



REPORT TO: CORPORATE COMMITTEE ON 25 APRIL 2023

SUBJECT: BEST VALUE PROGRESS REPORT ON MORAY COUNCIL

BY: DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (EDUCATION, COMMUNITIES AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT)

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 To inform the Committee of the latest progress on the Best Value Assurance Review Strategic Action Plan.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section 103E of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, as amended by the Local Government (Scotland) Act 2003.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **The Committee is asked to consider and note progress made on the Best Value Assurance Report (BVAR) Strategic Action Plan shown in Appendix 1.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Reference is made to the report to the Council on 29 June 2022 when the Council approved the updated Best Value Action Plan to continue progress in response to the Best Value Audit and the follow up report (para 25 of the minute refers).
- 3.2 The report in June 2022 set out the background that had led to the most recent iteration of the Improvement Plan and the positive progress that had been made in reaching that point, as summarised below:
 - i) A Best Value Audit of the Council took place in September 2019, published in August 2020;
 - ii) the Council agreed a plan of strategic actions in response in October 2020;
 - iii) Further report by the Controller of Audit on the progress made by the Council published February 2022;

- iv) the outcome of the follow up report was recognised that good progress and that challenges remained in delivering the council's strategic priorities;
- v) Plan of action to address remaining areas agreed by Council in June 2022.

3.4 Since the Action Plan was agreed many of the actions have progressed well and a number have been concluded, albeit that in some cases timescales were more protracted than originally planned. Progress has been made in:

- i) IMP project monitoring to CMT/SMT established and showing progress across a number of projects and shifts from red/amber to amber/green evidencing progress in maintaining pace;
- ii) Work on financial planning: hierarchical approach agreed, assumptions revised and contributions to budget gap identified, although gap remains;
- iii) Remit of Audit and Scrutiny Committee and Scrutiny Guide agreed;
- iv) Improve Education Attainment – range of work progressing, including finalisation of curriculum progressions (BGE), extension of qualifications and accreditation in line with SCQF ambassador programme (Senior Phase) and working in partnership with key partners (SDS, DYW, ES) to progress work on learner pathways and skills.

3.5 Although there has been good progress in most areas, some actions require attention, including the actions under the heading 'Need for Clear and Decisive Leadership' which has been delayed for a number of reasons, including the settling period needed following election of new Councillors and competing priorities. These actions include the definition of leadership roles and behaviours (councillors – agreed in September 2022), leadership development (officers) and improving the relationship of trust between members and members/officers. Progress on a number of workforce actions within this heading and the workforce heading have been delayed due to staff vacancies in the Organisational Development team but appointments have now been made and the work is progressing so it is anticipated that this will be completed with extended timescales as noted in the action plan updates.

4. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))

The Council is committed to delivering better public services year on year through Best Value and its key principle of continuous improvement.

(b) Policy and Legal

The Council has a legal duty to deliver Best Value and to address any findings containing recommendations arising from any Best Value Assurance Reports.

(c) Financial Implications

There are no financial implications arising directly from this monitoring report.

(d) Risk Implications

There are risks associated with the council's ability to deliver the actions in the Best Value Action Plan alongside a challenging agenda including addressing the Council's significant budget gap. The challenge of prioritisation and resourcing was reported to the Council on 8 March 2023 in the Chief Executive's report Corporate Overview of Council Priorities. The balancing of operational priorities and planned development work and the potential stop/start impact on planned work has been recognised in the series of best value reviews the Council has experienced and is one of the biggest challenges in ensuring sustained progress.

In order to mitigate this, the Corporate and Senior Management team monitor progress on the Improvement and Modernisation Programme and the Best Value Action Plan and as noted in this report, progress is being made with many actions well advanced and the majority of the overall work arising from the Best Value Review completed (as reported to the Council in June 2022).

Prioritisation of resources and focusing of agendas and priorities will be ongoing to continue to deliver planned actions and maintain the pace established for improvement and modernisation.

The financial climate adds demands that will require considerable political and officer attention to be given to unprecedented levels of savings in a climate where the council has already delivered savings for many years. This may require further review and prioritisation of the remaining Best Value actions in the context of the priority required to be allocated to the delivery of savings to address financial sustainability.

(e) Staffing Implications

There are no additional staffing implications arising directly from this report. Work is being accommodated within existing resources which increases the risks of delivery and risks to other work. As noted above, this is monitored through reporting at the Management team and Committee.

(f) Property

None.

(g) Equalities/Social Economic Impact

This is covered in terms of the inspection regime itself and the Council's duty to deliver Best Value.

(h) Climate Change and Biodiversity Impact

There are no implications for climate change or biodiversity arising from this report.

(i) Consultations

The progress reports that contribute to the **Appendix 1** have been provided by Heads of Service and considered by CMT/SMT. CMT have been consulted on the content of this report and any feedback incorporated.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The Council continues to make progress on the Action Plan to address the recommendations of the Best Value Assurance Report and follow up report (Appendix 1). This is set in a continuing challenging environment where priorities must be carefully balanced to ensure ongoing progress. However, there has been progress across the majority of planned actions with a number now concluded and work progressing on the workforce actions that had been delayed due to vacancies. Attention will now focus on the actions to address the need for clear and decisive leadership moving forward.**

Author of Report:	Denise Whitworth
Background Papers:	Best Value Assurance Report Strategic Action Plan (Appendix 1) – Moray Council on 28 October 2020 BVAR Action Plan Report 001 (20.01.2021) BVAR Action Plan Report 002 (10.03.2021) Covid Related Pressures and Service Prioritisation Report and Appendix (10.3.21) BVAR Action Plan Report 003 (12.05.2021) BVAR Action Plan Report 004 (30.06.2021) BVAR Action Plan Report 005 (15.09.2021) Scottish Government published advice and guidance on Coronavirus (COVID-19) protection levels and decision making framework BVAR Action Plan Report 006 (19.01.2022) Report to Council 15 March 2022 (Item 03) Best Value Progress Report 29 June 2022 (Item 17c)
Ref:	SPMAN-1108985784-726 / SPMAN-1108985784-865