

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET 20 MAY 2009

BEST VALUE 2 - PROPOSED CONSULTATION RESPONSE BY EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Chief Executive

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek agreement from Cabinet on the Council's response to the Accounts Commission's consultation paper: "Best Value 2 - Proposals for Consultation March 2009."

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 introduced new statutory duties relating to Best Value and Community Planning, and the Accounts Commission is responsible for auditing these processes under section 102(1) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973.
- 2.1 Following the completion of Best Value and Community Planning audits for all thirty two councils in Scotland, and the publication of the Crerar Report in September 2007 documenting the results from the 'Independent Review of Regulation, Audit, Inspection and Complaints Handling of Public Services in Scotland,' the Scottish Government adopted the following three key actions as central to simplifying the scrutiny and complaints landscape:
- Set out clearly what we expect of scrutiny as part of a reform of public services.
 - Make the scrutiny and challenge function more proportionate.
 - Embed robust self-assessment within delivery organisations using outcome based approaches.
- 2.3 In the report to Cabinet of 22 April 2009, Members were informed of the progress made by the Accounts Commission and Audit Scotland in their development of a revised audit framework in relation to the next round of Best Value and Community Planning audits (Best Value 2).
- 2.4 In addition to informing Cabinet that East Ayrshire Council had been selected as a Pathfinder Council, the report also confirmed that the Accounts Commission would be consulting with Councils, consumer organisations and the Scottish Government on its revised BV2 framework.

- 2.5 For the past eighteen months, the Accounts Commission has been working with all key audit and inspection bodies in Scotland to produce this new audit framework that is intended to reflect the Scottish Government's objectives. The Commission concluded that self-evaluation and improvement support need to feature more strongly in the Best Value and Community Planning audit, and that a greater focus on services and outcomes and on partnership working is required. It also committed to producing clearer, easier to read audit reports.

3. THE CONSULTATION

- 3.1 The Accounts Commission has now produced a framework covering the key elements of Best Value 2, (See [Appendix 1](#)) incorporating the Scottish Government actions and the Commission's own objectives, and will now consider comments on these proposals from the general public, members and officers in local government, and bodies that work as partners with local government.
- 3.2 The commission will also hold meetings with COSLA, SOLACE, Consumer Focus Scotland and the Scottish Government to discuss the proposals in greater detail.

4. KEY ELEMENTS

- 4.1 The consultation with local government has taken the form of a structured questionnaire, and Members are asked to consider the Council's response (see [Appendix 2](#)).
- 4.2 Members should be aware that there are thirteen sections to the questionnaire, requiring eighteen responses. The sections cover:
- Risk Assessment and Joint Scrutiny Planning
 - Self Evaluation
 - Single Corporate Assessment
 - Service Performance
 - Partnerships
 - Single Outcome Agreements and Best Value 2
 - Citizen Focus
 - Peer Involvement
 - Grading / Scoring
 - Role of the Accounts Commission
 - Audit Fees
 - Sustainability
 - Equalities
- 4.3 East Ayrshire Council, as one of the five Pathfinder councils, will be play an important role in testing the Commission's audit approach to BV2 and the shared risk assessment framework that will be used. This process will run in parallel with the national consultation on the audit

framework and the learning gained from the Pathfinder process will inform the overall outcomes from the consultation.

4.4 To ensure consistency in terms of the judgements made by Audit Scotland in future audit reports, the consultation proposes that 3 criteria would be reported on:

- Direction of pace and change judgement. This will report on the Council's record in improving the services it provides
- Capacity of future improvement judgement. This will assess the Council's prospects for further improvement, and
- The Council's self awareness, as reflected in local self evaluation activity

5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The Council is in a strong position to respond positively to the Pathfinder BV2 audit and to demonstrate economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of its services.

5.2 The results from the Council's 2nd Corporate Strategic Self Assessment of Performance appears as a separate item on this agenda and sets out a proposed Improvement Agenda. This will feature prominently in the Pathfinder audit process and builds on the Council's established EFQM structure, the recent review of the Community Planning Partnership Single Outcome Agreement, recent resident and employee surveys and the Strategic Review of the Revenue Budget.

6. FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no financial, legal or new risk implications.

7. COMMUNITY PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Community Planning is an important focus of the implementation of Best Value 2 with the audit framework seeking to take account of the developing relationship between national government and local authorities through the Community Planning Partnership Single Outcome Agreement and Concordat. There will also be an increased focus on outcomes and the views of citizens and service users.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Cabinet is asked to agree the Council's proposed response to the Accounts Commission's consultation on Best Value 2.

Fiona Lees
Chief Executive
7 May 2009

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Nil

IMPLEMENTATION OFFICER: Alex McPhee, Executive Head of Finance and Asset Management.