

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE – 8 JUNE 2006

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 of Corporate Support.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Local Government in Scotland Act, 2003 requires councils to make arrangements to secure Best Value. A key element of the requirements of the Act and the supporting Statutory Guidance and Regulations is the need to ensure that we report on progress in delivering Best Value services.
- 2.2 Members may recall that the Department of Corporate Support has produced a Best Value Position Statement in 2004 and in 2005. The purpose of this has been to draw together in a single report, information on the range of actions and initiatives which have been implemented within the various services within the Department which demonstrate that continuous improvement is embedded within our normal day to day practices.
- 2.3 It was initially anticipated that the production of a report such as this would be incorporated by the Scottish Executive into the Statutory Regulations relating to Public Performance Reporting. This, however, will not be the case and as a consequence, the Council's Policy and Resources Committee of 15 November 2005 agreed that the production of Best Value Position Statements by all departments was no longer a requirement. It was instead left to Executive Directors to ensure that the reporting on progress in relation to Best Value continues to be appropriate.
- 2.4 In relation to the Department of Corporate Support, it was considered appropriate for the current year to continue to produce a Best Value Position Statement for consideration by Elected Members. Once the Statutory Regulations are finalised by the Scottish Executive, further consideration will be given as to how to continue to ensure that reporting on our progress in future in relation to Best Value is appropriate.

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.

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 that Best Value is embedded in the normal day to day practices of the Department.

5.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The preparation of the Department of Corporate Support Best Value Position Statement 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

22 May 2006

List of Background Papers

1. Full Best Value Position Statement 2006 for the Department of Corporate Support.

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

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
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 / Service Plan has been updated for 2006/07. This identifies the main projects and initiatives for each service department for the year to 31 March 2007, all based on the Community Plan action plans, and which allows for better forward planning of the Communications aspect of events, with resources anticipated and deployed accordingly. • Press Releases issued for the Year 2005/06: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 920 (target was 650) issued (compared with 749 for 2004/05) – an increase of 23% for the year, whilst operating with 2.5 FTE staff as opposed to 3 FTE in the previous year • of the 920 issued, 688 (75%) featured in the press • of the 920 issued, 396 were proactive, with 335 (85%) featuring in the press, and • 524 were reactive, with 353 (67%) featuring in the press. • 278 (target is 290) Graphic Design commissions completed for 2005/06 (with 2.6 FTE staff), compared with 301 for the previous year to March 2005 (with 3 FTE staff). • 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

	<p>an intermediary department).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work is ongoing with West Sound radio to put contractual arrangements in place for handling emergency public information announcements, as well as routine advertising and publicity features on the local radio network. • The PR Unit continues to improve its arrangements for electronic imaging for PR events. Also, all images are now stored electronically. Significant cost savings of £11,000 (net of consumables costs) were achieved for 2005/06, against a target of £6,000, all resulting from the move to in-house printing of photographs. Also, postage costs have been reduced as images now accompany press releases to the media through the use of emails. • Proofing design jobs by electronic means is now well established and the time creating 'pdf' files has been further reduced through the use of new Design software. • The new Corporate Print Services contract, put in place by the Council's Procurement Unit, is now embedded into routine business and is working well for Graphics Design staff. • The section contributed significantly to the highly successful 2005/06 Employee Excellence Awards ceremony.
<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 completed a 2005/06 Customer Satisfaction Survey that indicated high levels of satisfaction across all Council services for the work done by a relatively small PR Unit. The information derived from the survey has assisted 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 also completed a 2005/06 Customer Satisfaction Survey. Again, there was solid evidence that design clients were satisfied with the quality of service provided. <p>PR and Finance input to publicity for the budget consultation was organised throughout January 2006, including an advertising campaign on West Sound radio. The Chief Executive gave positive comments on the overall quality for this innovative campaign.</p> <p>PR and Graphics sections produced a 10th anniversary Council celebration wraparound, during mid-late March 2006 for the Kilmarnock Standard, Ayrshire Post and the Cumnock Chronicle – published in all 3 editions on Friday 7 April 06.</p> <p>Highly successful Showcase Events were organised, highlighting the work of the following initiatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coalfield Community Transport

