



REPORT TO: MORAY COUNCIL ON 30 JUNE 2021

SUBJECT: BEST VALUE ASSURANCE REPORT STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN - PROGRESS REPORT

BY: CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. REASON FOR REPORT

1.1 To inform the Council of the latest progress on the Best Value Assurance Report Strategic Action Plan.

1.2 This report is submitted to Council in terms of Section 103E of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, as amended by the Local Government (Scotland) Act 2003.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 The Council 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 The areas of improvement recommended in the Controller of Audit's report and endorsed by the Accounts Commission in terms of the Commission's findings were integrated into a plan of strategic actions submitted to a special meeting of Council on 7 October 2020. It was agreed at that meeting a short life member/officer working group be established to further develop the Plan and bring it back to Moray Council for approval (para 3 of Minute refers).

3.2 The Action Plan was approved at the meeting on 28 October 2020 (para 18 of Minute refers) and this is the third iteration of a progress report to Council.

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 findings arising from any Best Value Assurance Reports.

(c) Financial Implications

The Council has committed earmarked reserves for transformational change which will require to be drawn upon to develop the capacity to deliver the action plan. The Council agreed at its last meeting on 12 May 2021 (para 13 of the minute refers) to proceed with the development of a programme of investment at the next stage of the Council's Improvement & Modernisation Programme (IMP) and release £5m of Reserves earmarked for transformation and Council's priorities.

(d) Risk Implications

Inspections involve a considerable amount of time and effort diverting attention from the delivery of priorities and day to day services and whilst scrutiny is invaluable in driving improvement, on balance it is in the Council's interest to maintain performance levels such that the number of scrutiny activities can be minimised.

As the Council operates with small teams/specialists there is an ongoing risk associated with workforce issues. Accordingly it will be important that the actions in the Action Plan are resourced properly and/or other work reprioritised given the tight resourcing across current services. Failure to do this is likely to introduce other risks.

There is a considerable risk that delayed progress in some of the significant actions has a substantial impact on the Council's future financial position.

There is also a considerable risk that lack of progress towards making the significant changes in the Council to produce the required improvements in performance and outcomes may result in further intervention.

Returning to responding to the demands of another lockdown has created a range of concurrent risks and responsibilities. These take the form of community testing and the vaccination programme. This is in addition to managing expectations of business as usual; Brexit (in terms of UK Government Levelling Up Fund) improvement and transformation of council services; future levels of additional investment all whilst dealing with the pressure of such an absolute priority. These were the subject of a report on Covid Related Pressures and Service Prioritisation to the meeting of Moray Council on 10 March 2021 and an update report to this meeting of the Council.

These concurrent risks and responsibilities continue give rise to a concern of things going wrong, and it remains critical this risk is understood by the council. In order to manage these concurrent risks and responsibilities and to mitigate the risk will require the continuation of practical measures such as changing the ranking of priorities in service plans and reviewing

performance indicators amongst others. Audit Scotland have now intimated the timetable for the BVAR Follow Up Audit.

(e) Staffing Implications

There are no implications arising directly from this report. The development of the officer capacity to deliver the required improvements related to the various actions will require to be costed as the actions are considered and initiated. Management capacity to lead and direct this continues to be compromised at present due to the response to the Covid pandemic and this may impact on progress to planned timescales as indicated in the report. Reference is also made to the report to the meeting of Moray Council 10 March 2021 on the subject of Covid Related Pressures and Service Prioritisation and an update report to this meeting of the Council.

In order to develop the investment programme referred to at para 4c the Council approved the appointment of a preliminary project team to support the delivery of the project in the Council's IMP.

(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) Consultations

CMT and SMT have been consulted.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 This report provides progress to date of the high level strategic objectives of the Action Plan approved at the end of October last year and covers the strategies, plans and projects which have been integrated into the Plan in order to establish and maintain clear focus on delivery of the Plan and to ensure it is sufficiently embedded, if the change and transformation envisaged, is to be delivered.**
- 5.2 Whilst the situation regarding Covid-19 is moving from the use of lockdown as a means of suppression the shift of focus to a programme of vaccination and community testing continues to have a significant impact on the Council's current strategic corporate capacity and capability given the level of responsibilities and concurrent risks the Council continues to carry for the foreseeable future. This continues to be effectively managed by reviewing and resetting strategic, corporate and tactical priorities with actions to mitigate in the short to medium term.**

Author of Report:

Roddy Burns

Background Papers:

[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)

Scottish Government published advice and guidance on Coronavirus (COVID-19) protection levels and decision making framework

Ref:

SPMAN-1108985784-636

SPMAN-1108985784-6XX