West Lothian Council is committed to delivering the very best services and working with communities, individuals, businesses and organisations to achieve improved and positive outcomes. The changing landscape of the public sector and shifting local priorities presented an opportunity for the council to adopt a more rationalised and integrated planning framework that will better support the delivery of sustainable outcomes. Integration was based on outcomes, establishing a clear link between the corporate priorities, the planned activity and the measurable impact of the investment. Development of our new Corporate Plan has been aligned to development of our new Single Outcome Agreement and linked to our current Community Plan to ensure that we have a consistent and evidenced ‘plan for place’.

A strategy mapping exercise was undertaken that aligned every council strategy and activity with the new priorities, which were set through consultation with the community, thereby allowing the council to calculate whole council contribution to priorities, in terms of: activities delivered, service performance, allocated budget and employee resource. This mapping activity brought together corporate and financial planning, a critical factor for the future design and delivery of services and allocation of resource, ensuring that decisions will be based on addressing the long-term priority local needs.

As well as providing an influential planning tool in the development of the council’s new Corporate Plan, this will ensure that future strategies and plans are formed sharing a singular purpose; to deliver and support the achievement of outcomes.

Supporting this activity and running concurrently, the Community Planning Partnership became one of the first in Scotland to complete a CPP wide Strategic Assessment, which evidenced and identified the priorities that are important for communities and partners in West Lothian. This work will support the development of our new Single Outcome Agreement and inform the continuous improvement in our Community Planning arrangements. A Community Planning development plan has been agreed by partners and provides a new focus on prevention, community engagement, understanding place and equalities. This will drive forward a new emphasis on new ways of working and delivering better outcomes.

In terms of shared services, progression has been steady and focused on developing local relationships, partnerships and more effective arrangements. West Lothian Council and West Lothian College have been working together to develop a new and innovative shared service model that establishes a new level of partnership within a regional context. This will build on the original senior school campus development and widen that to include backroom functions, shared CPD and shared expertise. By further developing our relationship with West Lothian College we can achieve 2 broad objectives: 1) by working together and establishing learning packages that support transitions for our young people from school to further education, we achieve better learning outcomes and enable more young people to move into positive destinations, and 2) At the same time, we reduce the cost base of both organisations and make better use of our combined resources. Our operational efficiencies are increased and our systems and processes streamlined.

We are still continuing discussions with Falkirk Council on developing shared services and have completed some joint work on internal audit. This has involved some independent peer review of each other’s processes against regulatory requirements, i.e. the CIPFA Code of Practice for Internal Audit in Local Government in the UK with an output resulting on the production of a report on compliance for each other’s Audit Committee. We have made provision within our internal audit plan for time spent by Falkirk Internal Audit on the audit of our systems and vice versa; this has involved swapping auditors with specific expertise to audit within each other’s councils. In our case we received the use of a qualified I.T. auditor and a report on information security was produced and submitted to our Audit Committee.

 Whilst other opportunities are being reviewed, the shared service agenda with other local authorities has perhaps not moved on as much as our discussions on with more local partners. We have progressed further in partnership with NHS and the college during the last year than initially expected. This is likely to be a result of the nature of those longer established relationships and co locations. It’s also an example of the strength of


our Community Planning arrangements. A good example of where we have achieved progress on a locally shared issue has been in the development of more efficient winter maintenance arrangements with the local NHS hospital. Through identification of a shared challenge and more effective sharing of resource – workforce and winter maintenance operational equipment – we have worked together to ensure that we have a more effective and cost efficient arrangement for keeping pathways and road clear around the hospital area. It’s been crucial that partners have been prepared to do things differently, as well as understand who is best placed to take on tasks which had been previously done by both organisations to different degrees in order to achieve better local outcomes. Crucial to this, however, has been the ability to work flexibly around boundaries and governance structures. NHS Lothian boundaries cover 5 local authority areas. We have achieved an agreement with NHS Lothian that enables us to work towards arrangements that cover West Lothian alone and seek efficiencies through sharing services in more manageable chunks.

West Lothian Council and its partners are aware that the expectations of customers are changing and the way services are delivered needs to reflect this cultural shift.

The 9-5 Mon to Fri service delivery model is no longer acceptable and customers want to be able to engage with Councils, and others, using a variety of channels. This brings with it challenges in adopting and adapting technology to meet customer needs, as well as providing increased access to services in a climate of reducing resources. West Lothian Council is seeking to expand the range of channels customers can use over an expanded time frame. We are also investigating where we can share this resource with other partners.

The community empowerment agenda is particularly relevant in terms of asset transfer. However, many communities are reluctant / unable to take on the responsibility of managing and running community assets. This is still seen as something the Council does. In trying to achieve efficiencies, whilst ensuring equal access to services, Councils are faced with dilemmas. Using volunteers can help to support service delivery, but it cannot be the alternative delivery method.