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CONDUIT • BTTC • the Zone at Dalmellington.
Sound Governance	<p>The Section's Procedure Notes have been reviewed and updated. New Procedure Notes continue to be developed and the section now has 36 Procedure Notes in place covering a wide range of important service areas. These Notes are key internal control documents that allow any member of the Section to undertake any of the tasks carried out by the Section, even with limited or no previous experience of that task.</p> <p>Public Relations and Graphics were represented on the working group that completed the July 2005 EFQM Pathway review.</p> <p>All staff participated in the 2005/06 EAGER review process.</p>
Use of Review and Option Appraisal	A new Photographic Services contract has been put in place for the 3 Year period, 1 May 2006 to 30 April 2008.
Equal Opportunities Arrangements	The section continues to complete its annual Racial Impact Reports, in compliance with the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000.
Best Value and Performance Unit	
Commitment and Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing good practice in the area of Customer Service within the Council has been drawn together and set out in the Customer First Service Commitment which was approved by the Policy and Resources Committee on 20 September 2005. This Commitment provides assurances to people using our services in relation to the standards of service they can expect. • The Unit is committed to the use of EFQM as a method of ensuring continuous improvement and has now undertaken its second EFQM Assessment using the Pathway Software. We can demonstrate improvement actions and initiatives driven from this process.
Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Statutory Performance Indicators (SPIs) again received 'A' grading from Audit Scotland for 2005, demonstrating that our processes and procedures for the administration of SPIs are robust. • The consultation on the 2006/07 SPI Statutory Direction was completed on target. • The EFQM Pathway Software was implemented across the whole of the Council – the first local authority in Scotland to do so. All Service Units have now undertaken an EFQM Assessment using the Pathway software, with improvement plans prepared and implemented. A programme is in place for year 2 assessments to be undertaken. An EFQM Officer Working Group has been

	<p>established and is involved in the annual review of the Council's EFQM arrangements which have been found to be working well. Ongoing support is also provided by the Best Value and Performance Unit to Council Departments on the implementation of the Pathway Software.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The East Ayrshire Public Performance Report was issued to every household in East Ayrshire – more than 50,000 households. • The Best Value and Community Planning Audit submission was lodged with Audit Scotland in accordance with agreed timescales. • The first meeting of the Performance Review Group was held on 16 June 2005 and 3 further meetings of the Group were held in October and December 2005 and May 2006. • The Best Value and Performance Unit supported the implementation of the Council's Strategic Self-Assessment of Performance, which was undertaken as a key element of preparations for the Best Value and Community Planning Audit.
<p>Sound Governance</p>	<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 update of the Local Code of Corporate Governance and its associated Action Plan. • The Best Value and Performance Unit is engaged in the review of Scottish Executive Statutory Guidance and Regulations in relation to Public Performance Reporting to ensure that the Council's arrangements remain appropriate and meet the emerging Statutory Requirements. • The Best Value and Performance Section represent the Council on the ABC Benchmarking Group. This Group provides a forum for conducting and encouraging benchmarking to promote a culture of continuous improvement and learning among participating authorities. This Benchmarking Group also provides a forum to discuss wider policy developments in Scottish local government.
<p>Responsiveness and Consultation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • East Ayrshire Public Performance Report was issued to every household in East Ayrshire – more than 50,000 households. . The report included a questionnaire in which residents are invited to express their views on Council services. The feedback received was collated and used to inform service development. • The Employee Attitude Survey highlighted a high level of awareness of Best Value across the Council.
<p>Use of Review and Option Appraisal</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Guide to Best Value Review for Employees has been published and distributed widely across the Council. • Progress in the implementation of the Council's Best Value

