

REPORT TO: DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL - 24 OCTOBER 2005

REPORT ON: DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL - THE AUDIT OF BEST VALUE AND COMMUNITY PLANNING

REPORT BY: CHIEF EXECUTIVE

REPORT NO: 626-2005

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To consider the findings of the Audit of Best Value and Community Planning by the Accounts Commission and make a response to the Commission.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Council agrees to implement the proposed Improvement Action Plan 2005/2007 outlined in Section 8.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 There are no immediate financial implications arising from this report but additional expenditure may be incurred in implementing elements of the Action Plan.

4 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Council will show progress in its overall approach to sustainable development.

5 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Council will take steps to demonstrate its commitment to equal opportunities in its service delivery.

6 BACKGROUND

- 6.1 The Local Government in Scotland Act (2003) introduced new statutory requirements for Scottish Local Authorities including duties relating to Best Value and Community Planning. The Accounts Commission holds Councils to account in relation to these duties, and Audit Scotland is conducting audits of Best Value (including other duties contained in the Act) on the Commission's behalf.
- 6.2 At the Policy and Resources Committee on Monday, 13 December 2004, it was agreed that a Best Value Advisory Group consisting of the Chief Executive (Chair), and one elected member from each of the political groups be set up on a similar basis as that established in regard to the Local Government Boundary Commission. At a further meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held on Monday, 10 January 2005 an Audit Programme was presented to the Committee for noting. Subsequent to this meeting the Best Value and Community Planning Advisory Group met on Friday, 18 February 2005 at which a submission by Dundee City Council to the Accounts Commission was agreed. The Council also made a presentation to Audit Scotland in regard to the Council's submission and the overall Audit began in March 2005. Audit Scotland also made presentations separately to Members and the Council Management Team and had access to the Council's Intranet and were afforded temporary accommodation during the detailed Audit period.

7. ACCOUNTS COMMISSION FINDINGS

A report has been submitted by Audit Scotland to the Accounts Commission. The report as agreed by the Commission finds that Dundee City Council is generally a good performing Council with areas and issues that need to be addressed. The Improvement Action Plan arising from the Reports Improvement Agenda for Dundee City Council is attached in Section 8 of this report. However, there are a number of comments and findings throughout the report that are addressed immediately below. In addition separate Commission findings of issues that must be addressed have been sent to the Council and these are responded to in 7.1 For ease of reference any paragraph numbers referred to are those within the Audit report.

7.1 Issues to Address

The overall conclusion finds that Council services generally perform well and that Dundee City Council has had considerable success in regenerating its area in the face of a series of complex challenges as a result of the social and economic circumstances of the area.

Listed below are those issues the Commission felt the Council should address. As with all Audit Reports areas of concern are identified within the Report and the Findings but it is for the Council to determine how to take these issues forward. The Council is expected to review the issues raised and to determine whether it wishes to make changes and in what timescale. The Council will in doing this have to determine the financial and other resources available. The Council's detailed response to each point is in italics.

- 7.1.1 The lack of an effective scrutiny process by elected members which is largely attributable to the fact that all 29 members sit on all 13 committees this makes the independence of view essential to the scrutiny process difficult, if not impossible, to achieve.

Elected members may wish to comment on how this could be addressed. One possibility could be an enhanced role for the Best Value Sub-Committee in regard to scrutiny.

- 7.1.2 The consistent focus on policy making in private session raises concerns about transparency.

There appears to be a misunderstanding between the Auditors and the Council around this issue which will be clarified at the meeting with the Commission.

- 7.1.3 The need to improve strategic management in a planned way in order to achieve appropriate structures, both at elected member and officer level, and by not simply reacting opportunistically to personnel and political changes.

This issue is covered in the Improvement Action Plan.

- 7.1.4 The need to systematically review the Council's policies and priorities on a regular basis to ensure that they are in line with the annual Revenue and Capital Budgets in order to strengthen the Council's capacity to deliver Best Value.

This issue is covered in the Improvement Action Plan.

- 7.1.5 The adoption of blanket policy commitments which, taken with pressures on resources, from a declining population/tax base and growing demand for services, severely limit the achievement of Best Value for the people of Dundee.

