OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

CARLISLE CITY COUNCIL

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Committee Report

Public

Date of Meeting:	**29th January**
Title:	**SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES BEST VALUE REVIEW**
Report of:	**Executive Director**
Report reference:	**CE 03/04**

Summary:

This report updates Members on the progression and completion of the Supporting Communities Best Value Review which was submitted to the Infrastructure Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 22nd January 2004. Further, it outlines the key issues raised in the scoping exercise and seeks agreement that these have been satisfactorily addressed during the course of the Review and that they are now reflected and will be progressed further in the Improvement Plan (attached at Appendix 1).

Recommendations:

Members are requested to:

1) Note the progress and completion of the Supporting Communities Best Value Review
2) Agree that the key issues raised in the scoping exercise have been satisfactorily dealt with during the course of the Review.

Note: in compliance with section 100d of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 the report has been prepared in part from the following papers: None

1.0   BACKGROUND

1.1   Members will be aware that this Best Value Review was refocused in June 2003. There had been some difficulties during the earlier stages of the Review, mainly in terms of its wide brief and it was not surprising therefore that the Review process stalled.

1.2   However the refocused Review meant that the remit, Supporting Communities through regeneration work, could still be addressed, through measuring the effectiveness of the Council's lead partnership role in Sure Start – Carlisle South.

1.3   The Review Team was reconstituted, retaining the core members and adding to that range of expertise, representatives from the Voluntary Sector; the Local Strategic Partnership and a Senior Officer from Preston City Council, who became the Review's 'challenger'.

1.4   The Scoping Workshop was held on 3rd September 2003 and Members of the Infrastructure Overview & Scrutiny Committee identified a range of key issues which they felt should be followed up during the Review process.

1.5   The workshop produced a wealth of information and the key issues identified by members helped to shape the framework for the Review Team to work within during the Review period. It was felt that these issues would also provide the challenge to the Council for real improvements to be made in its leadership and involvement in Supporting Communities and Regeneration. Both Members and Officers were acutely aware that for the Review to have successful outcomes there needed to be a high degree of transferability to all aspects of the Council's partnership work.

1.6   The outcomes of the Scoping workshop resulted in a framework of 7 Themes which had a number of key issues and challenges attached to them for the Review Team to address. The themes were identified as:
   ▪ Purpose & Direction of the Council's partnership role
   ▪ Policy & Strategy of the Council's partnership work
   ▪ How the Council 'delivers' its partnership role
   ▪ User Satisfaction
   ▪ Staff Satisfaction
   ▪ Performance Results
   These were approved by Infrastructure Overview & Scrutiny Committee at its meeting of 11th September 2003.

1.7   During the months that followed the Review Team made good progress and a key driver was the consultation element of the Review, which produced much evidence which both highlighted the strengths of the Council's partnership work, but more importantly identified the gaps in the Council's capacity to engage in partnership work which in turn supported communities. Consultation was an integral part of the Review and was not carried out in one block, it continued throughout, from July to November 2003.

2.0   ANALYSIS OF THE FINDINGS OF THE REVIEW/IDENTIFICATION OF KEY ISSUES

2.1   On the 4th December 2003 Members of Infrastructure Overview & Scrutiny Committee were asked to approve the Key Issues to be progressed within the Improvement Plan. These were derived from the Analysis of the findings of the Review. The Key Issues are as follows:

1.   The Council's partnership role within its Community Leadership role (as defined by the Local Government Act 2000) needs to be considerably strengthened and articulated through the Corporate Plan and City Vision.

2.   The Council should be aware of communities' and other agencies' sensitivities around partnership issues, and ensure that the Council does not dominate Partnerships, but rather acts as a facilitator, enabler and co-ordinator.

3.   There needs to be explicit statements made in corporate documents which champion the Council's role in Supporting Communities, especially those in the most deprived rural and urban areas.

4.   There needs to be a Regeneration Strategy and/or Framework in place which makes the strategic links between all Council policies, to ensure cohesion, and also the links with how the Council's partnership role links to tackling anti-social behaviour; improves community cohesion; supports social enterprise and addresses financial exclusion.

5.   There needs to be a robust Risk Assessment in place, which not only accords with the Councils' own procedures, but also enables the Council to:

- Show how the permanent posts established for relatively short-term projects will be supported once the funding ceases.

