

BEST VALUE REPORTING PROCESS

1. SUMMARY

In February 2006 Audit Scotland issued a report entitled "The Audit of Best Value and Community Planning". The report and findings related to the performance of Argyll and Bute Council's statutory duties to secure Best Value and to initiate and facilitate the Community Planning process. Part 2, paragraph 61 of the report pertaining to Scrutiny, recognised the effectiveness of the Audit Committee but requested its role be further developed to provide challenge on the findings and methodology of Best Value Reviews. In response to the Audit Scotland report the Council prepared an Improvement and Development Plan in May 2006. Set out below is an outline of the process for scrutinising service performance information to the Audit Committee.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That the Audit Committee approves the process outline set out in this report.

3. DETAIL -

3.1 Background

3.1.1 The Best Value Audit Report, published in February 2006 in particular paragraph 61, said, "There is an effective audit committee with sufficient independence and authority to scrutinise and challenge financial performance and ensure internal control issues are addressed. The audit committee's remit also includes monitoring services to ensure they are being provided efficiently and effectively, in accordance with Best Value principles. This role needs to be developed, particularly to provide challenge on the findings and methodology of Best Value reviews, and supported by better information about service performance."

3.1.2 In answer to the report comment expressing a need for the Audit Committee to expand its scrutiny role, an action was included within the Council's Improvement and Development Plan agreed with Audit Scotland to ensure that the Audit Committee is provided with a mechanism to challenge the findings and methodology of reviews.

3.1.3 In a separate paper to the Audit Committee a proposed process is outlined that addresses the second part of paragraph 61 that members are to be supported by better information about service performance. The presentation of Quarterly Service performance reports to the Audit Committee will fulfil this final requirement - to provide better information about service performance.

3.2 Proposal

3.2.1 Eight reviews were agreed by the SMT on the 31st of January 2006. The progress of each of these reviews will be reported to the Audit Committee on a quarterly basis.

3.2.2 Set out in Appendix 1 is the proposed reporting format for the 8 reviews for 2006-2007. The title of each is given, as is the scope, the agreed timescale and the name of the lead officer. The level of information proposed will provide the Audit Committee with a mechanism to challenge the findings and the methodology of the reviews. Once a review has been completed a final report will be presented to the Audit Committee for review.

3.3 Timescales and responsibilities

3.3.1 If the Audit Committee approves this process, the first progress report will be presented to the Audit Committee on the 8th of December 2006.

4. CONCLUSIONS

This will address the point raised in the Audit Scotland report regarding the challenging of findings and methodology of reviews by the Audit Committee.

5. IMPLICATIONS

- | | | |
|-----|----------------------|------|
| 5.1 | Policy: | None |
| 5.2 | Financial: | None |
| 5.3 | Personnel: | None |
| 5.4 | Legal: | None |
| 5.5 | Equal Opportunities: | None |

For further information please contact Ian Nisbet, Internal Audit Manager (01546 604216)
Ian Nisbet, Internal Audit Manager. 31st August 2006. 31Augfinalreport31Aug.