

South Ayrshire Council

**Report by Depute Chief Executive and Director
of Housing, Development and Operations
to Audit and Governance Panel
of 9 November 2022**

Subject: Best Value Action Plan 2021-22 – Update

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise members of the progress made in delivering the actions identified in the Best Value Assurance Report - [Action Plan 2021-22](#).

2. Recommendation

2.1 It is recommended that the Panel:

- 2.1.1 scrutinises the content of the Best Value Action Plan 2021-22 update report; and**
- 2.1.2 considers the progress through the narrative set out within [Appendix 1](#).**

3. Background

- 3.1 The Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 places statutory duties on Councils in relation to Best Value. The audit of Best Value is a continuous process that forms part of the annual audit of every Council. Findings are reported each year through the Annual Audit Report.
- 3.2 In addition, the Controller of Audit will present a Best Value Assurance Report to the Accounts Commission at least once during the five-year audit appointment for each Council. Audit Scotland published the Council's [Best Value Assurance Report](#) published in October 2021.
- 3.3 In response to the recommendations in the report, an [action plan](#) was developed by officers and agreed by Council in December 2021. Members agreed that progress on the action plan should be reported to the Audit and Governance Panel quarterly.
- 3.4 In January 2022, the Leadership Panel agreed to extend the existing Council Plan (2018-22) by no more than one year to allow new Members the opportunity to contribute to the development of a new plan. It is anticipated that the new Council Plan will be agreed by Cabinet by March 2023.

3.5 The Best Value Working Group met on 1 November and agreed to provide an update on the Best Value Action Plan to Council in December 2022. The group also agreed to develop updated terms of reference for approval by the Council.

4. Proposals

4.1 It is proposed that members of the Audit and Governance Panel scrutinise the attached report ([Appendix 1](#)) and offer feedback to officers.

4.2 Members should note that the actions relating to the development of the new Council Plan have been given updated timescales to match the anticipated adoption of the new plan in March 2023.

5. Legal and Procurement Implications

5.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

5.2 There are no procurement implications arising from this report.

6. Financial Implications

6.1 Not applicable.

7. Human Resources Implications

7.1 Not applicable.

8. Risk

8.1 Risk Implications of Adopting the Recommendations

8.1.1 There are no risks associated with adopting the recommendations.

8.2 Risk Implications of Rejecting the Recommendations

8.2.1 Rejecting the recommendations may impact on the reputation of the Council.

9. Equalities

9.1 The proposals in this report allow scrutiny of performance. The report does not involve proposals for policies, strategies, procedures, processes, financial decisions and activities (including service delivery), both new and at review, that affect the Council's communities and employees, therefore an equality impact assessment is not required.

10. Sustainable Development Implications

10.1 ***Considering Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)*** - This report does not propose or seek approval for a plan, policy, programme or strategy or document otherwise described which could be considered to constitute a plan, programme, policy or strategy.

11. Options Appraisal

11.1 An options appraisal has not been carried out in relation to the subject matter of this report.

12. Link to Council Plan

12.1 The matters referred to in this report contribute to Commitment 1 of the Council Plan: Fair and Effective Leadership/ Leadership that promotes fairness.

13. Results of Consultation

13.1 There has been no public consultation on the contents of this report.

13.2 Consultation has taken place with Councillor Martin Dowey, Portfolio Holder for Corporate and Strategic, and the contents of this report reflect any feedback provided.

Background Papers [Audit Scotland - Best Value Assurance Report - published on 27 October 2021](#)

[Best Value Assurance Report - Action Plan 2021-22](#)

Report to Leadership Panel of 18 January 2022 – [Council Plan 2018-22 \(2020 Mid-Term Refresh\) Extension](#)

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Best Value Action Plan Update Report - 2021-22

Appendix 1

Recommendation 1 The Council should confirm that it has the capacity and skills required to increase its pace of improvement in key aspects of Best Value, such as community empowerment, financial and workforce planning and transformation Where appropriate external support should be sought from other Councils, or the Improvement Service, to help with focussing its areas of improvement. (paragraph 119)

Action	Managed By	Progress	Original Due Date	Current Due Date	Latest Note
Secure additional funding to add temporary resources to key areas of Best Value	Eileen Howat	90%	31-Dec-2022	31-Dec-2022	Management restructure approved 9 September 2022 includes permanent additional resources and refocus on key areas of Best Value. Any additional temporary resources required will be considered as BVAR action plan progresses
Engage the Improvement Service on aspects of Best Value	Eileen Howat	100%	31-Dec-2022	31-Dec-2022	Assistance from IS has been secured in respect of development of Council Plan and Workforce Planning and further engagement planned in respect of change. It is expected that engagement with the Improvement Service will be ongoing in relation to key aspects of Best Value.

