

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE – 17 FEBRUARY 2005

BEST VALUE POSITION STATEMENT FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF CORPORATE SUPPORT

Report by Depute Chief Executive/Executive Director of Corporate Support

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To present the current Best Value Position Statement for the Department for Corporate Support.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Local Government in Scotland Act, 2003 requires councils to make arrangements to secure Best Value.
- 2.2 East Ayrshire Council will be subject to Best Value Audit during 2005.
- 2.3 The meeting of the Corporate Governance Committee of 10 February 2004 noted that, whilst not subject to full audit during 2004, departments had prepared Best Value Position Statements, highlighting the improvements made and their progress in delivering Best Value services.
- 2.4 The meeting of the Corporate Governance Committee of 21 September 2004 agreed that departments update their Best Value Position Statements for consideration by their respective Service Committees, thereby ensuring that Members continue to be kept abreast of Best Value activity within their services.

3. THE DEPARTMENT OF CORPORATE SUPPORT BEST VALUE POSITION STATEMENT

- 3.1 The Improvement Schedule contained within the updated Best Value Position Statement in respect of the services within the Department of Corporate Support is appended to this report. For completeness, a summary of the services provided by each of the service units within the department has also been included within the full Best Value Position Statement, a copy of which has been placed in the Members' Information Point and can also be provided on request.
- 3.2 Members will note that the Scottish Executive's framework that forms the basis of the Statutory Guidance supporting the Local Government in Scotland Act, 2003 has been used to form the structure within which the improvements secured by services have been highlighted. This is considered appropriate, particularly in light of the impending Best Value Audit that will be conducted by the Accounts Commission over the course of the current year and demonstrates a relevant and structured approach has been followed.

4.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The preparation of the Best Value Position Statement for the Department of Corporate Support and the improvements highlighted demonstrate an appropriate response to the statutory requirements set out in the Local Government in Scotland Act, 2003 and the relevant Statutory Guidance.
- 4.2 Reporting to this Committee on the actions taken and the range of improvements secured within the Department of Corporate Support provides an appropriate means of engaging Elected Members in Best Value.

5.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The preparation of the Department of Corporate Support Best Value Position Statement is in line with current Council policy and is a clear indication of the emphasis placed upon securing continuous improvement in the delivery of services within the Department.

6.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 None arising directly from this report.

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 The Corporate Governance Committee is asked to:-
 - (i) consider the Department of Corporate Support Best Value Position Statement; and
 - (ii) otherwise note the content of this report;

Elizabeth Morton
Depute Chief Executive/Executive Director of Corporate Support

4 February 2005

List of Background Papers

- 1. Local Government in Scotland Act, 2003.
- 2. Statutory Guidance on the Duty to Make Arrangements to Secure Best Value (Scottish Executive), September 2003.
- 3. Full Best Value Position Statement 2004 for the Department of Corporate Support.

Anyone wishing any further information should contact Elizabeth Morton, tel (01563) 576001, or John Clayton, tel (01563) 576165.



East Ayrshire
COUNCIL

DEPARTMENT OF CORPORATE
SUPPORT

BEST VALUE POSITION
STATEMENT

January 2005

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Department of Corporate Support primarily delivers support services to Council departments. Central to the Department's objectives is the promotion of a Best Value approach and a commitment to delivering continuous improvement in service delivery.

This Best Value Position Statement provides examples of good practice, sets out the Best Value activity the Department has been engaged in and presents a summary of improvements secured over the last year.

Section 2 of this Best Value Position Statement outlines the main service areas across the Department of Corporate Support. The Department has a total of 414 full time equivalent employees as at 30 September 2004, with a net revenue budget of £8.998m for 2004/05. The Department's capital budget relates to Information Technology and for 2004/05 is £500,000. The following summarises the functions carried out within the Department.

Corporate Development and Communication

The Public Relations and Marketing Unit provides media, design and publicity services to the Council. The Best Value and Performance Unit is responsible for co-ordinating and progressing the implementation of the Council's "Best Value" programme across the authority. The Community Planning and Partnership Unit co-ordinates the implementation of the Community Plan and monitors the implementation of a number of community regeneration initiatives through, for example, the Social Inclusion Partnership and Better Neighbourhood Services Fund.

Information Technology

Information Technology provides responsive and accountable information technology services to the Council that is focused upon, and driven by, the business needs of its customers.

Personnel Services

Personnel Services is responsible for managing the Human Resources function, the Health and Safety function and training function for the 6691 (5394 FTE) employees of the Council.

Administrative and Legal Services

Administration is responsible for a range of services from Central Reprographics and Committee Administration to Common Services and Member Services.

Legal Services provides legal advice to the Council both to its departments and committees, manages the Council's contracts and ensures that the Council's interests are protected. It provides conveyancing services to the Council, including the sale of Council houses. It manages and administers the East

Ayrshire District Courts in Cumnock and Kilmarnock; administers applications for liquor licences through the East Ayrshire Licensing Board and provides a comprehensive litigation service for the Council.

Finance Service

The Executive Head of Finance is the Council's "Proper Officer" in terms of Section 95 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 which requires every council to "make arrangements for the proper administration of their financial affairs and ensure that the proper officer of the authority has responsibility for the administration of those affairs". The prime role of the Finance Service is to support that requirement. The Service is provided through 5 operational teams: Strategic & Operational Accounting; Financial Accounting and Control; Revenues; Benefits; & Payments.

