

REPORT TO: East Lothian Council

MEETING DATE: 24 June 2014

BY: Chief Executive

SUBJECT: 2014/15 Council Improvement Plan

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To present the 2014/15 Council Improvement Plan to the Council for approval.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Council notes the update report on the 2013/14 Council Improvement Plan (Appendix 2) and agrees the 2014/15 Council Improvement Plan (Appendix 3).

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The diagram in Appendix 1 illustrates the sources used to determine the 2014/15 Council Improvement Plan. The action points in the Plan are primarily drawn from the results of the How Good is Our Council? (HGIOC) self-evaluation carried out by all services and the Corporate Governance self-evaluation (reported to Audit & Governance Committee, 20 May 2014). All of the improvement points raised in the self-evaluations have been reviewed to ascertain which actions should be addressed corporately. The results of the 2014 Employee Engagement Survey have also been taken into account. Improvement points from HGIOC and other sources relating to specific Council services are not contained within the Council Improvement Plan as they are dealt with in Service and Business Plans.
- 3.2 In preparing the 2014/15 account has also been taken of Audit Scotland's Overview of Local Government in Scotland, the auditor's Annual Report to Members and the Shared Risk Assessment prepared by the Local Area Network.
- 3.3 Appendix 2 provides an update on the 2013/14 Council Improvement Plan. All of the 21 action points have either been completed or are due to be completed. The five action points that have not been fully completed have been carried forward into the latest Plan.

- 3.4 In accordance with the principles of Best Value the Council strives to pursue 'continuous improvement' and seeks to deliver services in as effective and efficient way as possible. The recommendations arising from Council's self-evaluations, review and inspection work identified above help to inform the Council's pursuit of 'continuous improvement' through the adoption and implementation of the 2014/15 Council Improvement Plan.
- 3.5 The 2014/15 Plan includes 15 action points, significantly fewer than previous years' plans. The improvement actions which have been carried out over the last three years have addressed the weaknesses that have been identified in previous self-evaluations. This improvement work has contributed to positive feedback received from the most recent Assurance and Improvement Plan 2014-2017 published by the Accounts Commission, which reported: "*The Local Area Network has worked actively and positively with the council to support self-evaluation activities throughout the year. This, along with other improvements in performance, has helped to change the LAN's assessments in 18 areas from last year's AIP from further information required to no scrutiny required.*"
- 3.6 The reports of the Council's auditors (interim Management Report to Audit & Governance Committee, May 2014) and the Local Area Network (Assurance and Improvement Plan 2014-2017, to be reported to Council in June) provide assurance that there are no major concerns about the council's governance arrangements.
- 3.7 Also, it should be noted that the Council recently applied for and was awarded Investor in People accreditation. This is the first time that the whole Council has achieved the IIP standard and is a great achievement for the Council and a great reflection on the work and commitment of its staff. Whilst further development is required in a number of areas the award of IIP status is assurance that the Council is progressing on its journey from improvement to excellence.
- 3.8 Implementation of the Plan will be assured via ongoing internal monitoring of progress on key actions points by the relevant lead officers and Executive Directors. Monitoring reports on progress with implementing the Plan will be made to the Council Management Team and the Audit and Governance Committee.

4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 One of the four areas of focus of the Council Plan 2012-2017 is *Growing the Capacity of Our Council* which has one specific outcome: *We deliver excellent services as effectively and efficiently as possible*. All the improvement points in the 2014/15 Council Improvement Plan will contribute to growing the capacity of the Council to meet this outcome.
- 4.2 The Council Plan established five core principles that underpin or influence the Plan. The 2014/15 Council Improvement Plan supports four of these principles:
- Services built around people and communities

- Effective, efficient and excellent services
- Working together to achieve outcomes
- Prioritising prevention and promoting equality

4.3 The 2014/15 Council Improvement Plan will assist the Council in demonstrating that it is achieving Best Value. It will provide the necessary focus to improve key areas of the Council at a corporate level, thus aiding delivery of the Council Plan. Moreover, it will support East Lothian Council in its constant striving for continuous improvement, to continue improving the quality and delivery of its services and to meet the Council Plan outcome: ‘*We deliver excellent services as effectively and efficiently as possible.*’

5 EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

5.1 This report is not applicable to the well being of equalities groups and an Equalities Impact Assessment is not required.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Financial – none.