This appears to be a reference to the Council's key policy commitments outlined in paragraph 37. These particular policy commitments have the support of local communities and have the unanimous support of the elected members.

- 7.1.6 Corporate processes which do not adequately support performance management

This issue is covered in the Improvement Action Plan. The report also records that Dundee is the seventh highest ranked Council in Scotland for the number of Accounts Commission performance indicators in the upper quartile (135). This is a reasonable outcome of the existing performance management arrangements.

7.1.7 High staff absence levels, particularly among teachers.

The Department with Personnel Department support has recently delivered sickness absence management training to school senior management teams across the City. Further training and awareness raising will take place with all teaching staff when the new tighter review triggers have been agreed with the local negotiating committee for teachers.

The Director of Education has agreed that the department will aim to reduce its level of teacher absence to the Scottish average over the next three years.

In respect of our other staff a Committee Report has already been approved showing how we will tackle this issue.

7.1.8 Deteriorating performance in some aspects of children's services and adult social work

The Statutory Performance Indicators do not capture all components of the Social Work Department's approach to home care, which includes the provision of practical supports such as help with shopping, laundry and cleaning that are tailored to the individual service user, and help maintain people in their own homes and which research confirms are highly valued by older people.

The department is aware of the need to improve its performance in relation to the home care Statutory Performance Indicators, and has initiated a whole-system review of the service involving staff at all levels. The review is looking at capacity planning, systems, staff development and standards. It will seek to address inefficiencies in the service together with identifying quality measures and outcomes for older people. Its overall aim is to create additional service capacity and raise standards.

The Statutory Performance indicator of the percentage of reports submitted to the reporter within 20 days is one that many council's have difficulty in meeting. There are a number of variables that can affect performance such as the referral rates from the Children's Reporter, the number of qualified and experienced staff available and levels of deprivation that have a general impact on workload. These reports are prepared by qualified social workers and over the last few years there has been a serious national shortage of people with this qualification.

Over the last two years the Social Work Department has adopted a much more pro-active approach to recruiting key staff and this is now reflected in an improvement in the staffing position amongst teams who produce these reports. Social work managers keep the position under regular review.

It should also be noted that many of the reports missed the deadline of 20 days by as little as a day. This performance indicator time was seen as unrealistic by many local authorities and the standard has subsequently been changed to 25 days. Under the new standard our current performance is 75% of reports being submitted on time.

7.1.9 High cost of council tax collection coupled with a poor collection rate

The Council is already aware that the Accounts Commission Statutory Performance Indicators for the cost of Council Tax collection indicate that Dundee City Council's costs are higher than most other local authorities. The Council has previously attempted to share benchmarking information with other Councils with limited success and during the Best Value Review of Benefits, the Depute Chief Executive (Finance) visited a number of authorities to compare processes and costs with a view to improving Dundee's performance.

During these visits it transpired that the costs being reported by some authorities are not being prepared on a consistent basis with our own, although Dundee City Council's costs are consistent with the PI definition and agreed as accurate by the Council's External Auditor. In one Council their PI did not include property costs and in another the significant level of work carried out by their Housing staff was not included in the PI. This matter needs to be addressed by the Accounts Commission to ensure that valid performance comparisons are being made.

Any comparison of collection costs would still require to be considered on a "Family Group" basis with similar demographic authorities, i.e. in Dundee approximately one third of Council Tax payers are on Council Tax Benefit, of which two thirds are on maximum benefit. These factors have a significant impact on the complexity of Council Tax collection.

In terms of Council Tax collection, the Council has recently introduced a new Recovery Initiative with a target of increasing in-year collection of Council Tax to 90% by 2007. Current indications are very positive and the target of 90% should be achieved by this date.

The Council budgets to collect 96.5% of Council Tax levied which compares very favourably with other authorities with similar patterns of deprivation to Dundee.

7.1.10 Educational attainment below national and comparator authority averages

There are a number of serious concerns about the relevance and appropriateness of the current range of comparators for Dundee (Aberdeen City, Renfrewshire, Dumfries and Galloway, Inverclyde and South Ayrshire) as none of them are rated by HMIE as "very close" or "extremely close" to Dundee.

