

REPORT TO: POLICY COMMITTEE – 5 MARCH 2008

SUBJECT: BEST VALUE AUDIT REPORT - PROGRESS

BY: CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 The Policy Committee is asked to scrutinise the progress made against the Best Value Audit Report recommendations.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section A(59) of the Council's Administrative Scheme relating to formulating and reviewing Council wide policy, strategies, priorities and objectives in standards and levels of service.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Policy Committee scrutinise the progress made against the Best Value Audit Report recommendations.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The follow up audit by the Accounts Commission was undertaken during April – May 2007. Their findings were reported to Audit and Performance Review Committee on 26 September 2007 (Para 3 of the minute refers).
- 3.2 The Commission found that the Council has made steady progress in a number of areas and, in particular, improvement in the corporate leadership and strategic direction of the Council which can be seen in:-
- Publication of the 2006 – 2010 Community Plan
 - Training programmes for elected members and senior officers
 - Improvements in performance management arrangements
 - New political management arrangements and Committee structures
 - Progress on strategic priorities such as flood prevention projects and agreement on single status.

- 3.3 The Commission concluded, however, that a number of further improvements need to be made and that progress is needed on
- the need for consistent strategic leadership by elected members.
 - the need to develop a systematic approach to prioritise and manage strategic priorities
 - the need to develop a systematic approach to demonstrate the competitiveness of trading/commercial services
- 3.4 An improvement plan focusing on the three key areas of concern has been developed in consultation with the Corporate Management Team and Service Development Group.
- 3.5 The three key areas of focus are:-
- Strategic Leadership – developing clear priorities for Moray and the Council's services and leading the community planning process
 - Demonstrating Competitiveness – developing a systematic and consistent approach to demonstrating competitiveness across all trading/commercial services
 - Managing Strategic Priorities – developing a more systematic approach to prioritise and manage strategic priorities.

In addition, the Council is being asked to recognise the value of seeking external support in delivering this agenda

- 3.6 Overall good progress has been made against the commitment to demonstrate consistent leadership by Elected Members. Numerous informal sessions have been held with Elected Members on Community Planning priorities, Community Planning themes, strategic priorities, service issues and Community Planning structures. The Service Development Group meet regularly and presented their budget after many months of considering service priorities. The Administration Group also published their political priorities.
- 3.7 All actions in relation to demonstrating competitiveness have been progressed.

- 3.8 Work has also been carried out with Elected Members and CMT to agree strategic priorities which will inform the Single Outcome Agreement, Community Plan, Corporate Development Plan and Service Improvement Plan

4. **SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

(a) **Corporate Development Plan/Community Plan/Service Improvement Plan**

The Council is committed to delivering better public services year on year through best value, and accept the key principles of accountability, ownership, continuous improvement and transparency

Elected Members and senior managers will ensure that best value contributes to the corporate priorities of the Council and confirming the future direction of services.

(b) **Policy and Legal**

The Council has a legal duty to deliver Best Value and part of its delivery is to address recommendations arising from any Best Value audit reports

(c) **Resources (Financial, Risks, Staffing and Property)**

There are no financial requirements arising directly from this report. However, there may be risks associated with not addressing the recommendation from national audit reports.

(d) **Consultations**

Consultation with Mark Palmer, Chief Financial Officer and Carol Sheridan, Senior Employee Development Adviser who have provided information contained in the Action Plan.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 Overall good progress has been made against the commitment to demonstrate consistent leadership by Elected Members. All actions in relation to demonstrating competitiveness have been progressed. Work has also been carried out with Elected Members and CMT to agree strategic priorities which will inform the Single Outcome Agreement, Community Plan, Corporate Development Plan and Service Improvement Plan.**

Author of Report: Bridget Mustard, Corporate Policy Unit Manager

Background Papers:

Ref: