

### Rigorous and Robust Approach

Our approach to review is rigorous and robust. **Review and options appraisal** are conducted on a regular basis and are integrated into our management arrangements. Reviews cover significant topics where current policies and approaches are challenged explicitly. All our major services have been subject to a **Best Value Service Review** where option appraisal is conducted to challenge current policies and approaches and determine preferred future delivery mechanisms. While most of these reviews focused on a single service, some of them were strategic and cross cutting – Personnel Services, Finance and Administration.

**Scrutiny Board reviews** also follow a pattern of explicitly challenging policies and approaches, learning from areas of best practice and carrying out option appraisal to determine our future policies and procedures on the basis of expert evidence. To date 24 reviews have been completed and a further four are ongoing.

We undertake review on a systematic basis and concentrate on identified priorities, areas where performance may be poor, or which are of importance to stakeholders, of significant concern to the Council or otherwise offer clear opportunities for improvements in services and service delivery. A **new phase of service reviews** is currently being identified and where appropriate we will involve our Community Planning and other partners in carrying out these reviews. In all cases, areas selected for review will be those areas where we can expect to achieve significant improvements for our service users.

We use review to support high levels of service quality and **secure continuous improvement**. The whole thrust of our service review process is to achieve significant improvement in the levels of service being provided and ensure the service continues to improve. We also seek to ensure that future demands are clearly addressed.

We actively **review service delivery mechanisms** and we have a track record of delivering new solutions to ensure Best Value for our customers. Current/recent projects include our **schools PPP project** where the payment mechanism ensures focus on service availability and performance to pre-determined service standards; our proposed **Housing Stock Transfer** to deliver Scottish Social Housing Standards; our **Planning for Change** Council Headquarters redevelopment project and **Renfrewshire Leisure**, the transfer of leisure services to an Industrial and Provident Society.

We also involve our **Business Change team** in reviewing and challenging the way services are delivered. The cross Council Business Change Review programme is approved annually by the Corporate Management Team with particular emphasis being given on process reviews relating to services which take advantage of our Modernising Government service channels such as the Contact Centre, Customer Service Centre and the Portal. Specifically the relationship between the front office and the back office is analysed to ensure delivery of efficient services to our citizens. Our Contact Centre delivers services in Council Tax, payments, housing repairs, special uplifts, roads and street lighting faults, school placements, recycling, recruitment and senior citizens outing and voucher scheme. Furthermore, the Council recently launched its pilot Customer Service Centre that delivers Benefits, Council Tax and Housing services, with other services to follow.

Our **service review guidance** takes into account the need to achieve improvement in cross cutting agendas such as equalities, joint working and sustainable development. All our reviews address these issues and our revised service review guidance gives them much higher priority. We use a checklist style approach and have developed an **environmental checklist** based on the SOLACE sustainability checklist. We use this to build sustainability into the Best Value process and give an overview of the environmental impact of the current service and planned changes. In relation to equalities, each department undertakes an annual **equalities audit** designed to ensure that equalities issues are being mainstreamed and to highlight how they plan to improve their equalities performance each year.

Our service review guidance ensures that reviews are conducted within a **consistent approach** and ensures that review teams have the necessary skills, knowledge and aptitudes, and that they themselves are challenged on their conclusions. As part of the review process an additional level

of challenge is provided by the **Scrutiny Panel** which reviews the report and findings of the service review team to ensure that all options have been fully addressed in the conclusions reached. Before proceeding with the Schools PPP initiative, the formulation of the Outline Business Case involved the consideration of this option against the traditional funding route by a multi-disciplinary team of Council officers supported by experienced external advisors.

Our guidance demands that actions should be clearly described in sufficient detail to be readily understood should be clearly explained in terms of importance, relevance, and priority and be realistic and achievable. Implementation is then monitored on a regular basis. Each of our reviews has a Performance Improvement Plan which sets out a development programme. All actions in the PIP are SMART. Update reports on the implementation of the PIPs are reported annually to Policy Boards and monitored as part of the annual performance scrutiny process. This scrutiny continues until all actions are fully complete.

