Report for 2017/18 prepared by Audit Scotland found that the Council is making good progress in addressing the recommendations from the Best Value Assurance Report.
- 4.3 The Annual Audit Report 2017/18 also commented positively on the procurement practices which are in place within the Council, whilst providing feedback on two areas of activity which the Council could make further improvements. Specifically these relate to supporting elected members to have personal development plans in place, and also opportunities to enhance

public performance reporting. Actions to address these suggested additional areas of focus are included within Appendix 1.

5. Next steps

- 5.1 The Head of Policy and Commissioning acts as the link officer in terms of engaging with Audit Scotland on a regular basis around best value. Regular update reports will continue to be provided in relation to the improvement plan to the Corporate Management Team, and to the Leadership Board on a six monthly basis.

Implications of the Report

- 1. Financial** – the BVAR sets out how effectively the Council is using its resources and financial planning arrangements.
- 2. HR & Organisational Development** – the BVAR sets out the Council's arrangements for Organisational Development and Workforce planning.
- 3. Community Planning** – the BVAR assesses how well the Council works with its partners.
- 4. Legal** - none.
- 5. Property/Assets** – none.
- 6. Information Technology** – The BVAR provides examples of how well the Council is using new technology.
- 7. Equality & Human Rights** – none.
 - (a) The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report because it is for noting only. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.
- 8. Health & Safety** – none.
- 9. Procurement** – none.
- 10. Risk** - Shared Risk Assessment is a proportionate and risk-based approach to assessing Scottish Councils.
- 11. Privacy Impact** – none.

12. **COSLA** - Welcomed the risk based and proportionate approach to audits.

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Appendix One – Progress achieved against the Best Value Assurance Report Improvement Plan.

Audit Scotland Recommendations	What we will do	When will we do this by?	Who is leading on this?	Progress Update – June 2019
1. Councillors should improve cross-party working, given the financial challenges that exist and the important decisions that will need to be made in the future.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to embed Cross Party Sounding Board and identify opportunities for all elected members to work together on issues of common interest and importance for the Council and the Renfrewshire area. 	Ongoing	All elected members	<p>The Cross Party Sounding Board was established in May 2017 following revisions to the Council's governance structures.</p> <p>The Board has met on 5 occasions to date to consider issues such as the Council Plan, Community Plan and the review of local governance.</p> <p>Further topics have been identified for consideration by the Cross Party Sounding Board following the summer recess.</p>
2. Councillors should take advantage of the training and development opportunities that the council provides to ensure they have the necessary skills and knowledge to perform their role effectively.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake a review of the current training and development programme through engagement and consultation with elected members, to identify potential opportunities to further support attendance and participation levels. 	31 December 2017	Chief Executive All elected members	<p>Previous updates to Board have highlighted the progress that has been achieved to date in terms of this recommendation. This included a full review of the training and development programme in consultation with elected members.</p> <p>Changes have subsequently been made to the training and development programme, including use of external speakers, offering twilight sessions and delivering focused weeks of training and development once a year. The development week held in April 2019 is currently being evaluated.</p> <p>In the Annual Audit Report 2017/18 published in 2018, Audit Scotland recognised this progress however further recommended that further work was undertaken to ensure that elected members were supported to have personal development plans in place.</p> <p>Elected members are reminded regularly of the support available to develop their own PDPs. The Improvement Service recognises that not all elected members will make use of the learning opportunities offered regardless of the support available and will choose to access learning at their own pace. To make it easier for elected members to access CPD training resources at a time and place of their choosing, the full range of Improvement Service workbooks are now available in the online Members' Library.</p>