6.2 Personnel – none directly, although certain actions within the Plan are likely to require the commitment of staff resources.

6.3 Other – none.

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 Corporate Governance Self-Evaluation and Annual Governance Statement 2014; report to Audit & Governance Committee, 20th May 2014

7.2 Appendix 1: Sources of the Content of the Council Improvement Plan

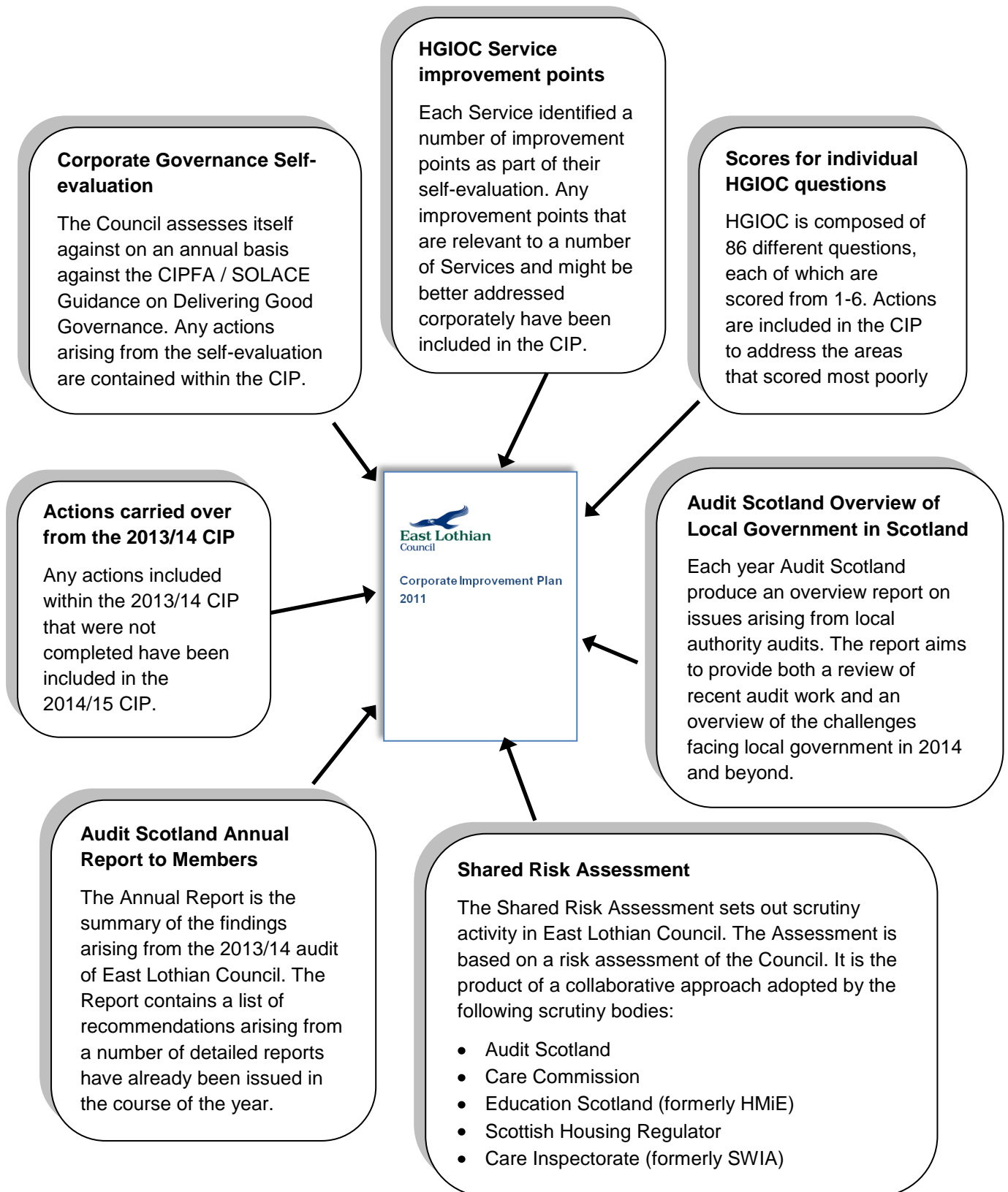
7.3 Appendix 2: 2013/14 Council Improvement Plan Update