	<p>Review Programme is reported to Committee.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Best Value and Performance Unit provides support to departments in the implementation of the EFQM Excellence Model and Best Value Review.
Joint Working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The North West Kilmarnock Neighbourhood Services Centre project was managed to construction stage by the Best Value and Performance Unit and thereafter handed over to the lead client Department.
Equal Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Race Equality Impact reports completed in accordance with Council Policy
Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council has adopted a range of means for reporting on its performance to the public. Details of the extensive arrangements across all Council services for reporting to the public on performance have been published on the Council's website and in Local Offices and Libraries. This has been implemented ahead of the anticipated requirements of relevant Statutory Regulations. • The Best Value and Performance Unit is responsible for the publication of Statutory Performance Indicators. • Additionally the Unit prepared the Council's fourth Annual Public Performance Report that was distributed to every household in East Ayrshire during November / December 2005
Community Planning and Partnership Unit	
Commitment and Leadership	<p>Community Plan continues to act as the Council's Corporate Plan. Message on 'One Authority One Plan' promoted throughout Council Departments and with Partner agencies.</p> <p>The Community Planning Partnership Board was established in June 2005 to assume responsibility for Community planning, the Regeneration Outcome Agreement and related Community Regeneration Fund and Community Voices programme. In addition, the Community Planning Partnership Board will ultimately assume responsibility for a range of Partnership initiatives, for example: Choose Life, Financial Inclusion Fund and Anti-social Behaviour.</p> <p>The Community Planning Core Partners' Group continues to set the strategic direction for Community Planning with the Joint Officers' Group ensuring actions arising from the Core Partners' Group are effectively progressed and full compliance with the requirements of the Local Government in Scotland Act, 2003.</p> <p>The Leader of the Council continues to Chair the Core Partners' Group with Cllr Menzies assuming the Chair of the Community Planning Partnership Board. To ensure greater co-ordination Cllr Menzies is also a member of the Core Partners' Group.</p> <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 Community Planning Partnership Board (CPPB) and Policy and Resources Committee consider performance and progress against set targets and outcomes on a routine basis as set out in the East Ayrshire Community Plan 2003 - 2015. • The Community Plan sets a clear strategic vision that incorporates the key elements of best value. • The Policy and Resources Committee has corporate responsibility for a range of partnership related programmes including Better Neighbourhood Services Fund, Community Regeneration Fund and Community Voices Programme – on behalf of the Council’s Community Planning Partners. • The CPP Board ensures that service planning and strategies are realistic and achievable and activity is matched to financial and other resources. • Community Planning Annual Performance Reports are prepared and submitted to P&R Committee and Partner Boards. • CPPB meetings are open to the public and minutes lodged on the Council’s internet. • CRF 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 widely distributed to voluntary and community groups.
<p>Performance</p>	<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 Community Regeneration Fund/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 for Corporate Regeneration Programmes. • Information is provided via the ROA Monitoring Framework to allow benchmarking across all local authorities. • Elected members are involved in performance review meetings for Community Regeneration Funded projects. • Information is routinely presented to the Community Planning Partnership Board/Community Planning Core Partners’ Group on performance including, regular updates on partnership projects and a formal annual report on Community Planning progress. • In addition, the Annual Community Planning report is presented to the Council’s Policy and Resources Committee, Partner Agency Boards for scrutiny and is reflected in the Council’s Annual Public Performance Report.

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; as a result of which Community Planning Partners commissioned a joint Residents' Survey. • A community consultation and engagement process has been instigated on the four yearly review of the Community Plan with a view to the new Community Plan and associated Action Plans being finalised by 31 March 2007. • Following completion of the Residents' Survey, 690 Residents' Panel members have been recruited to participate on the Residents' Panel and Focus Groups as required. • A draft programme of annual consultation for the Residents' Panel focusing around the 4 yearly review of the Community Plan was endorsed by the Joint Officers Group on 11 April 2006. • 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 Partnership 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

	<p>effective implementation of the actions contained within the Community Plan action plans.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The CPP Board ensures that service planning and strategies related to corporate regeneration programmes 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 CPPB receives quarterly financial monitoring reports for consideration and endorsement. • Quarterly and annual financial reports are forwarded to Communities Scotland for scrutiny. • Systems are in place to ensure that, prior to grant payment, project finance is scrutinised. • The CPPB receives a six monthly and annual summary report on project and Community Planning performance.
Sound Management of Resources	<p>The Community Planning Partnership 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 Monitoring and Evaluation in place to monitor Community Regeneration Funded and Community Voices Programme 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 CPP –all projects funded must strive to ensure best quality. • We provide regular reports via briefing agendas to elected members on performance related to Community Planning and Corporate Regeneration programmes.
Competitiveness, Trading and the Discharge of Authority Functions	<p>We seek to ensure that Community Planning Partnership Board complies with all conditions of grant as determined at a national and European level.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council's 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"> • We ensure through the Regeneration Outcome Agreement that equality of opportunity is a core component of the Community Planning Partnership in tackling social justice.