*It is perhaps significant that the average attainment of our "comparator" Education Authorities has been **above** the national average in every year 2001-2005. Given its level of deprivation Dundee has never been able to exceed the national average. Again this would call into question the relevance of our comparators.*

Notwithstanding the above it is significant that the attainment figures for our "comparator" Education Authorities and for the National Average have remained largely static since 2001 in all of the major indicators.

Despite these points Dundee over the last few years is demonstrably closing the gap with its "comparators" in 4 of the 7 measures at Standard Grade and Higher and keeping pace with them in the other three. This can only be described as an "improving" situation in relative terms. In addition a Best Value Review of Attainment in Education is currently being undertaken by the Council.

7.1.11 Slippage of the Public Private Partnership Scheme for new school building and school improvement

All consultations undertaken during the Project development since 2001 have been carried out in terms of the Education (Publication and Consultation etc) (Scotland) Regulations 1981. The extent of the consultation undertaken and the allowance for statutory consultation timescales is evidenced in the reshaped final scope of the Project. The Council is now awaiting formal approval from the Scottish Executive in order to appoint a Preferred Bidder to undertake the project.

7.1.12 Measures of home care provision are in the lowest quartile of national figures

The report does recognise that the Department's approach to home care includes a range of low level practical support, such as help with shopping and laundry that are designed to maintain people in their own homes and which are not included in statutory PIs. The recently approved increased spending by the Social Work Committee in the Home Care Service will result in over 30,000 additional hours per annum being provided directly by the Department and an additional 10,000 hours per annum provided by approved providers. This means that there can be approximately 770 hours extra service provided in any given week, which will be reflected in the performance indicator for 2004/05.

7.1.13 High percentage of roads that should be considered for repair and spending on structural maintenance

For all class A, B and C roads Dundee has significantly reduced the percentage in need of maintenance treatment and is well below the Scottish average for each of the 3 classifications. As regards unclassified roads only a 12% sample was surveyed in the Scottish Road Maintenance Conditions Survey (SRMCS) which is not statistically significant and the Society of Chief Officers of Transportation in Scotland (SCOTS) is reconsidering its survey approach to unclassified roads in urban areas.

Dundee City Council currently spends much more on road maintenance than our GAE allocation from the Scottish Executive.

7.2 PART 1 : does the Council have clear strategic direction?

The report recognises the clear vision the Council has for the future which is shared by its partners. This is despite the serious economic and social challenges that have faced the Council since reorganisation highlighted within this section (15-21). The report records the fact that the Council has successfully stabilised Council Tax issues recording the lowest increase in Scotland over the last 5 years (23).

7.2.1 Working with Communities, Citizens and Partners

Dundee's strong tradition of community engagement and development as well as its enthusiasm and commitment to joint working are referred to (26-27) as well as the significant achievements in areas such as reducing teenage pregnancies (29). Although not all targets were met Community Planning structures are seen as well developed at City and local level (31-34).

7.2.2 Policy Commitments and Priorities

Dundee is viewed as ahead of the national agenda in areas such as tackling neighbourhood deprivation (38). The report notes that the Council has decided against national policy in important areas, such as housing stock transfer (38). This is somewhat surprising given that housing stock transfer was a matter of choice and not national policy per se.

7.2.3 Accountability

This section recognises the difficult decisions that must be made in the light of the pressure on resources but nevertheless expresses the opinion that the reasons for these decisions need to be explained in the Council's public performance report (42-44). This will have financial implications.

7.3 PART 2 : is the Council organised to deliver better services?

7.3.1 Political Management

The Council is viewed as politically stable with relationships between elected members and with officers good (45-47) and Members are well supported administratively (48).

Some criticism is made of committee proceedings with an implication that any items that may occur a division will then be taken in private (50). This is perhaps due to a misunderstanding as in fact, this is very much the exception rather than common practice and where it does happen any revised proposal is then agreed in public view.