2. DEPARTMENT OF CORPORATE SUPPORT SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS

CORPORATE DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNICATION

The following provides a brief overview of the Service Improvements secured by the Corporate Development and Communication Service through its implementation of a Best Value approach:-

| Scottish Executive Best Value Criteria | Improvements Secured |
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| Public Relations and Marketing Unit | |
| Performance | <p>The Public Relations and Marketing Unit continues to collate and analyse management information through statistical data that is held on file. This information provides key data for identifying trends, where resources are / should be focused and where strengths and / or weaknesses in service delivery may exist. Examples of where this and other measures have enhanced performance are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A forward planner in the form of the Communications Development Plan has been developed. This identifies the main projects and initiatives for each service department for the coming year, which allows for better forward planning of the Communications aspect of events, and means that resources can be anticipated and deployed accordingly. The Communications Plan was revisited and information gathered from service departments to update the Plan in December 2004. • A Public Relations Officer and two people from the Graphic Design Unit have recently received DreamWeaver training (two members of staff who originally completed the training have left the Section). This provides the Section with direct access to the Council's web pages for updating relevant information. A member of the Public Relations Section is the Corporate Support Department's Service Co-ordinator for the Council's website. • The Communication Section continues to have an overview role in monitoring all Council advertising (although the responsibility for placing the ads through an advertising agency still rests with each department, an arrangement put in place by the Section). This arrangement passes on the benefits of economies of scale to departments and streamlines the process of placing orders and the subsequent payment of invoices (from the source department and not from an intermediary department). • The PR Unit has now moved towards fully electronic imaging for PR events. This leads to significant cost savings as prints will no longer be purchased from photographers as images will |

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| | <p>be stored electronically. Postage costs will also be reduced as images now accompany press releases to the media through the use of emails.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Design Unit has taken delivery of new G5 Apple Mac computers and associated software. As the section is now running the same upgraded software as external print companies and agencies, the efficiency and speed with which files for print are despatched to print companies has improved. Software packages that enable the section to produce multimedia documents for use on the Councils' intranet and internet sites have also been purchased. • An HP Designjet 30n colour printer has been purchased for the Design Unit that will eliminate the need for photographers to supply and charge for printouts and copies of photographs. At present the average cost of a photographic printout is £5.00, the Design Unit can now produce printouts for less than £1.00. • Proofing design jobs by electronic means is continuing and the time creating pdf files has been further reduced through the use of the new software. • Three print companies quoted for the last edition of Headlines, all were much dearer than the present company, who are web offset as opposed to litho printers. The present company have now reduced the cost of Headlines by approximately £100, this is due to all print now being produced in their main plant in England. |
| <p>Responsiveness and Consultation</p> | <p>The protocol for publicity at PR events is a key document that continues to greatly enhance and streamline the work of the Section. This was subject to rigorous consultation and all Elected Members and Heads of Service observe the protocol. We have also consulted our customers as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Public Relations Unit is currently carrying out a customer satisfaction survey that will be completed and analysed before the end of the current financial year. The information derived from this will allow the Unit to identify strengths and / or areas for improvement and thus better target its resources to meet the needs of Elected Members, client departments and the media. • The Design Unit has also conducted a customer satisfaction survey through a questionnaire that was issued to all client departments. The responses received indicated a high level of satisfaction with the quality of the service provided. |
| <p>Sound Governance</p> | <p>The Section's Procedure Notes have been re-viewed and updated. New Procedure Notes continue to be developed along with the section. These Notes are key documents that allow any member of the Section to undertake any of the tasks carried out by the Section, even with no previous experience of that task.</p> |
| <p>Use of Review</p> | <p>Following last year's tender for photographic services, the Section</p> |

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| and Option Appraisal | <p>has now tendered for an advertising agency to carry out the advertising trawl for the Council's magazines Headlines (public) and EastWords (staff). Added to this, the section has also:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assisted the Procurement Team with the print tender for Eastwords staff magazine to reduce the time taken to send the completed job to be commercially printed as three quotes are no longer required. • Assisted the Procurement Team in the forthcoming Council wide Print Tender exercise by creating print briefs for various commercial print processes. • Assisted Neighbourhood Services (Leisure) in the implementation of their annual print tender for the production of all museums and arts establishment programmes. |
| Equal Opportunities Arrangements | <p>The section has completed Racial Impact Reports, in compliance with the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000.</p> |
| Best Value and Performance Unit | |
| Performance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Statutory Performance Indicators (SPIs) received 'A' grading from Audit Scotland for 2004 • Consultation on the 2005/06 SPI's completed on target • EFQM Pathway Software implemented across the whole of the Council – the first local authority in Scotland to do so. All Service Units will undertake an EFQM Assessment on an annual basis, with improvement plans prepared and implemented. An EFQM Working Group was established and direct support is provided by the Best Value and Performance Unit to Council Departments • East Ayrshire Public Performance Report was issued to every household in East Ayrshire – more than 50,000 households • Positive outcome secured in New Best Value Transitional Audit which was undertaken by PricewaterhouseCoopers, the Council's External Auditor • Completed the review of the Council's Best Value Arrangements in light of the Local Government in Scotland Act, 2003 and supporting statutory guidance • The Performance Review Group has now been established |
| Sound Governance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Local Code of Corporate Governance has been established and is reviewed and improvements introduced on an annual basis. The Best Value and Performance Unit lead the Officer Working Group responsible for reviewing progress against the agreed Action Plan and co-ordinates the preparation of the Local Code of Corporate Governance. |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Best Value and Performance Unit has undertaken a full review of the various aspects of the Local Government in Scotland Act, 2003 and the supporting Statutory Guidance. This has resulted in the implementation of significant changes to the Council's Best Value arrangements. |
| Responsiveness and Consultation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Best Value and Performance Unit has undertaken a review of the Council's Complaints Reporting procedures to include the reporting of incidents of a discriminatory nature. The Council's Complaints procedure leaflet was updated and has been reissued. East Ayrshire Public Performance Report was issued to every household in East Ayrshire – more than 50,000 households. |
| Use of Review and Option Appraisal | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy in respect of Best Value Service Review has been developed by the Best Value and Performance Unit and subsequently considered and agreed by the Council. The Best Value and Performance Unit has supported departments in the implementation of the EFQM Excellence Model and Best Value Review. |
| Joint Working | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> North West Kilmarnock Neighbourhood Services Centre final design brief agreed with client Departments Additional £2.3m funding secured for North West Kilmarnock Neighbourhood Services Centre from Scottish Executive Grouting contract for the North West Kilmarnock Neighbourhood Services Centre (£175,000) completed and main project tenders issued Planning consent for North West Kilmarnock Neighbourhood Services Centre secured Toolbox for partnership working developed in conjunction with Scottish Executive |
| Equal Opportunities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council's formal Complaints Procedure has been amended to record complaints of a discriminatory nature. |
| Accountability | <p>The Council has adopted a range of means for reporting on its performance to the public. The Best Value and Performance Unit is responsible for the publication of Statutory Performance Indicators.</p> <p>Additionally the Unit prepared the Council's third Annual Public Performance Report that was distributed to every household in East Ayrshire during November / December 2004. The report included a questionnaire in which residents are invited to express their views on Council services. The feedback received will be collated and will inform service development.</p> |