- Recognise that the future of delivery of regeneration and supporting communities is likely to be through Specialist Projects (e.g. Sure Start; NWDA) and also increasingly through mainstreaming local public service provision. This mainstreaming has to be forecast at an early stage of the project and in the core posts funded by the Council (5 in total) for the Sure Start programme, as soon as possible. The Review Team has recognised that effective succession (rather than exit) Strategies is growing ever more pertinent for the City Council.

6. The capacity of Council staff in delivering 'extra' services as a result of the Council's partnership role has to be considered at an early stage and needs to be risk managed and costed accordingly.

7. The role of the Council's partnership role has to be considered in terms of all the other partnership work it is engaged in, to test both the impact and the capacity.

8. There needs to be an explicit Policy on the Councils' Partnership role which takes account of the VFM Internal Review of Partnerships. Evidence gathered in this Best Value Review will inform and influence the Policy.

9. There needs to be a much stronger awareness of the cross-cutting nature of Partnerships across the Council, both in terms of current partnership work and the potential for future work. This of course includes individual Business Units' capacity to deliver. All Business Unit Heads are committed to partnership working, but not all are aware of how or if they can contribute.

10. Consideration needs to be given to top-slicing external budgets wherever possible to enable the Council to properly fulfil its role as Partner.

11. A robust set of performance indicators needs to be developed and established, which measure the effectiveness of the Council's partnership role.

12. Other Local Authorities and organisations need to be consulted and involved at appropriate times, to support the Council's role and test out ideas of adding value to the Councils' partnership role. The Council needs to acknowledge that it has much to learn from other organisations and they in turn can learn much from the Council.

13. The Consultation process showed the Review Team that there are concerns in local communities about how the Council currently consults, which focus upon the issues

of 'over consultation' and the need to feedback consultation outcomes promptly and appropriately.

3.0   THE IMPROVEMENT PLAN

3.1   The Improvement Plan is attached at Appendix 1 and this was submitted to Infrastructure Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 22nd January 2004. The Plan follows through the original key issues and themes drawn from the Scoping Workshop and identifies, through the work that followed and the action needed to progress them. Further, the Improvement Plan also identifies the performance monitoring arrangements for each of the key issues.

3.2   The completion of the Improvement Plan and its approval, marks the end of the Review and the beginning of the monitoring process. The Infrastructure Overview & Scrutiny Committee will have a central role in this and Members will see that other internal groups, like Corporate Management Team, Executive Management Group and the Joint Management Team (Executive and Senior Officers) will also have a key role in ensuring that the outcomes of this Best Value Review are fully addressed.

4.0   RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1   Members are requested to:

1) Note the progress and completion of the Supporting Communities Best Value Review
2) Agree that the key issues raised in the scoping exercise have been satisfactorily dealt with during the course of the Review.

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CARLISLE CITY COUNCIL
SUPPORTING COMMUNTIES BEST VALUE REVIEW
IMPROVEMENT PLAN – FIRST DRAFT 29/12/03

KEY ISSUE	ACTION	MILESTONE DATES	LEAD RESPONSIBILITY	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	RISK FACTORS	PERFORMANCE MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS
1. The Council's partnership role within its Community Leadership role (as defined by the Local Government Act 2000) needs to be considerably strengthened and articulated through the Corporate Plan and City Vision.	▪ Consultation with CMT, EMG and JMT to ensure this key issue is acknowledged and progressed into the Prioritisation process of the Corporate Plan's Themes, Objectives and Actions. ▪ Consultation with City Vision partners to ensure the Councils' 'Community Leadership role' is progressed through the revised City Vision document. ▪ Consultation with Carlisle and Eden Local Strategic Partnership to ensure the Community Strategy reflects the Council's role.	*January – March 2004 –* Prioritisation process of Corporate Plan. *March – September 2004 –* Review of City Vision *January – June 2004 –* Community Strategy	Strategic & Performance Services; EMG; Executive; Executive Directors	Staff time	▪ Consultation relating to Prioritisation of Corporate Plan does not manage to highlight the 'community leadership' issues because of training and meeting deadlines. ▪ Regionalisation Agenda/Unitary Authority debates overtake the previous City Vision and Community Strategy.	▪ Infrastructure Overview & Scrutiny Committee ▪ CMT ▪ EMG - To be undertaken near/following milestone dates.