While acknowledging that elected members are largely comfortable with the opportunities for scrutiny (53) the report promotes the establishment of a separate scrutiny facility of a more formal nature (54) and this is addressed in the Improvement Action Plan. The report also revisits the recommendation of the Leadership Advisory Panel in 2001 with which elected members did not agree as the presence of elected members on all committees ensured there was no exclusion and maintained political balance.

7.3.2 Council Management Team

The report finds that the Council Management Team structure has been determined around opportunities that have arisen when Chief Officers have left the Council (60). Financial restrictions have prevented any wide scale reconstruction and the Council accepts that there has not been the opportunity for more deliberative meetings of the smaller management team around performance issues (62-64) and this is addressed in the Improvement Plan.

7.3.3 Continuous Improvement

Council services are recognised as being generally good with room for improvement in some areas. Some individual services are commended for their application of the EFQM model (68) but it is recognised there is still more improvement required.

Efficiency savings of £3.1 million arising from 117 Best Value service reviews between 1998 and 2003 and more than 800 proposals for improvement demonstrate the Council's commitment to continuous improvement (72). The statement that little progress has been made on Best Value reviews of strategic services is unfair as these are generally complex cross-cutting reviews which are demanding on both officer and elected member time as are those reviews with Community Planning partners.

7.3.4 Planning and Budgeting

Although service plans are consistently used across the Council with performance reported annually to committee there is a need to include more information relating to human, financial and physical resources (74-76). Budgeting within the Council is seen as traditional and the Council accepts that a review of policy and budget setting to integrate approaches is necessary. However, there is concern that redistribution of budget provision to some services will result in greater financial savings to others.

7.3.5 Performance Management and Reporting

The Council's main instrument for performance management and reporting is the departmental service plans which contain performance indicators (84-85). Although the Council accepts that there is work to be done in regard to making services plans clearer and this is addressed in the Improvement Plan it does not see the need for individual financial statements to be submitted to Committees but as an alternative has expanded the information available to all elected members at the Finance Committee.

Similarly specific reports have been submitted to Committee and highlighted in the local press in regard to housing benefit administration, council tax collection and rent arrears and although the Housing News is commended there are no available resources to Departments to undertake similar promotional programmes (90-93).

7.3.6 Managing Finance and Assets

The report recognises that the Council has a schedule for completion of an Asset Management Plan by 2007 (95) and has a well understood financial process.

7.3.7 Managing People

The report refers to the high staffing complement within Dundee City Council as compared to other Scottish Councils (96) and advocates a more robust approach to workplace planning while acknowledging that there have been mitigating circumstances.

The Council has already itself highlighted the need to develop a human resources strategy and this is included in the Improvement Plan (98-99).

Absence levels are highlighted in the report (100-101) and this issue has already been addressed by the Council with a substantial review of sickness absence procedures and a comprehensive action plan agreed at the Personnel Committee of 12 September 2005.

7.3.8 Competitiveness

The report accepts that tendering procedures have taken greater account of quantitative factors but nevertheless believes that there is further scope for business redesign and reconfiguration (103). There is evidence that Departments have used benchmarking and again there is scope for greater utilisation (105).

The report commends the consortium arrangements between Dundee, Perth and Kinross and Angus in regard to roads maintenance through Tayside Contracts (106).

7.3.9 Procurement

The Council accepts there was no corporate procurement strategy in place but has joined the Authorities Buying Consortium (ABC) and is starting to see some benefits already from this procurement process. The Council has submitted a bid to the Efficient Government Fund to

purchase and implement an e-procurement system. Further the Scottish Executive have provided funding to appoint a consultant to review the Council's procurement strategy.

7.3.10 Information and Computer Technologies (ICT)

The report recognises how the development of ICT is playing an increasingly important role for the Council and highlights as a case study the growth of online payments and transactions in 2004/05 (112).

7.3.11 Joint Working

The Council has been acknowledged as working with other public and private sector partners and there are good examples of joint working such as the Housing Repairs Service (114). Also highlighted are the joint reviews with other local authorities in the Tayside Area and the Council's Joint Future arrangements with the NHS (116). The Dundee Partnership is also highlighted as a good example of partnership working (118) and although there is a reference to a greater need to address cross-cutting issues around deprivation and health inequalities this is being addressed as an outcome of a separate consultants review of the Partnership.