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| | <p>The Best Value and Performance Unit co-ordinates the Council's formal Complaints Procedure which provides an important mechanism for service users to hold the Council accountable for the effectiveness of service delivery.</p> |
| Community Planning and Partnership Unit | |
| Performance | <p>Over the past year, the Community Planning and Partnership Unit has enhanced its service in the following examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BNSF Local Outcome Agreements which focus on outputs and outcomes • Performance review which is integral to all work, indicates compliance with national and local requirements in respect of SIP/BNSF and Community Planning. • Our review process highlights areas of success and identifies actions for improvement. • Systems are in place to ensure the return of quarterly monitoring reports and annual reports. • Information is provided via the SIP Monitoring Framework to allow benchmarking across all SIPs. • Elected members are involved in performance review meetings – BNSF and on the SIP Board. • Information is routinely presented to the SIP Board/Community Planning Partners |
| Commitment and Leadership | <p>Continuous improvement and best value is a guiding principle within the Community Plan. This can be seen in the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The SIP Board considers performance and progress against set targets and outcomes on a routine basis as in the East Ayrshire Community Plan 2003 - 2015. • The SIP Board has also set a clear strategic vision that incorporates the key elements of best value. • The Policy and Resources Committee has corporate responsibility for the Better Neighbourhood Services Fund – on behalf of the Council's Community Planning Partners. • The SIP Board ensures that service planning and strategies are realistic and achievable and activity is matched to financial and other resources. • The Leader of the Council chairs the Community Planning Core Partners' Group which sets the strategic direction for East Ayrshire's first Community Plan. • Community Planning Annual Performance Reports are prepared and submitted to P&R Committee and Partner Boards. • SIP Board meetings are open to the public and minutes lodged on the Council's internet. • SIP and BNSF annual reports are prepared and submitted to the relevant committee and Scottish Executive for endorsement. • Annual reports are also produced in a user friendly format and |

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| | widely distributed to voluntary and community groups. |
| Responsiveness and Consultation | <p>Consultation of our stakeholders and responding to their needs and requirements is a key element of our strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are developing new programmes in response to local need and after extensive community consultation. • Members and Senior Managers routinely engage with local communities through for example, Community Consultation Seminars, to determine need and priorities. • The Core Community Planning Partners have identified the need to ensure a more systematic and co-ordinated approach to community consultation and engagement. • Elected Members and Senior Managers have been actively involved in direct community consultation exercises such as Community Warden Consultation Meetings and BNSF Citizens' Panel meetings. • Elected Members and Senior Managers routinely meet with a range of stakeholders including members of the public, voluntary and community groups, and the private sector. • Two Community Planning Bulletins per year are circulated to Elected Members and the staff of all Partner organisations to inform them of achievement in relation to Community planning. • 'Quick Word About' documents are regularly circulated to Elected Members staff of Partner organisations to inform them of Community Planning and Partnership Unit activity |
| Sound Governance at a Strategic, Financial and Operational Level | <p>The Community Plan sets out the shared vision for the local authority area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elected members and senior managers were involved in developing the Community Plan which sets the strategic direction for the East Ayrshire area over the next 12 years (2003-2015). • The Leader of the Council and senior managers actively participate on the Community Planning Core Partners' Group. • Senior managers drive forward the actions arising from the Core Partners' Group via the Joint Officers' Group, as detailed and monitored as part of the JOG Work Plan. • Structures such as the JOG Minutes and the Lead Officers' Group Action Notes have been established to ensure the effective implementation of the actions contained within the Community Plan action plans. • The SIP Board ensures that service planning and strategies are realistic and achievable and activity is matched to financial and other resources. • The Budget Scrutiny Group ensures scrutiny of all of the partnership funded elements under the auspices of the Community Planning and Partnership Unit. • The Coalfield SIP Board/North Social Inclusion Initiative Board receive quarterly financial monitoring reports for consideration and endorsement. • Monthly, quarterly and annual financial reports are forwarded |

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| | <p>to Communities Scotland for scrutiny.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systems are in place to ensure that, prior to grant payment, project finance is scrutinised. • The Coalfield SIP Board/North Social Inclusion Initiative Board receive an annual summary report. |
| Sound Management of Resources | <p>The SIP Board seeks to maximise the level of resources available to the area by making best use of resources, in kind support and securing external funding.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To this end, all contracts issued are subject to regulated procurement procedures. |
| Use of Review and Option Appraisal | <p>We have set systems such as SIP Monitoring and Evaluation in place to monitor SIP projects quarterly, with annual review meetings held for all projects.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjustments are made to programmes to ensure activity continues to meet the needs of stakeholders. • Quality is a core principle of the SIP –all projects funded must strive to ensure best quality. • We provide regular reports via briefing agendas to elected members on performance related to BNSF programmes. |
| Competitiveness, Trading and the Discharge of Authority Functions | <p>We seek to ensure that SIP complies with all conditions of grant as determined at a national and European level.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council standard terms and conditions of grant are issued for all projects. • We have convened a State Aid seminar for staff. |
| A Contribution to Sustainable Development | <p>Sustainability is a guiding principle within the Community Plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are doing this through the Improving the Environment Action Plan which gives consideration to the environmental impact of programmes. |
| Equal Opportunities Arrangements | <p>Equal opportunities is a guiding principle within the community plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through the SIP Strategy 2002-04 we ensure that equality of opportunity is a core component of the SIP in tackling social justice. |
| Joint Working | <p>Effective partnership working is integral to the work of the Community Planning and Partnership Unit</p> |
| Accountability | <p>Annual reports are prepared for a range of the Unit's core activity and issued in an attractive format to the general public.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Plan 1st Annual Performance Report 2003/04 • SIP Annual Report 2003/04 • North Annual Report 2003/04 • BNSF Annual Report 2003/04 • Community Based Youth Justice Annual Report 2003/04 |