### Key Strengths

- Strong track record in taking difficult and sometimes controversial decisions to ensure the Council achieves Best Value for Renfrewshire residents – Schools PPP initiative, Housing Stock Transfer, Renfrewshire Leisure Trust.
- Clear evidence of having considered all options for service delivery.
- Service review process, continuous improvement and challenge built in to regular management cycle – not simply added on.
- Clear review guidance in place and reviewed as appropriate to ensure consistent approach, with focus on issues such as equalities and sustainability and to facilitate joined up working and cross party reviews.
- Scrutiny Panel provides additional challenge to Best Value service reviews.
- Willingness of members to take difficult decisions which has resulted in the closure of 2 schools and the amalgamation of four schools into two new schools, since 2000.

### Core Evidence

- Service Review Guidance.
- Service Review reports.
- Performance Improvement Plans with SMART actions and monitoring framework and reports.
- Scrutiny Board Programme.
- Best Value Catchment area reviews.

### Reviews Achieve Quantifiable Benefits

We can demonstrate real and continuous improvement for our citizens and communities as a result of conducting service reviews. Full details of all our Best Value service reviews, and the impacts and benefits generated for service users are set out in the Service Profiles but the following examples give an indication of what has been achieved. The **School Catchments Review** resulted in the closure of two secondary schools in Paisley, the amalgamation of two other secondary schools on a single new build site and the amalgamation of two primary schools on a new site. The savings generated from the Best Value review were reinvested in the School PPP project which will result in the new build of four secondary schools, six primary schools, two nursery schools and a learning centre. The **Care Home Review** also generated significant benefits to residents and will result in closure and disposal of five residential homes and two day care centres and their replacement with three new build 60 bed homes and two day centres. This will create single rooms with en-suite facilities for all residents and will meet the Care Commission's standards.

The **Street Cleansing Review** resulted in improved town centre sweeping, purchase of specialist chewing gum removal equipment and improved litter removal along the main roads all of which improved our Street Cleanliness Index rating from 58 in 2001 to 70 in 2004.

Our **Charter Mark programme** contributes to this in that each service that achieves Charter Mark needs to provide evidence against the criteria 'Contribute to improving opportunities and quality of

life in the communities you serve'. As a result of our service review programme and the resultant actions taken, we are satisfied that our services are now operating efficiently and effectively and we have delivered significant service improvements to our customers. Our focus now is to improve joined up, partnership working to make the Council's and partners services even more effective. Our service review and service planning processes ask that we look at how our services perform now, the environment in which they are currently operating and how this is liable to change in the future. We also consider how stakeholder needs and expectations may change in the future.

Our **Consultation Strategy and Panel results** demonstrate that we have taken into account the interests of key stakeholders, local residents, local businesses and the voluntary sector. Where a proposal would be expected to have a significant impact we consider views from all interest groups and stakeholders in analysing and developing recommendations. For our PPP and School Estate Strategy review, the views of the pupils, teachers, parents and the local community were taken into account. For the Housing Stock Transfer, the views of the tenants will be considered and both employee and elected members views are being considered as part of our HQ redevelopment review.

Even where we are not looking to fundamentally review service delivery, we recognise the value of **working with stakeholders** to achieve our service goals. The Council's consultation process with **employees** and their representatives, **staff surveys** and **Team Talk** all provide opportunities for employees' views to be highlighted. Employees are also provided with training to support key departmental and corporate initiatives such as the Customer Services Centre, which is supported by the development of training based on the **Customers Matters Toolkit**.

Our tenant participation strategy promotes active involvement and participation and has given tenants and the wider community an enhanced opportunity to be involved in the service delivery and management of their homes and communities. A **consultation register** allows voluntary organisations to actively participate in our tenant participation structure. Our Council Tax and Revenues Service regularly conduct **focus groups** and meetings with specific groups of users including the elderly to consider changes and improvements to service delivery. Reports and minutes from all Council wide forums, Neighbourhood Forums and the Tenant Participation Development Group are available from the Council. Our Operating Plan for Economic Development is produced on an annual basis and is subject to extensive consultation with partners. We participate in the Renfrewshire Economic Forum and the Renfrew Chamber of Commerce is represented on our Community Planning Groups.