7.4 Appendix 3: 2014/15 Council Improvement Plan

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DATE	6 th June 2014

Appendix 1: Sources of the Contents of the Council Improvement Plan

Actions contained within the Corporate Improvement Plan have arisen from several different sources.



Appendix 2: 2013/14 Council Improvement Plan: Monitoring Statement (April 2014)

2013/14 Council Improvement Plan

	ACTION	LEAD SERVICE	TIMESCALE	Update (April 2014)
1	Develop toolkit for self-evaluation of strategic partnerships	Communities and Partnerships	Nov 2014	<p>The Toolkit will be based on the Improvement Service Community Planning Partnership self-evaluation toolkit. East Lothian Partnership will undertake a self-evaluation supported by the Improvement Service in autumn 2014</p> <p>The self-evaluation will ensure that the Partnership is aware of its strengths and weaknesses and can identify appropriate improvement actions that will contribute to the delivery of the Single Outcome Agreement</p>
2	Review consultation strategy with view to ensuring that service users' views about quality of services is measured and used effectively	Communities and Partnerships	Completed	<p>Review of consultation strategy led to the decision to establish a Citizens' Panel with two surveys a year and scope for ad hoc surveys. The Panel is being established and the first survey will be conducted in June 2014</p> <p>The Citizens Panel will provide the</p>

				views of a representative sample of residents on quality of life, public services and key issues that will help to monitor outcomes in the Single Outcome Agreement and inform future service priorities
3	Roll out CPD for elected members and continue to support elected member and senior management development	Council Resources/ Communities and Partnerships	Completed	<p>Five elected members have signed up for the CPD and the Council has begun a programme of Elected members' briefings on key issues</p> <p>A management development course leading to a Chartered Institute of Management level 5 qualification is being undertaken by senior managers</p> <p>Evaluation of development training for elected members and senior managers will be carried out to assess the impact of the development opportunities and further improve the Council's management and political leadership</p>
4	Hold training session for elected members on new Standing Orders including session on Members Conduct delivered by the Standards Commission	Council Resources	Completed	A briefing session on the Councillors' Code of Conduct was conducted by the Standards Commission
5	Training for Audit & Governance Co and PPR Co members	Council Resources	Completed	A CIPFA training course on the role of Audit Committee was held and attended by members of the Committee. The course had a positive evaluation from the members present

				<p>and they have put some of the learning into practice at Committee meetings</p> <p>Further consideration should be given to providing scrutiny training for members of the PPR Committee</p>
6	Induction programme for all members of new Community Planning Partnerships, including elected members	Communities and Partnerships	Completed	An induction session was held for all East Lothian Partnership members in June 2013. A handbook on the role of members of the Partnership has been produced
7	Review and revise the Improvement Framework and make more effective use of benchmarking, develop guidance and training on the use of benchmarking, Best Value reviews and options appraisal	Communities and Partnerships	July 2014	<p>The Council is participating in two national benchmarking exercises being run by the Improvement Service. Several desk based exercises have been undertaken to ascertain whether more detailed process based benchmarking of lowest performing Performance Indicators should be carried out</p> <p>A Best Value review of parts of the Adult Wellbeing service has been carried out</p> <p>A template for Best Value Reviews, incorporating options appraisal is being prepared to assist services to undertake Best Value exercises</p> <p>The Assurance and Improvement Plan 2014-2017 has highlighted that the</p>