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

The following provides a brief overview of the Service Improvements secured by the Information Technology Service through its implementation of a Best Value approach:-

| Scottish Executive Best Value Criteria | Improvements Secured |
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| Information Technology | |
| Performance | <p>In the first IT Service EFQM assessment in January 1998, the service scored 166 points identifying significant areas of strength but also highlighting a number of areas that could be considered for improvement. The second EFQM assessment was completed in March 2000 and the score of 249 points demonstrates a 49% improvement in the performance of the service. An action plan was produced and updated as a result of these assessments. In addition:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To date 80% of the actions are completed or subject to an ongoing review process; 16% are subject to external factors before they can be fully completed. The remaining action is subject to ongoing discussions with IT Services management team. • The 2004 IT Service EFQM assessment is currently underway with a scheduled completion date of December 2004. • A PMP audit was undertaken in 2000/01. As part of the audit the service agreed a number of improvement actions that it would carry out to improve its PMP arrangements. In the following two years, an audit of the progress that had been made on these actions was carried out. Following the final audit (2003), all of the identified improvement actions have been completed as planned. • Helpdesk systems produce regular performance indicators to ensure compliance with agreed service levels. Statistics are produced on the number of open help desk calls, an analysis of outstanding faults and a summary of the availability of the key Unix application servers. The results are graphed and allow trends to be identified as well as allowing comparisons to be made year on year. Senior management receive these results and take action on any issues identified. • The performance indicators from the Help Desk System show that service levels have been maintained despite the continued increase in IT service provision. System availability is at an average of 99% over the year, the loss being mainly attributable to the failure of the Air Conditioning which has now been replaced with a vastly improved system with built-in resilience. A survey in November 2003 showed an improving position on service level perceptions in customer departments. A telephone survey indicated that the Help Desk service remains very highly rated and valued by users of the service. |

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| <p>Use of Review and Option Appraisal</p> | <p>The ICT function undertook a Best Value Service Review during 2002. This exercise was undertaken using methodology grounded in the Performance Management and Planning (PMP) self assessment framework and best practice guidance produced by the Scottish Executive's Best Value Task Force, COSLA and the Society of IT Managers (SOCITM). From the Service Review, the following resulted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Policy and Resources Committee endorsed the Information Technology Services Service Review recommendations of the Scrutiny and Best Value Review Group as a basis for service improvement. The recommendations resulting from the Service Review were then further developed into a detailed set of Actions which were in turn subsumed into the IT Services Service Action Plan. • All of the Actions identified have been completed or are subject to continuous and ongoing review processes. • As a result of an independent review of the Council's security strategy by security specialists, the service identified actions to be taken to respond to some of the issues identified in the audit. One area of concern was the security of desktop assets. This has been addressed by a project to implement a desktop management system aimed at improving the way the service responds to the needs of users. This will allow central monitoring of desktop assets to ensure that equipment is not removed or added without authority, as well as allowing the remote administration of desktop software. This will allow faster fault rectification with fewer site visits. • 100% of networked equipment is covered by the desktop management system. The need for site visits has reduced producing significant savings in resource. The Council is now a member of the Federation Against Software Theft and we have attained their Bronze Award for our procedures and management of software within the authority. |
| <p>Sound Governance</p> | <p>Improvement actions have been identified through various mechanisms and consolidated into a single service action plan. This also includes additional items from the service strategy, e-government strategy, service requests from departments and actions identified from security, network and other service reviews. The action plan is reviewed periodically by the management team to monitor progress against targets. In addition, the following actions have helped to enhance our service:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The IT Strategy defines the Corporate Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and e-Government Strategy that will be adopted for the development, implementation and management of information technology and associated data, video and voice communications facilities, and for the development, implementation and management for the electronic delivery of services within East |

Ayrshire Council. The latest version is currently in draft and will cover the period to March 2006.

- The ongoing development of Action & Development Plans to support these Strategies, to cover specific topics such as ICT Security and e-Government, are subject to continuous review.
- Allocation of Capital funding is established as part of a rolling three year programme monitored through an interdepartmental Capital Program Monitoring Group. The capital budget submission is drawn together by the departmental Information & Communications Technology Strategy Group (ICTSG), and is submitted to Finance Services for further consideration in light of available funds.
- The Capital Programme is reviewed on an annual basis. This allows changes in requirements and priorities to be examined, together with changes in costs for the forthcoming year as a result of price increases, slippage in programmes and additional requirements for projects. This allows the overall program for the forthcoming year to be determined and aligned with policy and strategy. IT Senior, Account and Service Managers are involved in expenditure projections for this process by providing budget submissions to the Head of IT.
- The Contracts database was also developed, maintained by Service and Account Managers and administered by IT Senior Management. The database is a register of all IT Contracts which entail recurring revenue costs and ensures accurate and up to date management of IT contracts. This, together with the IT Commitment Accounting system, provides IT Management with valuable tools in the financial and budgetary monitoring process.
- As a result of an independent audit of the Council's security strategy, the Council invested in a networked asset management system to consistently monitor and manage the Council's ICT assets. This will allow remote monitoring of PCs to ensure that the Council's ICT policies are implemented. The software also monitors the configuration of equipment to ensure that no peripherals or memory is stolen; that anti-virus software is installed and is up to date; that software installed is licensed; and that additional software is not installed without approval. The software also allows remote administration of networked PCs, allowing service staff to correct faults without an expensive visit to the user.
- A full Security Review by an external specialist is underway. Software management procedures agreed with the Federation Against Software Theft ensure that unlicensed software should not be loaded onto Council equipment.
- The Corporate ICT Strategy Group (ICTSG) is comprised of senior officers from individual Service Departments and IT Services. The Group is chaired by the Director of Corporate Support / Depute Chief Executive and provides a focus for the evolution and development of the Corporate ICT Strategy and related policies within the Council.