### Key Strengths

- Ongoing review is built into our service planning process. We can demonstrate significant benefits that are being realised for stakeholders as a result of our continuous improvement focus.
- Strong track record of constructive stakeholder involvement.
- Evidence of changes that have been made to plans and outcomes as a result of stakeholder involvement in reviews.
- Strong evidence of benefits being realised for customers.

### Core Evidence

- Consultation Strategy and database.
- Service planning and service review guidance.
- Service Plans and examples of Service Reviews.
- Charter Mark Programme.

### Fair and Open Approach to Reviews

We are **open and accountable**. Following reviews we produce clear recommendations based on factual analysis and consideration of quality, social impact, and whole-life costs. Resultant actions are described in sufficient detail to be readily understood, are clearly explained in terms of importance, relevance and priority and are realistic and achievable. All tasks set out in our Best Value review **Performance Improvement Plans** are SMART and are monitored on a regular basis by relevant Policy Boards, the Chief Executive and senior managers.

We provide specific statements about what improvements are actually intended to achieve and the focus of all our service reviews and wider performance management strategy is on achieving **tangible improvements on a continuous basis**.

We **involve members** at key stages and ensure that they approve the overall process and policies to be adopted in implementing action plans. Members are also involved at the start in approving the programme and in selecting the most appropriate option from the range evaluated for each service review. Our **Scrutiny Board** undertakes a comprehensive programme of member led service and policy reviews. The Board agrees areas for review, calls witnesses from other organisations and specialists to give evidence, identifies the scope for improvement based on best practice and agrees actions for improvement. All meetings of the Scrutiny Board are open to the public. Resultant reports recommending the action to be taken are submitted to the Council for approval and then remitted to Policy Boards for implementation.

**Senior officers** scrutinise performance against Performance Improvement Plans on a regular and structured basis. The Chief Executive holds **service planning and review** meetings with each Director on an annual basis, examining performance in depth. Members monitor implementation of Best Value review actions annually at **Policy Boards** and the process is updated annually until all actions set out in the Performance Improvement Plans have been implemented. We have recently introduced a comprehensive **computerised performance management** system and all future Performance Improvement Plans will be monitored through this.

**Key Strengths**

- Scrutiny Board programme.
- All Service Reviews result in a Performance Improvement Plan – SMART actions are regularly monitored as part of our annual performance scrutiny process and with regular reports to members.
- Introduction of integrated performance management system.

**Core Evidence**

- Service Planning and Service Review guidance.
- Service Plans and Service Reviews.
- Covalent performance management system.
- Performance Improvement Plans for each service review.

**Best Practice**

Business Change Programme  
(FIT BP 5)

The Business Change Team challenge and review the way services are delivered and identify changes that need to be addressed before the service can be delivered from our Customer Contact Centre. The work of the Business Change team, and the improvements introduced by the Contact Centre management, has had a positive impact on performance within the Contact Centre:

- Increase in the percentage of calls answered from 41% in 2002/03 to 89% in 2004/05.
- 89.34%. of calls were answered "right the first time" in 2004/05 and this currently has improved to 93%

Care Homes Review

The Best Value review of residential care for older people was conducted in line with the corporate guidance and systematically addressed the shortcomings, strengths and challenges facing the service. The review appraised four different options for the service and recommended a specific option. The strategic and financial impact of these options is described in the review report and was presented to the Policy Board for approval.

Planning for Change HQ Project  
(HPS BP 8)

The Council Headquarters Accommodation Review provided a comprehensive analysis of the options available to the Council to address the issues of current and future office accommodation. This resulted in the decision to consolidate all HQ staff in the refurbished and extended South

Building and the demolition of the North Building.

**Plans for Continuous Improvement**

- Identify the next phase of strategic, cross cutting service reviews involving Community Planning partners where appropriate and implement the programme in line with the agreed timetable.
- Continue our programme of rolling out Charter Mark to all front line services.