				Improvement Framework and work around performance management shows that: <i>“There continues to be a very strong commitment from officers and members to improving the work of the council.”</i>
8	Focused work with Local Area Network on an agreed programme of self-evaluation for improvement	Communities and Partnerships	Completed	<p>Local Area Network (LAN) members participated as ‘critical friends’ in the Council’s How Good is Our Council? peer review sessions led by the Chief Executive</p> <p>The Council Management Team has had several meetings with the Local Area Network</p> <p>The Assurance and Improvement Plan 2014-2017 highlights the positive relationship between the Council and the LAN and the positive impact this has had on the Shared Risk Assessment for East Lothian Council: <i>“The LAN has worked actively and positively with the council to support self-evaluation activities throughout the year. This, along with other improvements in performance, has helped to change the LAN’s assessments in 18 areas from last year’s AIP from further information required to no scrutiny required.”</i></p>

9	Implement programme of action to respond to the results of the Employee Engagement Survey	Communities and Partnerships	Completed	See 13 below
10	Review Whistleblowing Policy and publicise to all staff	Internal Audit	Completed	The Whistleblowing Policy has been reviewed and contacts updated following the re-structuring of Council services. The revised policy has been agreed by the Council Management Team and will be publicised to staff
11	Introduce Combined Impact Assessment and process for monitoring the needs of minority and vulnerable groups	Communities and Partnerships	August 2014	<p>The framework and associated guidance for conducting Combined Impact Assessments covering equalities, social, economic and environmental impacts of new policies has been finalised and will be considered by the Council Management Team in June.</p> <p>The use of Combined Impact Assessments (replacing Equality Impact Assessments) will be rolled out along with the new Council Committee Reports template in August 2014</p>
12	Review People Strategy including the how the values from the East Lothian Way are disseminated to staff	Communities and Partnerships	Completed	This has been incorporated in the Workforce Development Plan (see 13 below)
13	Develop Workforce Development Plan (including supporting internal jobs market, management of change, leadership development and succession planning)	Communities and Partnerships	Completed	The Workforce Development Strategy and Plan has been prepared. The strategy and Plan respond to the issues

				<p>raised in the Employee Engagement Survey and include a refresh of the East Lothian Way and staff communications as well as leadership development, managing change and other development issues</p> <p>The Strategy and Plan respond directly to issues raised by the Employee Engagement Survey and the HGIOC self-evaluation. They are based around four workforce related themes that have been identified as being crucial to the facilitation of the Council Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting transformational change • Building and sustaining leadership and management capacity • Sustaining a skilled, flexible and motivated workforce • Developing the workforce for the future
14	Review and further develop How Good is Our Council? self-evaluation, including involvement of stakeholders	Communities and Partnerships	Completed	HGIOC has been reviewed and new guidance including around stakeholder involvement has been issued (see 8)
15	Review service planning guidance and develop 3-year service plans	Communities and Partnerships	Completed	Service planning guidance has been reviewed. Development of 3-year service plans has been delayed until 2015 to allow new services created following the Council re-structuring in late 2013 to be embedded