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The IT Commitment Accounting System was developed to cover the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budgetary Control (revenue and capital) • Purchase Orders • Invoicing • Actual and Committed expenditure • Reporting and Monitoring facilities |
| <p>Responsiveness and Consultation</p> | <p>Service Level Agreements (SLAs) were introduced after a series of consultation exercises involving IT Senior Management, IT Account & Service Managers and Council Departments to develop the relationship with our customers, and to respond to customer requirements. The scope of the consultations allowed IT Services and client departments to define and agree on the level and nature of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IT service delivery. • Benchmarking (see above) <p>As part of the standard review process, Service Level Agreements are currently being re-examined within IT to identify areas that may be improved.</p> |
| <p>Joint Working</p> | <p>Consultation has taken place with other authorities, service providers and the voluntary sector to identify areas of shared interest. IT Services have created framework agreements with our principal suppliers to develop good working relationships. Close working relationships also mean that the IT service also receives other non-financial benefits from the relationship such as staff training and sponsorship of community initiatives such as the AEC/VISION project. IT Services are active members in the Scottish Executive Modernising Government Fund (MGF) Consortia. This has led to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council is participating fully in three Consortia led bids in respect of the development of a Master Address Database for the Council, the development of a Single Shared Assessment for Care for the Elderly, and the implementation of a Dialogue Youth/Young Persons Smart Card. • We also participate in the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) MGF consortium, and in the national Smart Card project (SCASC). • On a more local level, IT Services Senior Management participates in an IT consortium comprising of other Councils (South Ayrshire, North Ayrshire, Renfrewshire, Argyll & Bute etc.). • Recent joint working consortium arrangements have been initiated to address the Scottish Executive's Efficient Government Fund (EGF) proposals. This involves other organisations such as North Ayrshire, South Ayrshire, Ayrshire & Arran Health Board, Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire, etc. |

PERSONNEL SERVICES

The following provides a brief overview of the Service Improvements secured by the Personnel Services Service through the implementation of a Best Value approach:-

| Scottish Executive Best Value Criteria | Improvements Secured |
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| Personnel Services | |
| Performance | <p>Personnel Services seeks to continually improve its performance in a number of ways, examples of which are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have successfully become an approved Centre for in-house delivery of externally accredited courses including ILM Introductory Certificate in First Line Management and Full Certificate in First Line Management, and SVQ Customer Service Level 3. • Training and Development has retained accreditation from the Scottish Local Authorities Management Centre of Strathclyde University to deliver the Post Graduate Programme in Local Authority Management. • We provide materials and deliver workshops in support of ECDL syllabus and organise testing in liaison with Libraries / Registration and Information. • Our design and delivery of programmes for ICT training for teachers from all tiers within Education, support recommendations arising from McCrone Report. • We have introduced a FE induction day to ease the transition of employees back into formal education, supported by study skills sessions. • The Scottish Quality Management System accreditation has been successfully retained, ensuring contractual compliance with requirements of Scottish Enterprise for licence to deliver national training programmes. In addition, all external audits have demonstrated compliance with rules and regulations that apply to programmes funded by Scottish Enterprise and Job CentrePlus. • We have maintained validation for delivery of Administration level 2, 3 and Modern Apprenticeship and have recently applied for and received approval for in-house delivery of Customer Service vocational qualifications at level 2. • We continue to deliver Modern Apprenticeship programmes including Administration and various Construction Craft trades and also Information Technology. • The good performance outcomes of the delivery of 'Get Ready for Work' programme in vocational, personal and lifeskills strands has enabled the contract to be increased, so allowing additional young people to benefit from the programme. |

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| | <p>Our Health and Safety Section has achieved the following successes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IOSH Accredited Managing Safely Certificate – General 21 successful, 0 unsuccessful. • IOSH Accredited Managing Safely Certificate – Social Work 67 successful, 0 unsuccessful. • SHAW Initiatives throughout year on topic specific themes. • 2 New Health & Safety Standards developed. • 1 Health & Safety Standards revised. • Revised Incident/Near Miss Report Form (save developing a new system to report cases of fire). • Completion of Database of accident data. |
| <p>Commitment and Leadership</p> | <p>We have carried out a desk Top self-assessment of EFQM within Personnel Services and reviewed our Best Value arrangements. In addition:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training and Development section fosters and operates within a climate of continuous improvement. There is a system of regular review of Training materials and processes and verification procedures. All employees undertake CPD. We have introduced a Support and Supervision mechanism which compliments the ongoing EAGER process. • We have maintained 5 decentralised Safety Co-ordinator posts. |
| <p>Responsiveness and Consultation</p> | <p>We continue to maintain positive and effective working relationships with Trade Unions and employees by regularly monitoring and actioning complaints. In pursuit of this:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The most recent realignment of the Training and Development function built on the previous efforts to strengthen consultative links with our client departments. The Training advisory service now has TDOs regularly liaising with Directorate representatives, and co-ordinators linking directly with front line managers to address day to day development issues. Certain co-ordinators have specific responsibility for progressing VQ solutions, whilst others maintain generic interventions and ensure the effective communication of requests generated through EAGER. • We also consult and respond via the Chief Executive’s Strategy Group and the Joint Consultation Committees. |
| <p>Sound Governance at a Strategic, Financial and Operational Level</p> | <p>We are continuing to work towards the Implementation of the Single Status Agreement.</p> |
| <p>Sound Management of Resources</p> | <p>Council continuing to improve employees conditions of service with recently introduced revised personnel policies such as:</p> |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of Physiotherapy service. • Recognition of Continuous service - NHS Ayrshire & Arran. • Exchange Programme in Twin Towns. • Employee Identification • National Fraud Initiative • Pre-Retirement course developed. • Promoting Health Improvement • Freedom of Information Act • Disability Awareness <p>In addition:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We evaluate and assess requests for training and determine whether identified needs would most effectively be met by our service, other internal or external providers according to areas of expertise and use a range of Further/Higher Education institutions to deliver specific vocational qualifications. • The unit has been managed within agreed Council budgets and within funding constraints from Scottish Enterprise and other agencies. Additional support has been secured from ESF Objective 3 and proposals have been submitted for support from the East Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership. |
| Competitiveness, Trading and the Discharge of Authority Functions | We have met budget efficiency gains as approved by Council. |
| A Contribution to Sustainable Development | <p>We contribute towards sustainable development in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We encourage recycling activities in all of our sections. • We have developed bespoke training interventions for Elected Members, Community Representatives and Council supported initiatives (e.g. SIP, Conduit, BTTC). These are groups who have a direct impact on socio-economic matters. • Provision of training to SAC Managing Safely – Social Work 8 successful 0 unsuccessful. |
| Equal Opportunities Arrangements | <p>We are the Council's main vehicle for the formulation and dissemination of EO arrangements. We also follow EO arrangements within our own sections through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of Race Equality Scheme. • Continuation of Disabled Employee Forum. • Statutory Performance Indicator on Equal Opportunities. • Introduction of Equal Opportunities Monitoring of course attendance to enable both statutory and non-statutory statistics to be compiled. • Introduction of revised Equal Opportunities Code of Practice |

