



AUDIT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: 29 MARCH 2016
POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE: 30 MARCH 2016

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Joint Report by Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Corporate Resources

PURPOSE OF REPORT: To provide an update on the work of the Continuous Improvement Sub-Committee

COMPETENCE

- 1.1 There are no legal, financial, equality or other constraints to the recommendations being implemented.

SUMMARY

- 2.1 At its meeting on 11 February 2016 the Comhairle considered a Report suggesting a revised approach to continuous improvement which proposed a move from the self-evaluation of "How Good Is Our Council?" to the self-assessment framework of the Public Service Improvement Framework (PSIF) adopted by most Scottish local authorities to facilitate benchmarking. The Comhairle agreed this approach and also agreed to apply programme and project management principles to the delivery of the Comhairle's efficiency agenda. The Continuous Improvement Sub-Committee applies project management principles and performs a scrutiny role on behalf of the Comhairle.
- 2.2 The Sub-Committee received training in the PSIF model of self-assessment from the Improvement Service in April 2015 and project management training from CIPFA in August 2015. The Sub-Committee held its third business meeting on 2 March 2016 and the minute appears as a concurrent item. Details of the issues discussed are provided in the body of the report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 **It is recommended that the Comhairle :**
- (a) **note the outcomes of the self-assessment in relation to customer services; and**
 - (b) **agree to adopt the "We Asked, You Said, We Did" approach to inform business planning processes and evidence improvement planning.**

Contact Officers: Robert Emmott, Director of Finance and Corporate Resources, Ext 211385
Katherine Mackinnon, Head of Human Resources, Ext 211463
Lesley McDonald, Head of Executive Office, Ext 211263
Norma Skinner, Organisational Development Manager, Ext 211569

SELF- ASSESSMENT

- 4.1 The Sub-Committee considered a Report in relation to the outcomes of the self-assessment conducted on criterion 5 – processes and services and criterion 6 – results. This self-assessment had addressed the cross cutting theme of customer services and as this was the first corporate self-assessment undertaken there had been many valuable lessons learned which would inform the future development of processes and practices to be adopted when undertaking self-assessments. The principal finding related to the volume of evidence which had required to be collated.
- 4.2 The evidence gathered through the self-assessment exercise highlighted several corporate strengths including the range and means of gathering customer information through surveys, direct contact with customers and a range of consultations to develop insight into customer needs and preferences. A range of indicators at departmental level, outlined within business plans, and linked to organisational outcomes, acted as internal measures of efficiency and effectiveness. The principal weaknesses identified were the lack of evidence of creative use of customer information gathered to implement improvement initiatives or to stimulate innovations. There was also limited evidence of the use of external benchmarking across the majority of departments.
- 4.3 It was indicated in the Report that Corporate Management Team had agreed for its interests on 26 February 2016 that the area for corporate improvement should focus around the pro-active use of available customer information using the Scottish Government's consultation approach of "We Asked, You Said, We Did". This was considered to be a manageable and understandable means of summarising available information to inform and support ongoing business planning processes. The Sub-Committee emphasised the importance of asking the right questions in the first instance and of ensuring that when reporting on "We Did" the Comhairle also outlined what it had not done and the reasons for this.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

- 5.1 The Sub-Committee considered Project Highlight Reports for year one projects (2016/17) of the budget efficiency programme. Three work packages (Standardise Travel and Subsistence Arrangements; Catering Supplies and Re-negotiate WISP/FES contract) had been assessed as green; two work packages (Review of Car Usage, Mileage and pooling; and surplus assets) had been assessed as amber and one project (Streamline Community Support Services) had been assessed as red. The measures being taken in relation to projects assessed as amber were discussed and it was noted that a report would be submitted to the Sub-Committee in relation to the project assessed as red.
- 5.2 Initial documentation in relation to the year two (2017/18) work packages was also discussed. As reported to the last meeting it was noted that two work packages could not proceed as originally anticipated and that the 2017/18 target had therefore been revised to £979k. The Sub-Committee noted some of the challenges and that the efficiencies realisable from consultancy may be not produce revenue savings as a substantial proportion of consultancy was funded from capital. It was agreed that the Sub-Committee would review the year end figures.
- 5.3 The Sub-Committee finally noted that the Time Recording and Security System project was on target.