16	Review staff communications	Communities and Partnerships	Completed	Staff communications has been reviewed. A new format for Team Talk and other initiatives to communicate effectively with and engage with and involve staff in the Council's improvement journey will be rolled out
17	Prepare and implement Records Management Plan setting out arrangements for management and retention of records in line with requirements of the Public Records (Scotland) Act 2011	Council Resources	October 2014	The full plan is due to be completed by October 2014 and will then be the basis for a 5 year improvement model on this area of activity across the organisation. This will further link in with the work being undertaken on the Electronic Document and Records Management System and also on compliance with Data Protection & Freedom of Information legislation. Some improvements are being implemented as they are discovered rather than waiting for formal introduction. The whole the process is moving onwards to bring about improvement to the Records Management provision and efficiency across the entire Council.
18	Complete review of Standing Orders and Schemes of Administration and Delegation	Council Resources	Completed	Revised Standing Orders and Schemes of Administration and Delegation were approved by Council in August 2013
19	Develop a methodology for systematically reviewing and updating corporate policies	Council Resources	August 2014	Further work to be undertaken to agree scope of the policies to be included in the review and update schedule

20	Review and further strengthen the Council's financial management process	Council Resources	Completed	<p>In accordance with agreed actions arising from the annual audit process, a number of improvements have now been implemented e.g. introduction of a new Efficiency Progress Rating that supplements the existing Financial Risk Rating</p> <p>The 2012/13 Audit Report had fewer action points than previous audits</p> <p>The unaudited 2013/14 financial outturn shows less reserves being used than planned</p> <p>2014-2017 budget uses less reserves than previous budgets</p>
21	Focused work with the Local Area Network and external auditors as part of an agreed programme of external audit to meet the financial challenges faced by the Council	Council Resources	Completed	<p>The Council's external auditors have completed their audit of the 2012/13 accounts and associated work. The auditors' Annual Report to Members provided positive assurances that the Council is meeting its financial challenges</p> <p>The shared risk assessment in the Assurance and Improvement Plan 2014-17 provides assurance that action is being taken to deal with the financial challenges faced by the Council and that the Council's auditors will review the financial management processes</p>

Appendix 3: 2014/15 Council Improvement Plan

2014/15 Council Improvement Plan

We deliver excellent services as effectively and efficiently as possible

	ACTION	LEAD SERVICE	TIMESCALE	SOURCE
1	Develop toolkit for self-evaluation of strategic partnerships	Communities and Partnerships	November 2014	Corporate Governance Self-evaluation & carried over from 2013/14 Plan
2	Scrutiny training for PPR Co members	Council Resources	The Committee will consider future development needs at its meeting on the 23/09/14	Corporate Governance Self-evaluation & carried over from 2013/14 Plan
3	Review and revise the Improvement Framework and make more effective use of benchmarking, develop guidance and training on the use of benchmarking, Best Value reviews and options appraisal	Communities and Partnerships	July 2014	Corporate Governance Self-evaluation & carried over from 2013/14 Plan
4	Introduce Combined Impact Assessment and process for monitoring the needs of minority and vulnerable groups	Communities and Partnerships	August 2014	Corporate Governance Self-evaluation & carried over from 2013/14 Plan

5	Prepare and implement Records Management Plan setting out arrangements for management and retention of records in line with requirements of the Public Records (Scotland) Act 2011	Council Resources	October 2014	Legislative requirement & carried over from 2013/14 Plan
6	Work with partners to develop and implement the Children's Services inspection Improvement Plan	Children's Wellbeing	March 2015	Corporate Governance Self-evaluation
7	Review and develop elected members' training and briefings including briefing on Capital Investment Strategy and development issues arising from Councillors' responses to a survey based Audit Scotland Overview of Scottish Local Government Councillors' Checklist	Communities and Partnerships / Council Resources	September 2014	Corporate Governance Self-evaluation
8	Implement the action plan based on the Investors in People Improvement Plan and Workforce Development Plan	Communities and Partnerships	March 2015	Investors in People and HGIOC
9	Review and revise the staff communications plan to ensure staff are fully informed of and engaged	Communities and Partnerships	October 2014	HGIOC
10	Implement the Web Development strategy to provide a more responsive and effective Council website that will support more 'self-service' activity by council service users	Communities and Partnerships	March 2015	HGIOC
11	Further develop the Council's service planning process moving towards three-year service planning linked to financial planning based on staff and stakeholder engagement	Communities and Partnerships	November 2014	HGIOC