<p>3. The council should review its governance arrangements to ensure they provide for a relationship with Renfrewshire Leisure Limited (RLL) that is clear, independent, and more easily understood by the public.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake a review of existing governance arrangements between the Council and Renfrewshire Leisure Limited, being cognisant of the findings of the national review of ALEOs currently being undertaken by Audit Scotland. Engagement with Renfrewshire Leisure itself will be a key element of the review. 	<p>June 2018 (subject to publication date of Audit Scotland's national review report – scheduled for Spring 2018)</p>	<p>Chief Executive</p>	<p>Key actions undertaken to date to address this recommendation include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A summary of Renfrewshire Leisure's Business Plan 2018/19 was reported to the Leadership Board in February 2018. Previously the Business Plan was considered by the Board as an exempt paper. • In February 2018 the Leadership Board approved proposals to change the composition of the membership of the Renfrewshire Leisure Board. The two places held by officers from Renfrewshire Council were filled by community representatives, with one vacancy recently arising. • Two officers from Renfrewshire Council were subsequently appointed as observers to Renfrewshire Leisure Board meetings in September 2018 by the Leadership Board. The two officers are the Head of Policy and Commissioning and the Head of Finance. • Regular monitoring meetings are held between Renfrewshire Leisure and the Head of Policy and Commissioning. Work is underway to further enhance the reporting of performance information relating to Renfrewshire Leisure. Six monthly internal scrutiny sessions also form part of the monitoring relationship with Renfrewshire Leisure. <p>Our external audit team from Audit Scotland, have made no further recommendations for the Council to address in relation to governance arrangements for Renfrewshire Leisure.</p>
<p>4. The council should develop a detailed medium and long-term workforce strategy and plan and implement its organisational development strategy. Implementing both the workforce and organisational development strategies will be critical to managing how future services are provided.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roll-out Performance Development and Review programme across the Council • Implement new leadership and management development programmes • Provide 6 monthly updates on the recently approved corporate workforce plan to elected members 	<p>Ongoing with six monthly updates to board.</p>	<p>Director of Finance and Resources (in consultation with CMT)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular progress updates on the OD Strategy are provided to the CMT and Trade Unions. The next update to the Council's Finance, Resources and Customer Services Policy Board on progress will be reported in September 2019. • Good collective workforce planning progress is being made by services, with an approximate overall completion rate of 74% against overall Council priorities. • CMT spotlight sessions on each service workforce plan have been taking place from February 2019 onwards. • Circa 800 employees have attended workshops across the Council to develop a set of new Council values. These values will be the guiding principles that explain what the Council stands for, what is most important to us and what our communities expect from us. • Roll out of the 'Leaders of the Future', 'ASPIRE' and the Chartered Management Institute (CMI) Levels 2 and 3 development programmes is progressing well, with 417 managers and leaders from throughout the Council participating across these programmes. A new CMI Level 5 programme launched in May 2019 and a level 7 CMI qualification is currently being scoped.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement new management arrangements to integrate existing HR, organisational development and programme management resources within one function to further strengthen the Council's approach to managing change 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Following the recent corporate people development review, a new range of flexible development options and accredited qualifications will continue to be rolled out across the Council in 2019. Future corporate training will offer more accessible, on-demand and digital "bite size" training courses, focusing on supporting future transformational change. Following the success of the digital skills programme in 2018 which saw circa. 100 front line employees complete basic training to improve their digital skills, funding of £15k has been secured again from the Flexible Workforce Development Fund to support a further roll out of digital skills training across the wider workforce. As part of this approach, circa. 50 catering managers are currently being supported with bespoke digital skills training to operate the new cashless catering system being implemented across Renfrewshire schools. Work is progressing to roll out the People, Performance and Talent Policy approved in June 2018, by designing bespoke training and supporting materials to ensure managers have the right skills to carry out PPT effectively. A total of 8 new HR & OD Policies were implemented in 2018. The HR & OD Policy Review Plan for 2019 will update several existing policies and develop new policies to support employees who experience Domestic Abuse or Menopause symptoms. In January 2019 the Council was recognised as a "Carer Positive Employer" by Carer Positive. Currently 35 Council officers are participating in the Cross Organisational Mentoring Programme launched in September 2018. An Internal Mentoring Programme will also be launched across the Council in summer 2019. In May 2019 the Council reported progress in the last 12 months to reduce the Council's gender pay gap to 3.58% or £0.55 in favour of men. This is a drop of just over 1% from April 2018, with ongoing action to reduce the pay gap further.
5. The council is continuing to review how it will achieve the savings required within the medium-term financial strategy. The council should prioritise how services need to be provided in future to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to implement the agreed medium term financial strategy which will focus on delivering required savings through the Better Council Change programme, debt smoothing and 	March 2020 (<i>end date of Financial Outlook</i>)	Director Finance and Resources / Chief Executive (in consultation with elected members)	<p>The Council's 'Revenue Budget and Council Tax 2019/20' paper which was considered by full Council on the 28 February 2019 clearly articulates the financial pressures facing the Council.</p> <p>Demand led pressures, coupled with wage and cost inflation and constrained funding could create a potential residual funding gap of between approximately £24 million to £55 million for the Council over the medium term. Other economic factors including those potentially relating to EU withdrawal, may also further impact this position.</p> <p>The potential scale of the financial challenge will require the Council to</p>