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2. The Council should be aware of communities' and other agencies' sensitivities around partnership issues, and ensure that the Council does not dominate Partnerships, but rather acts as a facilitator, enabler and co-ordinator.	Will be part of the proposed brief for external work to be undertaken (please see Appendix 3)	*March – September 2004*	Supporting Communities Best Value Review Team	▪ This action will be part of the overall costs of 'Partnership' work – approximately £9000 ▪ Staff time	▪ Inability to identify appropriate consultant/s ▪ Lack of commitment/ time of Council staff and development in this area of work ▪ Consultancy work does not meet deadline	Supporting Communities Best Value Review Team Infrastructure Overview & Scrutiny Committee.
3. There needs to be explicit statements made in corporate documents which champion the Council's role in Supporting Communities, especially those in the most deprived rural and urban areas.	All other documents e.g. Business Plans, will identify this key issue	See Key Issue (1)	See Key Issue (1)	See Key Issue (1)	See Key Issue (1)	See Key Issue (1)

KEY ISSUE	ACTION	MILESTONE DATES	LEAD RESPONSIBILITY	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	RISK FACTORS	PERFORMANCE MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS
4. There needs to be a Regeneration Strategy and/or Framework in place which makes the strategic links between all Council policies, to ensure cohesion, and also the links with how the Council's partnership role links to tackling anti-social behaviour; improves community cohesion; supports social enterprise and addresses financial exclusion.	▪ To be incorporated within the 'Regeneration Framework' being progressed by Economic & Community Development Business Unit. ▪ All other Policies to be championed by relevant Executive Directors/Business Unit Heads/Portfolio Holders/Elected Member representatives on key groups e.g. Community Safety Leadership Group; Housing Strategy Group	Year One – *January – December 2004*	Economic & Community Development Business Unit Head Executive Directors Relevant Business Unit Heads Portfolio Holders/ Elected Member representatives	Staff time	Lack of cohesion because of complex nature of action required	CMT;EMG; JMT
5.There needs to be a robust Risk Assessment in place, which not only accords with the Councils' own procedures, but also enables the Council to:	▪ Strategic & Performance Services to advise Business Units on carrying out Risk Assessments of all Partnerships, in relation to all key issues identified in this section.	*First Review to take place May 2004*	Strategic & Performance Services; Financial Services; Executive Directors	The cost of permanent contracts attached to fixed term projects Potential additional funding to cover future staffing costs (once project ends) Staff time related to these actions	▪ Inability to recruit temporary staff on fixed term contracts. ▪ Financial implications for City Council to pick up staff and other revenue costs once project ends	▪ Executive Directors ▪ Infrastructure Overview & Scrutiny Committee

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▪ Show how the permanent posts established for relatively short-term projects will be supported once the funding ceases. Recognise that the future of delivery of regeneration and supporting communities is likely to be through Specialist Projects (e.g. Sure Start; NWDA) and also increasingly through mainstreaming local public service provision. This mainstreaming has to be forecast at an early stage of the project and in the core posts funded by the Council (5 in total) for the Sure Start programme, as soon as possible. The	▪ Business Units undertaking Partnership work which includes recruitment of staff and discussing financial implications with Financial Services at an early stage – possible extension of the remit of VFM Review of Partnerships? ▪ Regular reports to Executive on the changing pattern of projects which rely on external funding sources; temporary staffing and exit strategies. ▪ Discussion with the Sure Start 'Mainstreaming' Group to look at models of good practice in terms of mainstreaming/succession strategies. ▪ Mapping exercise of number and range of externally funded posts across the Council					

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Review Team has recognised that effective succession (rather than exit) Strategies is growing ever more pertinent for the City Council. 6. The capacity of Council staff in delivering 'extra' services as a result of the Council's partnership role has to be considered at an early stage and needs to be risk managed and costed accordingly.	▪ Agreement by CMT and EMG that wherever possible top-slicing of external funding allocations is undertaken to cover additional services. ▪ Effective time-recording undertaken by all staff involved in Partnership work	*First review to take place May 2003.*	Executive Directors and Business Unit Heads	Staffing costs	▪ Staffing capacity overload ▪ Impact on service delivery ▪ Commitment to the 'extra' services not fulfilled	CMT Infrastructure Overview & Scrutiny Committee