Recommendation 2 The Council prepare both medium and long-term financial plans. The plans should consider changes to both income and expenditure, identify both budget gaps and set out the actions necessary to address those gaps. There should also be a clear linkage to Council priorities (paragraph 62)

Action	Managed By	Progress	Original Due Date	Current Due Date	Latest Note
Develop a Long-Term Financial Outlook (LTFO) that draws together all known factors which affect the Council's financial position and its financial sustainability over the longer term (i.e., a ten-year period). The LTFO will be refreshed bi-annually	Tim Baulk	100%	31-Dec-2022	31-Dec-2022	The Long-term Financial Outlook (LTFO) and Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) was considered and approved by Leadership Panel in 2021. Future iterations of this plan will be considered by the Best Value Working Group and approved by Audit and Governance Panel.

Develop a Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) that provides a clear understanding of the anticipated resources available to the Council in the short and medium term (i.e. three years) in order to deliver its priorities and objectives. The MTFP will be updated annually	Tim Baulk	100%	31-Dec-2022	31-Dec-2022	Plan developed and approved. Future iterations of this plan will be considered by the Best Value Working Group and approved by Audit and Governance Panel.
Ensure clear and continued linkage between the LTFO and MTFP with other key strategic documents, including the Council Plan, Workforce Plan, Long Term Financial Linkage evidenced in future strategic developments. Executive Leadership Team (ELT) and Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) Ongoing and aligned to Council Plan and Workforce Plan Strategy and Treasury Management Strategy	Corporate Leadership Team; Executive Leadership Team	60%	31-Dec-2022	31-Mar-23	Further engagement planned with Administration following IS session on developing Council Plan and during preparation of 2023/24 budget. The new Council Plan will be developed to sit alongside key corporate strategies such as our Workforce Plan and LTFO.
Develop a public-facing communication plan to publicise and explain the significant financial challenges facing the Council for the foreseeable future	Tim Baulk; Jane Bradley	80%	31-Mar-2022	31-Mar-2023	A communications plan has been developed and the first in a series of videos have been developed to support this.
Develop a clear understanding of public needs, preferences, and priorities through a robust and recurring engagement process, aligned with the local government electoral cycle	Jane Bradley	60%	31-Dec-2022	31-Mar-23	The Thriving Communities team have structures in place to support consultation and engagement with communities at the appropriate time when the Council plan is being developed.
Develop processes to support Elected Members in setting clear, prioritised objectives based on the Council Plan and the projected needs of the public, including service redesign, reduction, and cessation where appropriate	Kevin Anderson	60%	31-Dec-2022	31-Mar-2023	Discussions have taken place with the Improvement Service who are supporting the Council in developing the priorities. The first elected member briefing event took place on 11 October with the Corporate Leadership Team and Councillors attending in person and online. It is anticipated that the new Council Plan will be approved by Cabinet in March 23.
Engage with external partners (e.g. Improvement Service) to ensure that the design and delivery of community engagement improvement actions are effective and reflects best practice	Jane Bradley	100%	31-Mar-2022	31-Mar-2022	Thriving Communities are liaising with the HSP, 3RD Sector and other CPP partners to improve community engagement across CPP. It is proposed that the existing CPP Communities Reference Group is refreshed and called Community Engagement Coordination Group. (Proposal Attached). Internally improvements have already taken place, this includes the established consultation officer's group, engagement with Community Councils and the roll out of Place Standards toolkit. Initial meetings have taken place with the Improvement Service and a presentation was delivered by them to Senior Management. Early engagement has commenced in relation to best practice engagement activity.

Recommendation 3 The Council should improve and embed workforce planning, so that service workforce plans are developed consistently across the Council. The plans should include clear links to the Council's priorities and to its strategic change programme. (paragraph 77)

Action	Managed By	Progress	Original Due Date	Current Due Date	Latest Note
Convene a Corporate Working Group to develop a workforce plan for 2022-25 that links to the Council's strategic priorities and improvement areas in relation to Best Value	Eileen Howat	100%	31-Dec-2021	31-Dec-2021	Complete, a workforce planning group has been convened.
Workforce Plan Implementation	Jane Bradley	100%	31-Mar-2022	31-Mar-2022	The workforce plan will be brought forward to Service and Performance panel in October 2022.