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| | <p>for all Trainers, whether internal or commissioned.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training offered in Diversity and Equalities. • Representation at Forum for employees with disabilities. |
| Joint Working | <p>Personnel Services aim to develop and improve appropriate joint working. The following examples indicate some of our ventures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have enabled Joint Future arrangements with Ayrshire and Arran Health Board on relevant issues. • Our Training and Development take lead responsibility on the Community Planning Training Group. This Group reports to the Joint Officers Group, and is currently investigating practical ways in which the partners may share existing resources and develop common training solutions to joint problems. • Partnership training takes place between Training and Development, Health Improvement and Social Work in regard to Promoting Health Improvement. This training was piloted within East Ayrshire, and resulted in a request from COSLA for it to be delivered to their staff. • Training and Development participate in a Workplace Literacies Group, which informs the Community Development Learning Partnership. • Good working relationships have been maintained with East Ayrshire Employment Initiative, local employers and with several Council service departments who provide valuable work experience placements. • Under a contract with East Ayrshire Employment Initiative, we delivered the Environmental Task Force option of the new Deal Programme, and have secured 6 jobs for participants so far this year. • Under a contract with East Ayrshire Employment Initiative, we managed the StepUp Employment Initiative for the Council, providing temporary supported employment for long term unemployed adults which so far this year has lead to 11 gaining full time employment. • Provision of training to SAC Managing Safely – Social Work 8 successful 0 unsuccessful. • Continuation of contract with AHS as Occupational Health Service Provider. |
| Accountability | <p>We report Statutory PIs on absences and Equal opportunities.</p> |

ADMINISTRATIVE AND LEGAL SERVICES

The following provides a brief overview of the Service Improvements secured by the Administrative and Legal Services Section through the implementation of a Best Value approach:-

| Scottish Executive Best Value Criteria | Improvements Secured |
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| Administration | |
| Performance | <p>The Administration section seeks to continually improve its performance in a number of ways with examples as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An in-house courier service for Service Departments has been developed. • Performance in relation to the production of Committee minutes/decisions within each Committee cycle is monitored. • Successful production of Council employee identity badges in accordance with Council strategy. |
| Use of Review and Option Appraisal | <p>A Best Value Review of the Administration Service was conducted in 2000. In addition to this, we have carried out the following actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular review of governing protocol documentation. • Review of Committee cycle to meet Elected Member/Service Department requirements. • Review/enhancement of management support. • In relation to the Reprographics Service, a review / development of facilities has been undertaken and enhancement of the network implemented to meet client needs. • A Community Council scheme has been established and two successive reviews carried out. • Review of Members' Services has resulted in a number of improvements, including the development of a training package, the introduction of IT support and a review of support services to Elected Members. • Development of new training initiative for Community Representatives. • Review and development of community Representatives Annual Seminar to support and encourage existing and new Community Representatives. • Review of staff structure carried out to develop existing Trainee Admin Officer post and further development of |

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| | <p>Trainee Admin Officer career development scheme.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of Trust procedures and development of best practice. • Review of dormant Trusts held by other Departments for activation and promotion to meet Trust aims. |
| Sound Management of Resources | <p>A grants database has been developed.</p> <p>A CALM records management system has been purchased and is being used to manage the Councils semi-current records</p> |
| Responsiveness and Consultation | <p>Our actions include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-to-one support is provided to Chairs/Vice-Chairs. • Support is provided to Community Representatives. • Support to Council Departments on Records Management. • Support and advice to Council Departments, Councillors and the general public on Freedom of Information implications. <p>Consultations are carried out with a number of stakeholders, including:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elected Members; • Service Departments; • Community Representatives; and • Community Councils. |
| Accountability | <p>We ensure that Committee papers are provided for public view within the Council web site.</p> |
| Joint Working | <p>The examples noted below show some of our joint working processes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Work Complaints Review Committee. • Joint working with CPAC and children's Panel representatives to review and develop Panel Members monitoring regime. • Joint working to support the various Trusts including innovative processing of applications e.g. online purchasing system established, business relations established with specialist suppliers. |

| Legal Services | |
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| Performance | <p>Legal Services continually work towards the improvement of our services and the maintenance of professional integrity. The following examples describe some of our actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Section's performance in meeting the statutory performance indicator target of 26 weeks for the sale of Council Houses fell in the year 2003/2004 to 36% as a result of resource implication arising from the increased number of applications received and the legislative changes imposed by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001. Scheduled monthly meetings involving officers from all services to monitor service provision and agree settlement targets have been established. This has allowed for an improvement in the indicator performance for Q1 and 2 of the current financial year to 55% and 77%. • There have been no formal legal challenges within the year against the Council in Court in respect of a contractual arrangement. • The Procurement Section was audited on Tendering & Advertising of Contracts during 2003 and passed a follow-up review during 2004, all actions completed successfully. • 77 % of summary cause actions have been raised within the timescale targeted of 14 days. From the date of receipt of instruction the agreed target is 90%. The process has been reviewed which should allow for an improved performance in the current year. • 98 % of correspondence in respect of District Court disposals has been issued within the timescale target of 3 days. The agreed target is 95%. • 100 % of licences have been issued within the statutory target of 28 days and within the internal indicator target of 7 days. The indicator has been reviewed to allow the timeframe for the issue of licences in an appeal situation to be measured from the date of notification of the determination of appeal. |
| Commitment and Leadership | <p>Our leaders are fully committed to the service through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scheduled Legal Services management team meetings involving the Head of Service, all 3 Team Leaders and the section's senior administrative officer have been held regularly throughout the year. Standing items on the agenda include staffing issues, eager reviews, training issues and absence management monitoring. • Scheduled Legal Services team meetings together with individual meetings with managers and meetings of the various operational units within each team e.g. Council House Sales and Procurement Units have been held regularly |