KEY ISSUE	ACTION	MILESTONE DATES	LEAD RESPONSIBILITY	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	RISK FACTORS	PERFORMANCE MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS
7. The role of the Council's partnership role has to be considered in terms of all the other partnership work it is engaged in, to test both the impact and the capacity.	▪ Mapping of Council's current commitment to Partnership work. ▪ CMT, EMG and Executive (when appropriate) to agree all future partnership work	*On-going*	▪ CMT ▪ EMG	Staff time	Decisions taken outside 'Lead Responsibility' with potential to overload capacity of staff Possible risk-averse to partnership opportunities Results of mapping exercise not kept up to date, therefore unclear picture of current partnership undertakings.	▪ CMT ▪ EMG
8.There needs to be an explicit Policy on the Councils' Partnership role which takes account of the VFM Internal Review of Partnerships. Evidence gathered in this Best Value Review will inform and influence the Policy.	This key issue will be part of the proposed brief for external work to be undertaken (see Appendix 3)	*March – September 2004*	Supporting Communities Best Value Review Team	This action will be part of the overall costs of the partnership work – approximately £9000. Staff time	Inability to identify appropriate Consultant	Supporting Communities Best Value Review Team Infrastructure Overview & Scrutiny Committee

KEY ISSUE	ACTION	MILESTONE DATES	LEAD RESPONSIBILITY	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	RISK FACTORS	PERFORMANCE MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS
9. There needs to be a much stronger awareness of the cross-cutting nature of Partnerships across the Council, both in terms of current partnership work and the potential for future work. This of course includes individual Business Units' capacity to deliver. All Business Unit Heads are committed to partnership working, but not all are aware of how or if they can contribute.	▪ Initial awareness raising of Councils' partnership work through CMT and proposed consultancy ▪ Strategic & Performance Services to maintain an up to date list of Partnerships which involve the City Council as lead body/and or representative partner ▪ CMT updated through Performance Monitoring and information sharing by Business Unit Heads.	*Ongoing*	Business Unit Heads Strategic & Performance Services	Staff time	▪ Business Units unaware of the context and impact of Partnership work across the Council ▪ Capacity overload ▪ Potential risk-aversion to cross-cutting work	Strategic & Performance Services
10. Consideration needs to be given to top-slicing external budgets wherever possible to enable the Council to properly fulfil its role as Partner.	This key issue is now subsumed within Actions for Key Issues (6) and (7)					

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11. A robust set of performance indicators needs to be developed and established, which measure the effectiveness of the Council's partnership role.	▪ Strategic & Performance Services to provide support and advice to ensure that the identified Performance Indicators accurately reflect the work being carried out. ▪ Will also be part of the proposed brief for external work to be undertaken (See Appendix 3)	*March-September 2004*	Strategic & Performance Services. Supporting Communities Best Value Review Team	▪ This action will be part of the overall costs of 'Partnership' work – approximately £9000 ▪ Staff time		▪ Supporting Communities Best Value Review Team ▪ Strategic & Performance Services ▪ Infrastructure Overview & Scrutiny Committee
12. Other Local Authorities and organisations need to be consulted and involved at appropriate times, to support the Council's role and test out ideas of adding value to the Councils' partnership role. The Council needs to acknowledge that it has much to learn from other organisations and they in turn can learn much from the Council.	▪ Supporting the Research Officer in Strategic & Performance Services to help identify good practice in other Local Authorities /Organisation. ▪ Will also be part of the proposed brief for external work to be undertaken (See Appendix 3)	*Ongoing*	Supporting Communities Best Value Review Team. Strategic & Performance Services	▪ This action will be part of the overall costs of 'Partnership' work – approximately £9000 ▪ Staff time	▪ Inability to identify appropriate Consultant ▪ Inability to identify comparator Local Authorities/ Organisations	▪ Supporting Communities Best Value Review Team

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13. The Consultation process showed the Review Team that there are concerns in local communities about how the Council currently consults, which focus upon the issues of 'over consultation' and the need to feedback consultation outcomes promptly and appropriately.	▪ Feedback to all consultees involved in this Best Value Review. ▪ Feedback to the Democratic Engagement Best Value Review Team and for this key issue to inform the Corporate Consultation Policy ▪ Awareness raising across Business Units	Ongoing with feedback to Supporting Communities Best Value Review Consultees by *mid February 2004*, following report to Infrastructure Overview & Scrutiny Committee on *22nd January 2004.*	Supporting Communities Best Value Review Team Communications Team	Staff time	Inconsistencies in implementing Corporate Consultation Policy Inability to consult with most deprived groups of our local communities 'Over consultation' of some key groups e.g. young people	Supporting Communities Best Value Review Team. Communications Team