7.3.12 Customer Focus

The report indicates that there is strong evidence of a cultural shift towards genuine involvement and participation with local residents over many years (122). Examples highlighted are the Housing Repairs Service, Social Work single shared assessment and services for young people as well as the Customer First Strategy (124).

7.3.13 Equal Opportunities

The report acknowledges the work done to date to mainstream equalities into all activities (127) and the Council will ensure progress is maintained in this area.

7.3.14 Sustainable Development

This section highlights many of the areas of good work undertaken by the Council including the approach to waste management and recycling as well as a case study of the Dundee Energy Efficiency Advice Project (DEEAP). The Council is currently reviewing its approach to environmental sustainability (133) and is currently developing a Sustainability Policy.

7.4 PART 3 : how do services perform?

The report accepts that from an overall perspective statutory performance indicators show that Council services are performing well (134). Dundee is the seventh highest ranked Council in Scotland for the number of indicators in the upper quartile (135). As well as accepting that services generally performed well the report also highlights areas where performance has "deteriorated", highlighting children's services, adult social work as well as sickness absence, benefits administration and management of rent arrears. The Council is well aware of performance in these areas and has taken measures to address poor performance which has been highlighted in Section 7 above.

In regard to Council Tax collection and recovery rates recent reports to the Council show that the collection levels will reach the target rate by 2007 and that performance had improved significantly. Similarly, figures on housing benefits administration and the number of days to process new benefit applications have improved dramatically over the past year.

7.4.1 Education

While recognising the Education Department's significant commitment to quality improvement and the positive results from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education's inspection of the Council in 2001 where all quality indicators were judged to be either very good or good (140) the report highlights problems in regard to the need to improve attainment and achievement in the city (144). It acknowledges that as a result of the impact of attainment figures the Council has undertaken a wide ranging review of its various strategies aimed at raising attainment and there is currently a Best Value Review in progress. The Education Department is also commended by HMIE for the

very good progress made in its review of policy provision for pupils in social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (150).

7.4.2 Social Work

The report identifies a new culture of performance improvement growing throughout the Social Work Department accompanied by a willingness to try new ways of working that will improve outcomes for service users (151). The report also recognises that Dundee's levels of deprivation means that it is inevitable that Social Work is one of the Council's highest demand services. Single shared assessment is highlighted as a case study as part of the encouraging results that the department has received in its drive for a new culture of performance management (154). The report acknowledges that the department is aware of the need to improve its performance in relation to the home care SPIs and that it has initiated a whole system review of the service of all the staff at all levels.

7.4.3 Housing

The report recognises the Department's strong system for measuring and managing performance and its strong focus on its customers and tenant involvement. The report appears to question the validity of the Council's decision in relation to the whole transfer of housing stock to another provider (162). It expresses the view that the Council should consider whether the survey provided an adequate basis for its decision to retain the housing stock. However, this policy was expressed as a preference by the Dundee Tenants Federation as well as at a subsequent meeting of the Housing Committee. Rent arrears are also referred to as an area for action (165) and the Council is addressing this. Housing's clear commitment to joint working is illustrated in a case study which demonstrates the services progressive and pro active approach to tackling anti-social behaviour (169).

7.4.4 Communities

The section of the report on Communities is positive with the case study highlighting The Corner Young People's Health and Information project as a positive contribution to young people's health in Tayside and Dundee (175).

7.4.5 Planning and Transportation

The Planning and Transportation Department has been recognised as developing its approach to performance management in recent years and has demonstrated steady improvement across its services (178). The report highlighted that Dundee is amongst a quarter of Scottish Councils with the highest percentage of roads that should be considered for repair and also ranks amongst the lowest quarter of Councils in terms of spending on structural maintenance (181). The Council's response to this has been outlined above in Section 7.1.

7.4.6 Leisure and Arts

The Leisure and Arts services has been able to demonstrate systematic improvement as a result of engaging with the Best Value principles and processes and the services are seen as innovative and responsive to citizens (183). The case study highlights the Passport to Leisure scheme and the outcome of the service users surveys (187).