Joint Working	<p>Effective partnership working is integral to the work of the Community Planning and Partnership Unit.</p> <p>Joint working arrangements are in place with Core Community Planning Partners in respect of community planning related activity, including the Joint Officers' Group, Research and Information, Consultation and Engagement and Monitoring and Evaluation Groups.</p> <p>In addition, joint working arrangements are in place between the Community Planning and Partnership Unit and the two Federations of Community Groups to ensure effective community engagement in the community planning process.</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 2nd Annual Performance Report 2004/05 • SIP Final Report 2004/05 • SIP Final Evaluation 2004/05 • North Final Annual Report 2004/05 • BNSF Annual Report 2004/05 • BNSF independent Evaluation 2004/05 • Community Based Youth Justice Annual Report 2004/05

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
Information Technology	
Performance	<p>The IT Service is committed to the use of EFQM as a method of ensuring continuous improvement and has now undertaken its second EFQM Assessment using the Pathway Software, the results of which demonstrate an improvement in the performance of the service.</p> <p>Action plans have been produced and updated as a result of these assessments and the EFQM actions are included in IT Services Service Improvement Action Plan (SIAP). The SIAP is aligned to the Community Plan, Service Department requirements, and the Budget process. In addition:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In general the majority of the actions are subject to an ongoing continuous improvement review process. • The ongoing quarterly IT Services Performance Planning reviews show continuous improvement, performance highs, progress on community plan priorities and progress on service priorities. These reports are published on the corporate Intranet. • 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. Due to the installation of new Air Conditioning units and other improvements to the Data Centre, system availability is at an overall average of nearly 100% over the year. • A telephone survey in November 2005 indicated that the Help Desk service remains very highly rated and valued by users of the service. • The Council Web site statistics and online transactions show a substantial increase in the use of online services. Some details are as follows –

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Web pages views have increased from 17,000 per day in 2004/05, to 22,500 per day in 2005/06; ○ e-Payments over the Internet and Automated Telephone Payments (ATP) have increased from £1.42m in 2004/05, to over £1.63m in 2005/06; ○ Online forms submitted over the Internet have increased to over 3,800 in 2005/06 <p>Further performance details and statistics are published on the Corporate Intranet</p>
<p>Commitment & Leadership</p>	<p>IT Services developments to assist Service Departments in the BV process include –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IT Services publish Performance Monitoring statistics etc. as well as strategies, policies and guidelines on the Council’s Intranet. These are continuously under review. • All Committee agendas, minutes and reports are published on the Councils Web site. • Customer focused service delivery via the development of Customer Contact Gateway (CCG), Distributed Contact Centre (DCC), Online Mapping (WebGIS), e-Bookings etc. <p>IT Services carry out an annual EFQM self assessment and the actions are included in our SIAP.</p> <p>All ICT services provided are subject to continuous improvement and review processes, both from a service delivery point of view and a cost benefit basis.</p>
<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 Service 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 <p>As part of the standard review process, Service Level Agreements are continuously reviewed within IT to identify areas that may be improved.</p> <p>Periodic telephone surveys dealing with randomly selected calls, are carried by IT Services to measure the level of satisfaction in calls made to the IT Service Desk.</p> <p>Processes relating specifically to IT Services, include the use of Web Consultation forums (e.g. the 2006 Budget Consultation), on line</p>

	<p>Talkback forms and the publication of Service Department online consultations (and outcomes) via the Council's web site.</p> <p>IT Services publish Performance Monitoring statistics etc. on the Council's Intranet.</p>
<p>Sound Governance</p>	<p>Improvement actions have been identified through various mechanisms and consolidated into a single Service Improvement Action Plan (SIAP). 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. This plan is supplemented by project specific Development Plans.</p> <p>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 is 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 of this strategy is scheduled for issue to the ICTSG. • 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. A consolidated Service Improvement Action Plan for 2005/06 has been compiled. • 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 is maintained by IT Service and Account Managers and administered by IT Senior Management. The database is a register of all IT Contracts

