

Item: 5

Policy and Resources Committee: 17 April 2018.

Accounts Commission – New Best Value Audit.

Best Value Assurance Report – Response Plan.

Joint Report by Chief Executive and Executive Director of Corporate Services.

1. Purpose of Report

To present the Response Plan, developed in response to the recommendations set out within the Accounts Commission's Best Value Assurance Report on Orkney Islands Council.

2. Recommendations

The Committee is invited to note:

2.1.

That, on 22 February 2018, the Council considered the Best Value Assurance Report presented to the Accounts Commission on 7 December 2017, and published on 14 December 2017.

2.2.

That the Council subsequently accepted all of the Accounts Commission's recommendations contained within the Best Value Assurance Report.

2.3.

That, in response to the Accounts Commission's recommendations, the Chief Executive has developed a Best Value Response Plan, attached as Appendix 2 to the report.

It is recommended:

2.4.

That the Best Value Response Plan, attached as Appendix 2 to this report, be approved.

3. Policy Aspects

The Council's Best Value processes are underpinned by the Council value "working to provide better services - to improve the planning and delivery of services", as outlined in the Council Delivery Plan 2015 to 2018.

4. Introduction

The previous decision of the Council in respect of the Best Value Assurance Report is detailed, in full, in Appendix 1 to this report.

5. The Best Value Response Plan

5.1.

The Council has a long history of responding positively to external inspections and audits, viewing these as a form of low-cost consultancy, the findings and recommendations of which assist the Council to improve its services and activities for the benefit of the people of Orkney.

5.2.

The Best Value Assurance Report is considered to have been a fair and positive assessment of the Council, recognising in particular the Council's:

- Very good understanding of Orkney and its communities.
- Clear priorities and ambition for Orkney.
- Stable, effective leadership strongly focussed on doing what is right for Orkney's communities.
- Use of its financial reserves to help to protect front line services.
- Very high levels of satisfaction with its services amongst Orkney's residents.

5.3.

The Best Value Assurance Report also recognised that the Council works well with its partners and local communities.

5.4.

The Best Value Assurance Report made a series of Recommendations, as set out in section 2.2.1 of Appendix 1 to this report.

5.5.

Following its consideration of the Best Value Assurance Report, the Accounts Commission added one further finding, which encouraged the council to further increase the pace of progress.

5.6.

Attached at Appendix 2 to this report, is the Council's response to the Accounts Commission's recommendations, in the form of the Best Value Response Plan. For each of the six individual recommendations, the Response Plan lists the following:

- What the Council is planning to do in order to in response to the Accounts Commission recommendation.

- The desired outcome of the Council's response to the Accounts Commission recommendation for the people of Orkney.
- Whether or not additional resources will be required.
- The timescale for completion.
- The Council officer with lead responsibility for ensuring that the response to each recommendation is progressed to completion.
- Within which plan (Council Plan or appropriate Service Plan) the response to each recommendation will be monitored.
- The SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timebound) targets and performance indicators through which the response to each recommendation will be monitored.

5.7.

As previously agreed by Council, following approval of the Best Value Response Plan, each individual action point will be placed within either the Council Plan or appropriate Service Plan, for the purposes of performance monitoring, management, scrutiny and Public Performance Reporting.

6. Financial Implications

6.1.

The Accounts Commission expects local authorities to achieve high standards of financial stewardship and value for money in their use of resources to provide services to the public. The Best Value Audit process is one means of demonstrating whether the Council is meeting these objectives.

6.2.

There are no immediate financial implications arising from the report recommendations.

7. Legal Aspects

Monitoring progress and completion of the actions listed in the Best Value Response Plan will help the Council meet its statutory obligations to secure best value.

8. Contact Officers

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9. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Previous Council Decision.

Appendix 2 – Best Value Response Plan.