meet these savings.	effective workforce planning.			<p>deliver savings at a more significant level than in previous years delivered through for example the Better Council Change Programme since 2011.</p> <p>Work has commenced on the development of the next phase of the Council's transformation programme which has been reported under a separate report to the Leadership Board in June 2019.</p>
6. Community Planning partners need to plan their budgets and finances together to provide a clearer picture of the overall resources available.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake a Strategic Financial Overview exercise on an annual basis with community planning partners. 	Annual basis – March	Chief Executive / Director of Finance and Resources	<p>A key priority within Renfrewshire's Community Plan 2017-2027 is to develop a Community Planning Partnership that is sustainable and connected.</p> <p>Partners provide regular feedback on the financial outlook for their respective organisations, and are alert to opportunities to continue to work together to deliver more efficient services which provide for better outcomes.</p> <p>An example of this is the Community Planning Partnership sponsored Alcohol and Drugs Commission, a key of which is to consider how the partners can better use their resources to support those impacted by alcohol and drug use.</p>
7. The council and its partners need to continue to involve communities and work together on joint priorities and to strengthen partnership working. This will provide a positive base to ensure the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 is fully implemented	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalise review of Local Area Committees in Renfrewshire Publish Renfrewshire's Community Plan 2017-2027 Embed new governance arrangements for community planning in Renfrewshire, developing shared work plans and priorities in consultation with partners, 	<p>December 2017</p> <p>1 October 2017</p> <p>March 2018</p> <p>June 2018</p>	Chief Executive	<p>All actions are now complete.</p> <p>An area in which significant progress has been made is in relation to the development of new Local Partnerships which have now replaced Local Area Committees.</p> <p>The new partnerships launched in January 2019, and in March 2019 each Local Partnership agreed its initial local priorities.</p> <p>This is a significant step forward with the first round of the new Local Partnership funding being allocated these priorities by each Partnership in June 2019.</p> <p>The stage of the development process involves the establishment of a new participatory budgeting approach with young people, which will involve young people leading on decisions about how to use the Youth Challenge Funding for each Local Partnership.</p>

	<p>communities and people.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop locality plan arrangements in line with the requirements of Community Empowerment legislation, with particular focus on working with partners to engage with those people who are most impacted by poverty in Renfrewshire. 			
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NEW ACTIONS FROM ANNUAL AUDIT REPORT

<p>We reviewed the Council's arrangements for collecting, recording and publishing data in 2017/18. Information is publicly available on the Council website, with the main SPI report published as well as a summary version. <i>'It's all about you'</i> provides a graphical and pictorial presentation of performance data. However there is limited reference to performance in the Council's Annual Report.</p> <p>The Annual Report should include a summary position regarding the Council's performance together with relevant detailed performance information. This would improve the accessibility of performance information and help to demonstrate greater transparency by the Council.</p>	February 2019	Head of Policy and Commissioning	<p>All key sources of performance information have been brought together in one place on the Council's website to ensure greater transparency of information.</p> <p>This includes our local performance against the Local Government Benchmarking Framework indicators.</p> <p>The annual report is current produced as a live story map and links to this overview or dashboard are provided within the story map itself as an appendix or summary.</p> <p>We will continue to review our annual report in 2019 and have commenced a benchmarking exercise to review best practice amongst other local authorities.</p>
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