	<p>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.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A full Security Review by external specialist has taken place and recommendations implemented, allowing secure and authenticated connectivity to the Government Secure eXtranet (GSx) network. This has also included the appointment of a dedicated ICT Security Manager. • Software management procedures agreed with the Federation Against Software Theft (FAST) ensure that unlicensed software should not be loaded onto Council equipment. The Bronze certification has been awarded. • IT Services publish our Performance Monitoring statistics, benchmarking KPIs, etc. on the Council's Intranet.
<p>Sound Management of Resources</p>	<p>IT Services adhere to and adopt, all relevant legislation and guidelines as defined nationally and corporately, in respect of Health & Safety, Procurement, and Contract management.</p> <p>Staff resources are allocated in line with Service requirements and all staff are involved in the annual EAGER process. In addition staff in the Assistant Business Support Analyst (ABSA) post, are reviewed and assessed in line with the agreed progression scheme in use within IT Services.</p> <p>Training is required on an "as needs" basis to cover new technologies, ICT skills update, and in personal development.</p> <p>Major ICT developments undergo risk assessments which adhere to nationally accredited evaluations (such as those defined by BS7799 and CRAMM).</p> <p>All ICT assets are logged on the Service Desk system to manage faults, requests for service and to ensure compliance with FAST, BS7799, etc.</p>
<p>Use of Review and Option Appraisal</p>	<p>IT Services undertook a full Best Value Service Review during 2001-2002 and a further review is currently underway for 2006.</p> <p>A number of other reviews have taken place under the banner of continuous improvement. These targeted areas such as Voice/Telephone support, e-Government development, ICT Security, and Network Storage.</p> <p>From these Service reviews, the following resulted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 such action was the appointment of a dedicated

	<p>ICT Security Manager.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council is now a member of the Federation Against Software Theft (FAST) and we have attained their Bronze Award for our procedures and management of software within the authority. • Review and rationalisation of the Wide Area Network (WAN) infrastructure, continues. <p>Consultation continues to take place with the Scottish Executive, other public authorities, service providers and the voluntary sector to identify areas of shared interest and identification of options.</p> <p>Reviews and appraisals are aligned to the Community Plan, Service Department requirements, and the Budget process.</p>
Competitiveness	<p>IT Services adhere to and adopt, all relevant legislation and guidelines as defined nationally and corporately.</p> <p>Where practical, IT Services are involved in all ICT procurement throughout the Council.</p> <p>All ICT contracts are monitored and controlled via our Contracts database which forms part of our financial accounting process.</p>

	<p>IT Services are active members in the Scottish Executive Modernising Government Fund (MGF), Customer First (CF) and Efficient Government Fund (EGF) etc. Consortia.</p> <p>This has led to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council is participating fully in consortia led programmes in respect of the development of a Local Land and Property Gazetteer (LLPG) 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). The latter has also meant close working relationship with SPT. • The above programmes also require IT Services involvement in the SE National Infrastructure in support of the LLPG, CRM and SCASC initiatives. • On a more local level, IT Services Senior Management continue to participate in the IT consortium comprising of other Councils (South Ayrshire, North Ayrshire, Renfrewshire, Argyll & Bute etc.). • The IT Services Management continue to participate at Steering Board level, on the CONDUIT programme which is celebrating its 10th anniversary in 2006. • IT Services managers also participate in the Community Planning regime, in particular in respect of Improving Opportunities through the use of ICT. • The ongoing feasibility of joint ICT developments with other Local Authorities, for example, CCG/CRM security issues currently under discussion with North Lanarkshire Council. • Joint working consortium arrangements have been initiated to address the Scottish Executive's Efficient Government Fund (EGF) proposals and the Integrated Shared Services & Governance Model. This involves other organisations such as North Ayrshire Council, South Ayrshire Council, Ayrshire & Arran Health Board, Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire, etc. • IT Services are now responsible for supporting the former AEC ICT infrastructure and centres. • The feasibility of joint procurement of IT Services continues, for example, in the area of PC disposals.
<p>Accountability</p>	<p>IT Services assist other departments to fulfil their Public Performance Reporting obligations by informing the public using the Council's web site of both Council and departmental performance as well as promoting the Council.</p> <p>Processes relating specifically to IT Services, include the use of Web Consultation forums (e.g. the 2006 Budget Consultation), on line Talkback forms and the publication of Web trends statistics.</p>

