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**REPORT TO: CORPORATE COMMITTEE 28 JANUARY 2025**

**SUBJECT: BEST VALUE ACTION PLAN PROGRESS REPORTING**

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

**1. REASON FOR REPORT**

- 1.1 To inform the Committee of progress against the actions set out in the Council's Best Value Action Plan since the last quarterly update on 4 November 2024.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of paragraph III B (41) of the Council's Scheme of Administration, Best Value being a cross-cutting issue that does not fall within the remit of a particular committee.

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 **It is recommended that the Committee reviews and notes the progress made against the actions in the Council's Best Value Action Plan (Appendix 1).**

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Councils in Scotland have a statutory duty to demonstrate Best Value, introduced in the Local Government (Scotland) Act 2003. Statutory Guidance defines Best Value as:

*Ensuring that there is good governance and effective management of resources, with a focus on continuous improvement, to deliver the best possible outcomes for the public.*

- 3.2 In March 2020 the Scottish Government published refreshed Best Value guidance requiring councils to demonstrate a focus on continuous improvement in performance around seven themes:
- Vision and leadership
  - Governance and accountability
  - Effective use of resources
  - Partnerships and collaborative working
  - Working with communities
  - Sustainability
  - Fairness and equality

- 3.3 The Corporate Committee on 23 April 2024 agreed a new Best Value Action Plan that set out the Council's priorities for the next 3 years to enable it to meet its Best Value duty (paragraph 6 of the minute refers). The Plan takes account of and supersedes the consolidated list of improvement actions which bring together recommendations from a number of sources in relation to the Council's progress in achieving its Best Value duty and the output from the Council-Wide Strategic Self-Assessment of Performance by both Councillors and officers.
- 3.4 The Committee also agreed that the Best Value Action plan will be monitored on a quarterly basis and **Appendix 1** provides the quarterly monitoring of the actions in the Plan for October to December 2024. As well as reporting to Committee, arrangements are in place to ensure that the Corporate Management Team has regular oversight of performance monitoring of progress on the actions in the plan to ensure that work is prioritised and early remedial action can be taken if required.
- 3.5 Progress is on target in implementing the actions in the Best Value Action plan with a number of actions being concluded. Overall there 64 actions in total, of which 26 are black (completed) actions, 26 green (on target), 9 amber (require monitoring), no reds and 3 actions that have yet to commence. Key highlights in progress as noted below:
- i) Public communication and engagement: the Council engagement strategy has been implemented in relation to the general budget position as well as decisions of the council on financial planning, including libraries consultation. Feedback on this is due to be reported to the council early in 2025. Relevant progress is reflected in **Appendix 1** against the Vision and Leadership, Effective Use of Resources and Working with Communities themes.
  - ii) Financial management – Work has been progressed on a number of the actions within this theme and reported to the council on 4 December 2024: Corporate Asset Management Plan; Forecasting of budget projections, further development of savings plan for short to medium term and the medium to long term financial plan.
  - iii) Transformation Strategy update and development of next set of projects was reported to Council in August and a further update report was considered by Corporate Committee on 4 November 2024 for this committee to ensure regular oversight and monitoring.
  - iv) Sustainable development – a strategic sustainability statement was approved at Corporate Committee on 4 November 2024.

3.6 The Best Value Action Plan sets out an ambitious programme of work and it is important to maintain pace to ensure that targets are delivered. As indicated in the appendix, while overall progress is positive with 26 actions now completed, there are a small number (9) areas that have been identified for close monitoring:

- i) Leadership development – action is being taken to progress a short term programme of development and to ensure that individual development needs are identified. A draft strategic position has been prepared but finalising this is proposed to be put on hold until the new Chief Executive can provide direction on some of the cultural aspects that need to be part of this work.
- ii) Partnership working – the absence of specific resource has been a barrier to progress. This is an issue across partners and recent discussions have identified some options to provide capacity which is being explored further in anticipation of proposals coming forward in the new year that will enable this work to come back on track.
- iii) ICT developments – there are a few amber actions relating to the demand for ICT resources. The service is prioritising work across various requirements but there is likely to be ongoing pressure as resources cannot accommodate all of the current service requests. This will be carefully monitored by the CMT.

3.7 The next planned stages of work over the coming quarter are noted against each of the actions in the progress update (**Appendix 1**). Highlights of actions due to be reported to Corporate Committee (CC) on 10 June or Full Council (FC) as appropriate are noted below:

#### Vision and Leadership

- i) Leadership development – proposals are under development (Dec 2024) – CC January 2025.

#### Effective Use of Resources

- i) Next stage of short to medium term financial planning – FC January 2025.
- ii) Transformation strategy – development of expanded set of projects and financial benefits (December 2024) - CC January 2025.

#### Community and Partner Engagement

- i) Consultation on specific budget proposals (Nov/Dec) – Full council January/February 2025.

3.8 It is also of note that the Annual Audit Review has been completed and was reported to the Council at its meeting on 22 October 2024. The actions from the annual audit are being progressed and will be captured in a future update to ensure the Best Value Action plan remains comprehensive and current.

#### 4. **SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

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

The Best Value Action Plan supports the Council to deliver the priorities in the corporate plan and supports the council values of Improving: drive improvement; Ambitious: ensure sustainable and efficient services; and Responsive: promote community participation and involvement and involve our communities.

**(b) Policy and Legal**

The Best Value Action Plan supports the Council to fulfil its statutory duty to demonstrate Best Value, introduced in the Local Government (Scotland) Act 2003.

**(c) Financial implications**

There are no specific financial implications, however, the Best Value Action Plan supports the Council in its duty to make best use of resources and there are a number of specific actions that relate to financial management that are moving forward.

**(d) Risk Implications**

There are risks associated with not making adequate progress on the actions set out in the Best Value Action Plan. The Council has had feedback from a number of external stakeholders that identified areas for improvement and failure to address these through the planned actions is likely to lead to adverse reporting and implications for the council.

Several of the Best Value themes feature on the Council's Corporate Risk Register including leadership, financial sustainability and workforce development. Progressing the actions in the Plan will also secure improvements in the management of these risks.

**(e) Staffing Implications**

There are no specific staffing implications arising from this report.

**(f) Property**

None

**(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact**

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

**(h) Climate Change and Biodiversity Impacts**

This is a key component of Best Value

**(i) Consultations**

Extended CMT (E/CMT) have contributed to the progress monitoring set out in **Appendix 1**.

## 5. CONCLUSION

5.1 This report provides the quarterly monitoring of the Council's Best Value Action Plan (Appendix 1) for October to December 2024. Progress continues to be made across all of the areas of the plan with 26 areas where actions have been completed and work continues to ensure the plan is completed on target.

Author of Report: Denise Whitworth  
Background Papers: Corporate Committee report on Best Value Action plan 23 April 2024 ([item 5a](#))  
Corporate Committee report on 27 August 2024 Best Value Action Plan ([item 11](#))  
Corporate Committee report on 5 November 2024 Best Value Action Plan ([item 8](#))  
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