



REPORT TO: MORAY COUNCIL ON 19 JANUARY 2022

SUBJECT: BEST VALUE ASSURANCE REPORT STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN – QUARTERLY 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 **It is recommended that the Council 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 fourth iteration of a progress report to Council.
- 3.3 At the scheduled meeting of Moray Council on 10 November it was agreed the frequency of these progress reports would change to quarterly to reflect the longer term nature of the strategic actions.
- 3.4 The actions in the Plan fall into short, medium and long term categories. The short term actions are largely completed and as the Plan moved into the medium to long term actions, it is appropriate to reflect this by moving the reporting on progress to a quarterly frequency.

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 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.

Continuing to respond to the demands of the Covid-19 pandemic and the latest variant continues to create a range of concurrent risks and responsibilities set out in previous progress reports.

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. The timetable for the BVAR Follow Up Audit has now been agreed with Audit Scotland and is underway.

(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 continues to be costed as the actions are considered and initiated. Management capacity to lead and direct this continues to be variable depending upon 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 reports to the meetings of Moray Council on 10 March and 30 June 2021 on the subject of Covid Related Pressures and Service Prioritisation.

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. There is progress in the recruitment of the skills and expertise of a Transformation Team agreed to ensure corporate management across all two phases of the 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) Climate Change and Biodiversity Impact

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

(i) 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 2020 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 Due to the latest variant, the situation nationally regarding Covid-19 remains at the time of writing this report fragile and continues to have a significant impact on the Council's current strategic corporate capacity and capability. 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)
[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

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