	<p>In addition IT Services regularly report internally to the relevant Management and Committee structures on our targets, progress and plans.</p>
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	<p>Accountability is also aligned to the Community Plan, Service Department requirements, and the Budget process.</p>
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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
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"> • Retained the IIP accreditation. • ISO 9000 accreditation audited and retained • 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 2&3, IRRV Housing and Council Tax Benefits SVQ Level 3, IRRV Local Taxation Level 3 and SVQ Learning and Development A1 and V1 units. • Training and Development has an accredited Approved Instructor for Scotland's Mental Health First Aid and 4 accredited facilitators to deliver the Pacific Institute, "Investment in Excellence Programme." • We have 7 employees who have successfully undertaken the The Crisis Prevention Institute, "Non-violent Crisis Intervention Instructor Certification Programme." • 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.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • We have had considerable success in meeting the agreed outcomes detailed in the East Ayrshire Community Planning Regeneration Outcome Agreement, progressing young people into employment, mainstream training and further education. <p>Our Health and Safety Section has achieved the following successes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IOSH Accredited Managing Safely Certificate, General (External validation) – 21 successful = 100% Pass Rate. • IOSH Accredited Managing Safely Certificate, Social Work (External Validation) 67 successful = 100% Pass Rate. • Refreshed 5 Safety Policy Documents into single cohesive Policy with clear objectives and Organisation for Safety. • Developed 2 New Health & Safety Standards. • Revised 1 Health & Safety Standard. • Revised Incident/Near Miss Report Form (save developing a new reporting system for cases of fire). • Completion of Database of accident data • Development of Database of violent incident data. • SHAW Initiatives throughout year on topic specific themes.
Commitment and Leadership	<p>We have carried out a desk Top self-assessment of EFQM within Personnel Services and reviewed our Best Value arrangements. Retained recognition as continuing to meet the requirements of the national standard for effective Investment in People. 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 and formally recognised a Safety Assistant position.
Responsiveness and Consultation	<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

	<p>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.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Health and Safety Section input to local consultation committees as well as attendance at departmental management meetings to report progress and performance of the attending Services. • We also consult and respond strategically via the Chief Executive's Health and Safety 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>Offered employees in the Catering, Cleaning and Home Care employee groups equal pay compensation payments on the basis that they would sign compromise agreements agreeing not to pursue equal pay claims to Employment Tribunal.</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> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salary Sacrifice Employee Benefits Scheme – Home Computing Initiative • Reviewed the Car Leasing Scheme • Revised the Smoking in the Workplace Policy • Updated Adverse Weather Conditions Scheme • 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

	<p>other agencies. Additional support has been secured from ESF Objective 3 and confirmation of support from the East Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership up to March 2008 has been received.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support in kind has been secured for the EASY project from Merchants Limited a large data and communications processing company who have agreed to provide specialist staff to strengthen the inputs for the benefits of our learners. • In partnership with SWAPwest, Scottish Wider Access Programme, West of Scotland, we have added European learning experiences to our Personal Skills Development portfolio, enabling short visits by staff and learners to partner countries in Europe.
<p>Competitiveness, Trading and the Discharge of Authority Functions</p>	<p>We have met budget efficiency gains as approved by Council and assisted other departments to achieve their own targets.</p>
<p>A Contribution to Sustainable Development</p>	<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 = 100% pass rate. • Participate in Members' Development Forum and assisting in the preparation and roll out of Members training programme to meet identified priorities.
<p>Equal Opportunities Arrangements</p>	<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 for all Trainers, whether internal or commissioned. • Training offered in Diversity and Equalities. • Representation at Forum for employees with disabilities.
<p>Joint Working</p>	<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"> • Established working party to explore feasibility of a Pan Ayrshire provision of Occupational Health Service to all three Ayrshire Councils. • 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. • Co facilitation between EAC and NHS has been established for delivery of Scotland’s Mental Health First Aid Training across all partner agencies. • 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 = 100% pass rate. • Opening Training in Non-violent Crisis Intervention to Renfrewshire Council (8 delegates) • Continuation of contract with AHS as Occupational Health Service Provider.
Accountability	We report Statutory PIs on absences and Equal opportunities.