Recommendation 4 The Council should make sure that its transformation work is fully aligned and integrated to its covid recovery planning work and improve its approach to its Strategic Change Programme by: • Adding greater detail about individual projects • Setting clear timelines for each project • Developing a benefits realisation tracker to assess whether the Council has achieved its aims. (paragraphs 123 and 124)

Action	Managed By	Progress	Original Due Date	Current Due Date	Latest Note
Update Leadership Panel on the development and delivery of the South Ayrshire Way Strategic Change Programme	Stuart MacMillan	100%	31-Dec-2022	31-Dec-2022	To date, the following updates have been provided: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership Panel - 15 February • Service and Improvement Panel - 29 March • Cabinet - 14 June An update will also go to the Service and Performance Panel in October.
Development of a Communications Strategy including the roll out of key messages to staff, stakeholders, partners and the public on the launch of the Change Programme; key themes and outputs and the benefits that will be achieved	Stuart MacMillan	100%	31-Mar-2022	31-Mar-2022	Communication Strategy approved and implemented, and updates provided to the Strategic Change Executive
Implementation of internal effective mechanisms for reporting programme progress and in particular tracking benefits	Stuart MacMillan	100%	31-Mar-2022	31-Mar-2022	Benefits Realisation Plan has been approved by Strategic Change Executive (26 August 2021). It was also shared at Service and Performance Panel on 29 March 2022 which noted the approach that the Council

					is taking to benefit realisation and implementing trackers.
Continue to progress the delivery of projects, focussing on moving projects from the scoping/exploratory phase and into delivery	Stuart MacMillan	100%	31-Mar-2022	31-Mar-2022	Over 80% of the projects on the Programme are at delivery stage. There will be a continued focus on moving projects into implementation.
Review governance arrangements across the Council to integrate its approach to transformation and change; avoid duplication, promote recovery from covid and inform best practice	Jane Bradley	75%	31-May-2022	31-May-2023	Governance arrangements have been embedded for the Strategic Change Programme. Some scoping work has been undertaken to identify transformational activity across the Council and map governance arrangements. A route map will be developed to integrate the Councils approach to transformation and change, avoid duplication and promote recovery from Covid and inform best practice.

Recommendation 5 The Council needs to build on the Service Recovery and Improvement Plans and the Community Engagement Strategy to ensure that future community engagement and consultation is consistent, and fully involves communities to develop how Council services will operate in the future in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, in order that real change and outcomes can be delivered. (paragraphs 25 and 112)

Action	Managed By	Progress	Original Due Date	Current Due Date	Latest Note
Establish a new Thriving Communities service has been established to lead community engagement across South Ayrshire	Jane Bradley	100%	31-Mar-2022	31-Mar-2022	A new Thriving Communities service has been established and implementation of new structure and formation of community-based locality teams is ongoing
An annual log of all consultations and engagement will be published	Jane Bradley	75%	31-Dec-2022	31-Dec-2023	Officers group established who will now log consultations. Information will be published in April 2023 and annually thereafter in line with reporting cycle.
Thriving Communities will be responsible for engaging with local communities to help develop local place plans – November – March 2022 already underway and planned	Jane Bradley	75%	31-Dec-2022	31-Dec-2022	The Consultation Reference Group met on 22nd September 2022 and will meet again on 18th January 2023. The group discussed recent consultations, issues and challenges and consultations that are scheduled over the next six months. The meeting wasn't well attended, services represented include Thriving Communities, Education, Legal and Asset Management. The six months progress report on consultations will be sent out in October requesting information and encouraging services to utilise the