7.4.7 Economic Development

The Economic Development service has demonstrated it has had an impact in turning around the economic position and physical environment of the city (193). The further work in tackling the mismatch between job opportunities and skills, reversing the population and reducing poverty in the city are some of the main areas of work for the Dundee Partnership.

7.4.8 Waste Management

The report recognised that Dundee's Waste Management service performs much better than the Scottish average although waste disposal costs are high (196). The case study is Dundee Energy Recycling Ltd (DERL) (197).

8. **PART 4 : what needs to improve? - Proposed Improvement Action Plan**

- 8.1 The Council's submission document to Audit Scotland contained a section devoted to a draft improvement plan. This plan addresses some of the issues referred to in Audit Scotland's improvement agenda for the Council.
- 8.2 The Improvement Action Plan consists of a number of measures with target dates for delivery as well as identifying the lead officer/s with responsibility for delivering the actions. As well as the individual officers the action plan targets and overall progress of the Improvement Plan will be monitored through the Council's Monitoring Database by the Chief Executive and both the plan and its monitoring will be a standing item on the Council's Management Team agenda with a regular report to appropriate committees to ensure elected members are involved in the process.
- 8.2 Accordingly, the proposed new improvement action plan incorporates the Council's submitted improvements, and the resulting composite plan is as follows:-

DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL IMPROVEMENT ACTION PLAN 2005-2007

Reference	Area for Improvement	Measures	Target Date	Responsible Officer
A	Review the political management and public performance reporting arrangements with a view to increasing openness and transparency of decision making, and ensuring members get better opportunities to exercise scrutiny and greater public accountability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report reviewing how to improve openness, transparency and scrutiny of decision making through the political management and public performance reporting to be approved by Committee. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> December 2005 Report to Policy and Resources Committee January 2006 	Chief Executive
B	Ensure that members take a more active role in reviewing the performance of services and take steps to ensure more systematic and comprehensive reporting from services to service committees.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the service planning process and produce new comprehensive guidance and training on producing service plans and involving elected members in the process. The review will incorporate the improvements referred to in J & K below. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> June 2006 Report to Policy and Resources Committee June 2006 	Chief Executive Assistant Chief Executive (CP)
C	Develop and implement an HR strategy that will ensure effective corporate management of staff absence, and ensure the Council's staffing establishment is as stream-lined and targeted as possible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corporate Human Resource strategy developed and agreed by Committee. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> March 2006 Report to Personnel Committee April 2006 	Assistant Chief Executive (Management)
D	Develop more coherent links between planning and budgeting and allocation of resources in accordance with policy priorities and objectives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A working group will be established to bring forward measures aimed at integrating resource planning, including the financial costing of corporate/service objectives and new initiatives, into both corporate and service plans. Measurable financial performance targets will also be established and reported for significant areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group in place by December 2005 partial implementation by May 2006 Full implementation of agreed proposals in May 2007 	Depute Chief Executive (Finance)

Reference	Area for Improvement	Measures	Target Date	Responsible Officer
E	Review the format, content and frequency of financial reports to ensure members receive adequate information to monitor the financial position.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The format of the revenue and capital expenditure monitoring reports to be reviewed by Management Team and Finance Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> December 2005 Report to Finance Committee January 2006 	Depute Chief Executive (Finance)
F	Review the role of the Council Management Team (CMT) to bring a greater degree of corporate discipline to performance management, service review, and option appraisal ensuring that these are properly linked with corporate planning and budget settling processes and are better placed to deliver continuous improvement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the functions of CMT and implement new performance management measures Review Service Plans 2006/07 Option Appraisal Review Further review of performance management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> December 2005 March 2006 March 2006 June 2006 	Chief Executive Chief Executive Chief Executive Chief Executive
G	Review the Council structure to ensure a better fit with corporate objectives, the needs of service users and organisational efficiencies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review to be carried out and reported to Council for consideration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> June 2006 	Chief Executive
H	Review the impact of community planning with the planning partners to ensure that all partners are directing adequate resources to agreed priorities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Community Plan 2005/2010 agreed and published in June 2005 The first annual monitoring review of the Plan and its 6 themes will include a review of impact and resource allocation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In place October 2006 	Assistant Chief Executive (Community Planning)