ADMINISTRATION AND LEGAL SERVICES

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

Scottish Executive Best Value Criteria	Improvements Secured
Administration and Legal Services	
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"> • Performance in relation to the production of Committee minutes/decisions within each Committee cycle is monitored. • Targets for performance within the Reprographics Service and the Switchboard have continued to be met. <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 has risen from 36% in the year 2003/04 to 56% in 2004/05 and following a review of the process to 63% in 2005/06. • There have been no formal legal challenges within the year against the Council in Court in respect of any contractual arrangement, policy decision or quasi-judicial determination made by the Council. • Following the introduction of the Corporate Procurement Strategy in November 2004, the first annual review of performance against the approved action plan was reported to the Corporate Governance Committee in November 2005 and it was noted that satisfactory progress had been achieved. • 82.2 % of summary cause heritable actions have been raised within the timescale targeted of 14 days, an increase of 5% on last year's performance. From the date of receipt of instruction the agreed target is 90%. The process continues to be reviewed which should allow for an improved performance in the current year. • 97.5 % 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.

<p>Commitment and Leadership</p>	<p>The Section is committed to the use of EFQM as a method of ensuring continuous improvement and has now undertaken an EFQM Assessment using the Pathway Software. We can demonstrate improvement actions and initiatives driven from this process.</p> <p>Our leaders are fully committed to the service through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scheduled Administration and Legal Services management team meetings involving the Head of Service, all 3 Legal Team Leaders and the Administration Manager have been held regularly throughout the year. Standing items on the agenda include staffing issues, eager reviews, training issues, health and safety issues and absence management monitoring. • Information is also cascaded throughout the Section through Scheduled team meetings involving all staff groups within the service which are held regularly 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. • 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.
<p>Use of Review and Option Appraisal</p>	<p>A Best Value Review of the Administration and Legal Service has recently been concluded and the outcome of this review and its associated Improvement Action Plan will be reported to the Policy and Resources Committee on 30 May 2006.</p> <p>In addition, 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

	<p>for processing heritable actions has been reviewed in response to the implementation of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • Regular review of governing protocol documentation. • Review of Committee cycle to meet Elected Member/Service Department requirements. • Review/enhancement of management support. • A Community Council scheme has been established and two successive reviews carried out. • An Elected Members' Training and Development Forum has been established to assess the training needs of Elected Members and develop appropriate training plans. • Review and development of Community Representatives Annual Seminar to support and encourage existing and new Community Representatives. • 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.
<p>Sound Governance</p>	<p>Managers within the Service play an active role in the SOLAR Administrative Best Practice Working Group and the Scottish Members' Services Development Network. These Groups provide a valuable forum for benchmarking performance and sharing best practice. They will also assist in informing our consideration of wider policy developments such as the introduction of multi-member wards in 2007.</p>
<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

	<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. • A CALM records management system has been purchased and is being used to manage the Councils semi-current records
<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"> • Within the Legal section 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, 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 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). • Consultation with Consultee Organisations has taken place as

	<p>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> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-to-one support is provided to Chairs/Vice-Chairs • Support is provided to Community Representatives for whom an annual seminar is also held. • Support to Council Departments on Records Management. • Support and advice to Council Departments, Councillors and the general public on Freedom of Information implications. • The Grapevine Local Committee Newssheet is produced and distributed widely. • We ensure that the Council has fully compliant arrangements for responding to Freedom of Information enquiries. <p>As part of the recent Administrative and Legal Services Best Value Service Review, extensive consultations to identify best practice and seek suggestions for service improvement, were also carried out with a range of stakeholders, including:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elected Members; • Service Departments; • Community Representatives; • Community Councils; and • Customers <p>The outcome of these consultations will be taken forward and implemented through the associated Improvement Action Plan arising from the Best Value Service Review.</p>
<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 and Catrine Environmental Trust. • 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.

Accountability	<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. • Within the Administration Service we ensure that Committee papers are provided for public view within the Council web site.
Equal Opportunities	<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. These are incorporated into contractual arrangements where appropriate, e.g. community care contracts.
Joint Working	<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. • 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.