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| | <p>throughout the year. Improvement activities are a standing item at Team Meetings as a result of which a number of procedural improvements have been identified and implemented.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eager Reviews have been carried out in respect of most members of staff. Individual training needs have been identified either at Eager Reviews or through discussion with management. All identified training needs have been met. All solicitors have met or exceeded the Law Society of Scotland's C.P.D requirements. Procurement officers have attended external training sessions on the incoming Consolidated European Procurement Directive and have kept up to date with developments in the procurement environment generally. • One member of the Council's Administrative Support Staff (District Court), qualified as a paralegal in Criminal Court Practice within the year. Another member of support staff has commenced training as a paralegal (conveyancing) following appointment as a temporary Council House Sales / Conveyancing Assistant. • Internal training has been provided to both paralegals and solicitors within the conveyancing team on the legislative changes within the Abolition of Feudal Tenure etc (Scotland) Act 2000 and the Title Conditions (Scotland) Act 2003 implemented on 28th November 2004. |
| <p>Responsiveness and Consultation</p> | <p>We always consult our customers where possible and respond to their needs and requirements in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular meetings have been held throughout the year with internal client departments to ensure service delivery meets Council policy objectives and responds to customer service requirements and legislative change. Examples include council house sales monthly review meetings that are referred to above and are linked to indicator performance, consequential recovery of council tax arrears linked to refusals and the factoring working group which is linked to the development of revised procedures / process to better monitor and collect capital contributions from owner occupiers. • A Council House Sales Customer Satisfaction Survey is issued in every Council House Sales transaction whereby solicitors and tenants are given the opportunity of assessing level and quality of service provision within a band of 1 to 5. The majority of questionnaires returned have expressed satisfaction with the service. • All tenders issued by the Procurement Section include a multi-part scoring questionnaire whereby each tenderer has the opportunity of scoring each section of the tender documents against 5 levels of "appropriateness" and adding ad hoc comments. The results vary dependant on the project and are normally included in the Tender Outcome Reports. • Attendance at Justices' Committee Meetings, Justices' Housekeeping Committee Meetings and the Annual Meeting |

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| | <p>of all Justices and day to day working with individual Justices has allowed an opportunity for feedback and a review of ongoing training requirements. No negative feedback has been received in relation to District Court Services (Professional Users).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation with Consultee Organisations has taken place as part of the statutory consultation process prior to each Board Meeting (4 in year) and has provided an ongoing basis to obtain perceptions on accessibility, reliability and flexibility of service. Feedback from individual Licensing Board Members is obtained from day to day working. |
| <p>Use of Review and Option Appraisal</p> | <p>We continually review our processes and consider options that may be available as exemplified in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legislative change has a direct impact on processes and service delivery and has led to a review of processes and procedures both internally and within Client Departments. The Council house sales processes / procedures and related general disposal / acquisition have been reviewed in response to the implementation of the Abolition of Feudal Tenure etc Scotland Act 2000 and the Title Conditions (Scotland) Act 2003. Processes / Procedures have been developed to address the preparation of management agreements required to enable the Council to create a paths network as provided for in the Land Tenure (Scotland) Act 2003. The procedures for processing heritable actions has been reviewed in response to the implementation of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001. • Inter Authority working / working with COSLA / SOLAR has been used to further develop joint consultation issues and mutual development. In particular, membership of the SOLAR reform working group on Feudal Reform that has led to a joint approach to the development of a response to the Feudal Reform Legislation which is linked to the obtaining of joint Counsel's opinion where appropriate. |
| <p>Sound Management of Resources</p> | <p>The resources available to us are managed in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Procurement Section manages and maintains a detailed contract register for all contracts awarded via the Legal Services Office. Two separate Licensing Access Documents are maintained by the Licensing Unit in respect of all licensed premises and betting office premises in East Ayrshire. • Internal Cash handling procedures have been reviewed to provide better protection to staff with cash responsibility. • An extended use of Registers Direct computerised database to access title information and Linnets Scots Law Data Base to assist in legal research has had a positive effect on Service Delivery. All solicitors within the Conveyancing and Contracts teams are registered users of Registers Direct; there are 5 registered users of Linnets Scots law within the 3 teams |

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| | <p>although all solicitors have access to the system.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal Services participates in Credit Agreement Schemes operated by both Kilmarnock and Ayr Sheriff Courts that allows for all Court fees to be settled through a single monthly payment. • External Solicitors are employed as agents where analysis of cost renders agency arrangements appropriate. • Financial probity Council wide is supported through the Legal Section's contribution in providing advice in developing and operating the Council's tendering and procurement procedures as contained in the Council's Financial Regulations and Standing Orders relating to contracts. The recent adoption of a new procurement protocol and the adoption of a Corporate Procurement Strategy has in turn, led to an on-going review of the Contractual Standing Orders. |
| <p>Contribution to Sustainable Development</p> | <p>We work towards sustainable development in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal Services have an ongoing role in the preparation of Section 75 Agreements in conjunction / consultation with the Planning, Development and Building Standards Division and Building Control Division to secure provision of open space, developer contributions to the Mineral Trust Fund and in respect of sports or leisure facilities. • Legal Services provide professional services to voluntary bodies such as the East Ayrshire Woodlands Initiative, which aims to redevelop / protect natural woodland within the local environment. • In addition to the development of processes and procedures, Legal Services have an on-going role in the provision of legal advice and assistance to the Council's Access Steering Group which was established to address the requirements of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 in respect of the formation of a core path network within East Ayrshire. |
| <p>Accountability</p> | <p>We see ourselves as being accountable in many respects but in particular:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To progress / monitor reports in several areas relating to service level performance and submit to various Committees for Member consideration - e.g. reports to Housing Committees on Council House Sales and recovery of rent arrears for which Legal Services has an indirect responsibility in respect of the raising of Court actions. |
| <p>Equal Opportunities</p> | <p>We take equal opportunities internally and externally very seriously:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal Services has an ongoing role in the provision of advice and training to Client Departments, organisations and voluntary groups in line with the Council's Policies and legislative provision relating to Equal Opportunities, Disability Discrimination, Sex Discrimination, Race Relations, etc. |