West Lothian has a real focus on Partnership working in sharing locations and developing more “partnership centres” based on community need and partner aspiration. Bringing services together under one roof can lead to a better customer journey and ensure that customers are able to maximise their entitlements. For example, Bathgate Partnership Centre has created “savings” in building costs and staff numbers, whilst increasing the number of customers receiving a service.

National partners such as Department of Work and Pensions are working in partnership with the Council to deliver a local solution to a national agenda. For example, having a “pop up” jobcentre in Fauldhouse Partnership Centre allows customers to access support to find employment whilst not having to travel considerable distances. The DWP is also working with the Council and other partners to develop further innovative delivery models in West Lothian Connected, by ensuring that we position ourselves to maximise the use of technology and allow customers to contact services in ways that best suit their needs.

However, in order to assist with this, the implementation of Welfare Reform needs to be better connected at a local level. For this to happen, it needs to be better supported at a national level, which will ensure that we do not create 32 solutions to the same challenge.

The development of a national IT strategy is welcome, and paves the way for greater collaboration across authority boundaries in developing technology solutions to common situations.

In 2012/2013, West Lothian Council committed to investing in Families Included. This approach was initially informed by the Swindon Life model and subsequently broadened to take account of the lessons learned in Family Intervention Projects across the UK. Evidence and research indicated that there were some critical features that can support improved outcomes for families with multiple and complex needs, these include:

- A whole family approach including strengths based family assessments
- A multi-agency team around the family to minimise duplication and maximise impact
- An assertive and persistent Key Worker role
- Low case load
- Robust Family Agreements and plan.

A strategic multi-agency board, the Preventative Interventions Board, was established to drive this approach forward. Consultants now have commissioned to support the development of a model suited to the needs of...
families with multiple and complex needs in West Lothian. The model will also reflect the high level of partner commitment to establishing a shared understanding of the needs of these families and the drive to work collectively to improve outcomes within constrained budgets.

The core staff team for this approach is being recruited and a comprehensive training programme is being developed. The approach will be reviewed regularly with an evaluation of the impact of this innovative way working completed in 2014/2015.

Community Planning Partners in West Lothian are committed to the **Early Years and Early Intervention** agenda. This commitment extends to the fundamental shifts in philosophy and approach which will be necessary to improve outcomes and ensure the efficient and targeted use of resources: shifts from intervening only when a crisis happens, to prevention and early intervention; providing a supportive environment for children and the earliest possible identification of any help that may be required. The Early Years and Early Intervention Change Fund has been established to finance a shift towards a preventative spend model of service delivery and to make a direct contribution to key priority areas, such as parenting, childcare and family centres. In the recent three-year spending review, the Scottish Government committed £50 million to the fund and contributions to the fund have also been sought from Local Government and Health. West Lothian Council agreed a £777,000 contribution with the approved 2012/13 revenue budget.

Multi-service representatives across the life-stage sub-groups of Early Years, School Age and Young People in Transition have identified key priorities and recommendations to improve social outcomes for the most vulnerable children and young people in West Lothian. An initial gap analysis determined potential developments with relevant services, activities and interventions which could be progressed by drawing on resources from the agreed change fund contribution. This work is being used to inform the production of a number of targeted action plans. Early years action plans will focus on giving children the best start in life. School age programmes will target children and young people at risk of failing to achieve their potential owing to adverse circumstances. Priority programmes for young people in transition will focus on sustaining positive destinations for young people leaving care, 14-19 year olds who have disengaged with school and other systems, 20-25 year olds in the criminal justice systems and young mothers aged 14-20 years old. Corporate parenting will include a range of measures aimed at improving the life chances and outcomes of looked after children and young people across life stages. Finally, action will be taken to address priority cross cutting issues over all life stages, including: problematic substance abuse, domestic and sexual assault and mental well-being.

This work is underpinned by the West Lothian Integrated Children’s Services Plan.

The **Persistent Offender Partnership** became operational on 1 November 2012. The Partnership will target and work with identified persistent offenders who commit acquisitive crimes and where there is a clear link with drug and alcohol use. Evidence tells us that offenders are representative of the most disadvantaged groups in society and are likely to have experienced family breakdown, poor educational experiences, high level of drug and alcohol use, mental health issues etc.

In response to this, West Lothian Council and our partners have taken an integrated approach to reducing reoffending by building on existing strong partnership working practices.

The West Lothian Persistent Offender Partnership (WLPOP) is a joint initiative funded through the Early Years and Early Intervention Change Fund with contributions from Lothian and Borders Police, West Lothian Criminal Justice Social Work, West Lothian Drug and Alcohol Service (WLDAS) and HMP Addiewell. This initiative has been developed to meet the identified needs of persistent offenders and to support them in addressing their drug and alcohol problems. It is envisaged that this partnership approach will make credible inroads into challenging the high offending rates amongst those with addictions.

**CONCLUSION**

West Lothian Council is pleased to note some local progress in terms of **new ways of delivering services** and to provide the above noted update and additional information in contribution to the continuing discussion on public sector reform and local government.

Contact: Lorraine Gillies, Community Planning Development Manager, loraine.gillies@westlothian.gov.uk