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
Finance	
Performance	<p>The Finance Service seeks 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"> • The Benefits Section has continued to work as part of a consortium of local authorities developing a comprehensive performance management framework. This provides a system to benchmark overall performance, whilst also improving the speed and accuracy of overall reporting. • Internal Audit has carried out a number of system reviews during the previous year. A series of action plans designed to improve the overall internal control matrix have been agreed. Areas covered included: - Payroll, Authorised Signatories; Benefit Overpayment follow up; Income Management. • Statistical performance in relation to collection of council tax and non domestic rates is routinely reported to the Policy & Resources Committee, with performance being monitored against agreed targets annually. • The collation and publication of a suite of Performance Indicators among the 32 local authority Directors of Finance. The majority of these demonstrate year on year improvement. • A key aim of the Finance Service is the stable management and longer term planning of the Councils financial resources. • DWP Quarterly Performance Indicators for Benefits demonstrate continuous improvements in most aspects of benefit service. • All Statutory Performance Indicators received "A" Grading reflecting audit satisfaction with their preparation. • EFQM action plan produced following review in 2005 to be updated by April 2006.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Improvement plan agreed following Best Value Service Review
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. • The Executive Head of Finance has a key role in the strategic management of the Council as a member of the Corporate Management Team • The Risk & Audit Scrutiny Group was established during 2005, this provides a mechanism for the scrutiny of control and risk issues, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The monitoring of strategic audit plans ○ Review of audit performance ○ Review of the annual audit certificate and management letters ○ Monitoring and review of implementation of audit recommendations ○ Ensuring the existence of and compliance with an appropriate Corporate Risk Management Strategy
Responsiveness and Consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Annual Budget Consultation involves a wide range of interests, including community, trade union, the general public and employees. • The 2006/07 Budget Consultation Process was enhanced with the introduction of a real time web forum, in which the Council Leader responded directly to individual comments and questions. • The abstract of annual accounts is made available for public inspection and scrutiny as part of the annual external audit process. •
Sound Governance at a Strategic, Financial and Operational Level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Finance Service contributes to the clear integration of strategic and operational planning and budget setting within Services, through the out-posted Financial Services Teams. • 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.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • Contribute to the annual review and update of the Local Code of Corporate Governance. • The Finance Service has worked closely with IT to specify and development a Corporate Risk Register and management reporting system which it is expected will become operational by September 2006.
<p>Sound Management of Resources</p>	<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 professional Financial Support Service is provided the Departments through the out-posted Financial Services Team Model. Each team is directly accountable to the Executive Head of Finance • A training package covering, funding; financial planning; budgeting and financial control and the use of financial information is available for delivery to service managers. • The Financial Regulations are kept under constant review by the Executive Head of Finance and proposed amendments are submitted to Council for approval. • The financial regulations are supported by Accounting Policy Bulletins (APBs) which are cross referenced to the Regulations. Both are available on the Council Intranet, hard copy form or on CD Rom. • The Corporate Risk Management arrangements have been approved by the Risk & Audit Scrutiny Group. A Corporate Risk Register has been established and is subject to regular review by the Corporate Management Team. • Reports are prepared on a 4 weekly cycle for the Capital Programme Monitoring Group which allows regular review and scrutiny of General Services and Housing Capital to be undertaken. • Procedures have been reviewed in conjunction with Property Services to ensure all capital expenditure is appropriately classified and reflected within the balance sheet in line with accounting policies. • Detailed reports are prepared for the Budget Scrutiny Group

	<p>and Service Committees inviting further examination and explanation as necessary.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The annual accounts of the authority were once 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 throughout the year
Use of Review and Option Appraisal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key performance targets and plans have been agreed for the Service which are monitored through the Senior Management Team meetings. • A Best Value Service Review was carried out during 2005 and approved by Policy & Resources Committee in June 2005. This is expected to deliver recurring annual efficiency savings of £0.400m by financial year 2007/08.
Competitiveness, Trading and the Discharge of Authority Functions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Finance Service has provided advice and guidance to Departments to support the review of Trading Services in line with CIPFA/LASAAC guidance.
A Contribution to Sustainable Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Finance Service represents the Corporate Support Department on the Energy Efficiency Working Group, providing support to analyse and improve existing payment and utilisation statistics. • The availability of resources for investment through the capital programme are now determined with reference to the Prudential Code.
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 stationery and other forms used in service delivery are compliant with race relations policy guidance.
Joint Working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finance staff continue to 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.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finance Service provides support and financial advice to the North West Kilmarnock Neighbourhood Services Project Board. • The Executive Head of Finance is a member of the Community Planning Partnership Board • Consultation has taken place with neighbouring authorities in respect of shared support services. • Contribution to the preparation of bid for funding under efficient government programme for shared correspondence and distribution centre
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. • The Prudential Framework for Capital Finance in local authorities requires that annual indicators are set and reviewed by the Council.

April 2006