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| | <p>These are incorporated into contractual arrangements where appropriate, e.g. community care contracts.</p> |
| <p>Joint Working</p> | <p>We work with many different groups. The following are provided as examples of what we do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific Ayrshire Inter-Authority Groups are encouraged and reflect joint policy initiatives. These arrangements are formalised through joint contractual arrangements. Examples of joint working are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Framework Contracts, tendered and set up for the Supported Living Services Pan Area Waste Group which tenders for Refuse Collection Bins Freighters and the North West Kilmarnock Neighbourhood Centre. • Legal Services has an ongoing role in the provision of advice to a variety of partnership working groups involving internal and external partners including Newmilns Townscape Heritage Initiative and the Coalfield Environmental Initiative, Justices of the Peace, Police, Procurator Fiscals, Social Work Provider Organisations, Sheriff Officers, Licensing Board Members and SOPO (Society of Procurement Officers). • Legal Services has an ongoing role in partnership with other services in delivering support to Trusts administered by the Council e.g. Ayrshire Educational Trust, Charitable Trusts. |

FINANCE SERVICES

The following provides a brief overview of the Service Improvements secured by the Finance Service through the implementation of a Best Value approach:-

| Scottish Executive Best Value Criteria | Improvements Secured |
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| Finance | |
| Performance | <p>Finance Services seek to continually improve its performance and identify its areas for improvement through the application of Best Value principles. The following examples are indicators of what and how we have carried out these principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our Benefits Section is part of a consortium of 10 local authorities who are working to develop a performance management framework product for Housing & Council Tax Benefit Sections. This will allow the authority to benchmark against standard performance measures and improve the accuracy of processes and outputs. • A number of internal audit reviews have been concluded over the past year that have indicated that action plans designed to improve internal control and performance have been successfully implemented. These included – Debtors; Creditors; Payroll; Housing Benefit Overpayments. • Statistical performance in relation to collection of council tax and non domestic rates are reported to the Policy & resources Committee, with performance being monitored against agreed targets annually. |
| Commitment and Leadership | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Executive Head of Finance is a member of the Performance Review Group – the over riding purpose of which is to take a wider corporate perspective across the entire Council in challenging and thereby providing assurances that Best Value Review is: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) applied consistently; 2) achieving efficiency; 3) relevant; 4) delivering improvement. • It has been agreed to establish a risk and scrutiny group whose remit would be the consideration & ongoing monitoring of the Councils operational & strategic audit plans both internal and external. • Arrangements have been put in place to deliver training to front line staff in respect of the Freedom of Information Act 2002. |
| Responsiveness | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is an annual process of consultation in respect of the |

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| and Consultation | <p>budget, involving trade union involvement; resident and employee budget lines; website based information and also budget consultation e-mail address.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The abstract of annual accounts is made available for public inspection and scrutiny as part of the external audit process. |
| Sound Governance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Executive Head of Finance, together with the Chief Executive and 7 elected members is a member of the Budget Scrutiny Group. The remit of this group is to monitor on a continuous basis spending levels in relation to budgets and report and make recommendations to Committees on their findings. • The Policy & Resources Committee consider and set departmental budget allocations having taken account of strategic and service priorities. The capital allocations are set with reference to compliance with key community planning objectives. |
| Sound Management of Resources | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Executive Head of Finance is responsible for ensuring that appropriate advice is provided on all financial matters, for keeping proper financial records and accounts and for maintaining an effective system of internal financial control. • A Risk Management Strategy presented to and approved by Corporate Governance Committee. This identified a framework for risk identification and analysis and set out an action plan designed to ensure implementation of the Strategy. • Payments Service has been subject to a Service Review the conclusions of which were; the costs of the service compared favourably with other Councils; the service delivers a high level of quality and accuracy. • Detailed reports are prepared for the Budget Scrutiny Group and Service Committees inviting further examination and explanation as necessary. • The annual accounts of the authority were again audited without qualification by the external auditor. • Our outposted Financial Services Teams provide regular detailed reports to operational managers, and provide support in the preparation of service budgets and the monitoring of projected expenditure. |
| Use of Review and Option Appraisal | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The delivery of Payments Service was subject to review and benchmarking against other local authorities. This indicated that the cost base of the service was below most other Councils. • Key performance targets have been set for the Service which are monitored and reviewed through the Senior Management Team meetings. |
| Competitiveness, Trading and the Discharge of | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A working group was established led by the Executive Head of Finance to review the position and identify potential trading organisations on a departmental basis. These potential |

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| Authority Functions | operations were tested against CIPFA/LASAAC guidance and key internal criteria. Departments will continue to review the relevance of trading accounts as part of ongoing service review programmes. |
| A Contribution to Sustainable Development | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Finance Service led on the review of the management of water consumption to secure reduced usage and therefore waste and deliver recurring savings. |
| Equal Opportunities Arrangements | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Finance Service adheres to corporate recruitment procedures, with training and development plans being developed through the use of the EAGER process. • Work has been undertaken to ensure stationary and other forms used in service delivery are compliant with race relations policy guidance. |
| Joint Working | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finance staff work closely with Health Service partners in respect of resource transfers to Joint Future Partnership Groups. • Joint initiatives are undertaken with other local authorities and the Dept. of Work and Pensions on Benefit administration and performance management (including formal SLAs with DWP; Rent Registration Service; Housing Associations). • A formal Service Level Agreement has been agreed with Scottish Water that extends beyond the minimum legislative requirements for collection of Water and Sewerage charges. |
| Accountability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Finance Service has produced “user friendly” summary of accounts leaflets – these provide details of the Councils spending during the financial year in a simplified format. • Statutory performance indicators are produced for a number of services including Benefit Administration; Council Tax and Non Domestic Rates Collection; and Supplier Payments that set out our annual performance and measure delivery against previous years. |