					<p>Consultation Reference Team site and attend the meeting in January.</p> <p>The annual log of consultations will be collated in April 2023.</p> <p>Thriving Communities have now completed the latest round of Place Planning engagement sessions. The opportunity to provide online feedback has now closed. The data/information is with Economy and Regeneration Place Planning Officers to develop and publish plans that can be shared with communities.</p> <p>Ayr North – Plan Published 2020 Girvan Plan Published 2022 Annbank / Mossblown / Tarbolton / Coylton – Engagement Sessions Complete Monkton – Engagement Sessions Complete Dundonald – Engagement Sessions Complete Loans – Engagement Sessions Complete Symington - - Engagement Sessions Complete South Carrick Villages – Engagement Sessions Complete Prestwick - Engagement Sessions Complete Maybole and North Carrick – Place Planning Carried out by NCCBC Troon – Troon Together Responsible for Place Planning</p>
A new online platform will be launched in January 2022 and will provide an opportunity for residents to let public services and community groups know what is important to the people of South Ayrshire	Jane Bradley	100%	31-Jan-2022	31-Jan-2022	<p>South Ayrshire Community Conversations' (Consul) Training has been rolled out to internal officers and 3rd sector partners. The platform will be piloted in July 2022 as part of the consultation to amend the Community Council Boundaries in North Carrick.</p>
A new officers group will be established to support and improve consultation across the organisation. We will continue to work alongside the Consultation Institute to improve our consultation processes	Jane Bradley	100%	31-Jan-2022	31-Jan-2022	<p>Officers group established and officers commenting on the Teams channel already provide support and guidance for colleagues. Training for Consul has been rolled out.</p>

Recommendation 6 The Council should improve performance reporting, by: • Setting targets for its KPIs • Including a summary of performance against KPIs in its performance reports to Members • Increasing the frequency of reports to Elected Members • Making performance reports more accessible to the public (paragraphs 32, 47 and 51)

Action	Managed By	Progress	Original Due Date	Current Due Date	Latest Note
Explore options for the future iterations of the Council Plan with Members and community planning partners and consider how reporting could be improved	Mike Newall	75%	31-Dec-2022	31-Dec-2022	A Council Plan Priorities Workshop took place on 11 th October 2022 with Elected Members and Chief Officers to consider the priorities for the Council in the development of the new Council Plan. The workshop was facilitated by the Improvement Service and generated a range of priorities for consideration. Elected Members will confirm to officers their preferred priorities to be taken forward.
As part of the development of the new Council Plan a greater emphasis will be on measuring outcomes	Mike Newall	70%	31-Dec-2022	31-Dec-2022	It was agreed at the Council Plan Priorities Workshop that took place on 11 th October 2022 that the confirmed priorities that will be published within the new Council Plan will have specific and measurable outcome that will define the benefits of the priorities.
Review the performance monitoring framework to improve public performance reporting	Mike Newall	100%	28-Feb-2022	28-Feb-2022	The review of the Performance Monitoring Framework was approved at the Service and Performance Panel that took place on Tuesday 8th February 2022.

Recommendation 7 To help them carry out their roles, including their responsibilities under Best Value, Elected Members should take advantage of the learning and development opportunities provided by the Council. The Council should continue to work with Elected Members to understand and address reasons for variable uptake of training (paragraph 30)

Action	Managed By	Progress	Original Due Date	Current Due Date	Latest Note
Conversion of all training to on-line Coast training courses and production of online Member's pack	Catriona Caves	95%	28-Feb-2022	31-Aug-2022	Induction training has been uploaded as Coast training courses and ICT finalising process to allow members access to recordings of members briefings. Process being implemented for Briefings being held by Teams Briefings for the new Schedule of briefings. Confirmation awaited from ICT on the format as to how members can access Member Briefings on-line after in person training. This will then be implemented after recess for new Briefing Schedule. On-line induction pack completed and uploaded on members area
Consideration of medium for delivery of training – ie by Hybrid training where Members can be both present in person and attending on-line	Catriona Caves	100%	31-May-2022	31-Aug-2022	Members are able to access training both in Hybrid and in person. On occasion there are some sessions which are run as purely in person sessions.
Return to PDP and personalisation of training needs with new Members intake	Catriona Caves	80%	30-Apr-2022	31-Dec-2022	Meetings with improvement service are complete by 5 November and then more experienced members are to have one to ones with OD/Member services before Christmas and new members thereafter.
Further develop new Member induction training	Catriona Caves	100%	30-Apr-2022	30-Apr-2022	A timetable of Induction Training was completed and an electronic new member's induction pack provided to all members and uploaded on a freshly designed new members page on the Core (the Council's intranet)
Report to Service and Performance Panel on training that is delivered with details of Member attendance	Catriona Caves	10%	31-Dec-2022	31-Dec-2022	Will be brought forward with initial update.