Reference	Area for Improvement	Measures	Target Date	Responsible Officer
I	Take steps to share good practice more widely and systematically within the Council and the management team to make better use of benchmarking and option appraisal, building on examples of these already being used in parts of the Council.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and report on the use of benchmarking and option appraisal in the Council recommending what steps to take Implement best practice and update service plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nov 2005 May 2006 	<p>Depute Chief Executive (Finance) and Assistant Chief Executive (Community Planning)</p> <p>Depute Chief Executive (Finance) and Assistant Chief Executive (Community Planning)</p>
J	Ensure that all service plans are SMART and that these and Council strategies are able to demonstrate that they respond to customer views as expressed through consultations and surveys.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All service plan performance targets and strategic projects milestones to be reviewed to make them as SMART as practicable. Public consultation and communication strategies to be prepared and approved for all services. Feedback reported via service plan reports to committees. Monitoring and reviewing effectiveness of consultation and communication via the new CMT roles and via Service Plan reports to Committees. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> July 2006 July 2006 July 2006 July 2006 	<p>Assistant Chief Executive (CP) and All Chief Officers</p> <p>Assistant Chief Executive (CP) and All Chief Officers</p> <p>Assistant Chief Executive (CP) and All Chief Officers</p> <p>Assistant Chief Executive (CP) and All Chief Officers</p>

Reference	Area for Improvement	Measures	Target Date	Responsible Officer
K	Take steps to ensure that the Council can demonstrate its commitment to equal opportunities in its service delivery, and show progress with its overall approach to sustainable development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement Equality Action Plans for each service. • Sustainability performance to be specifically monitored via the CMT, and Service Plan and Council Plan reporting procedures. • Sustainability Policy in place following approval by Committee • A comprehensive environmental policy framework to be developed and approved by Committee. • Sustainability criteria incorporated into Council's procurement strategy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • December 2005 • July 2006 onwards • October 2005 • December 2005 • December 2005 	<p>All Chief Officers</p> <p>All Chief Officers</p> <p>All Chief Officers</p> <p>Chief Executive</p> <p>Chief Executive</p>
L	Renewal of the importance of leadership in establishing a culture of Best Value.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out a rigorous corporate EFQM self-assessment process and implement resulting action plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • August 2006 	Chief Executive
M	Extend asset management arrangements across the Council to ensure assets are managed in the most effective way possible and are explicitly matched to the Council's objectives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete property surveys and have information in accessible computer-based system. • Draft Asset Management Plan issued for consultation • Finalisation, approval and implementation of Asset Management Plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • February 2006 • September 2006 • July 2007 	<p>Director of Economic Development</p> <p>Director of Economic Development and Depute Chief Executive (Finance)</p>
N	Ensure that the Council's approach to risk management fully reflects business continuity issues and civil contingencies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Departments of the Council to produce their own detailed business continuity plans in an agreed format. • Business continuity plans to be modified in the light of specific obligations imposed by the Civil Contingencies Bill. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • December 2005 • Dependent upon publication date of the Bill 	<p>Depute Chief Executive (Finance)</p> <p>Depute Chief Executive (Finance)</p>

Reference	Area for Improvement	Measures	Target Date	Responsible Officer
O	Ensure that the Council's approach to procurement at all levels achieves best value.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare bid for funding assistance to take forward procurement-related proposals under Efficient Government Initiative. • Investigate extension of joint working initiatives with other local authorities and public sector agencies to maximise buying power etc. • Annual review of corporate procurement strategy (incorporated as part of overall annual review of Council Plan Performance). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • July 2005 • October 2005 • July 2006 	<p>Depute Chief Executive (Finance)</p> <p>Depute Chief Executive (Finance)</p> <p>Depute Chief Executive (Finance)</p>

9 **CONSULTATIONS**

All Chief Officers have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

10 **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Dundee City Council : The Audit of Best Value and Community Planning - Audit Scotland, October 2005.

**ALEX STEPHEN
CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

17 OCTOBER 2005