DEVELOPING NEW WAYS OF DELIVERING SERVICES

LOCAL AUTHORITY SAVINGS PLANS

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

I refer to your letter of 5 February 2013 and would comment as follows:

1. The Council has a long term financial strategy for 10 years - which was developed a few years ago - and which is refreshed on a regular basis. This provides analysis at two different levels - short/medium term where for the next 3 financial years projections of costs and resources are provided with estimated funding gaps for General Fund services and HRA. For longer term the strategy identifies future issues which are likely to influence future funding and costs. Linked to this is the long term capital plan (also for 10 years) which provides an analysis of capital investment options and available resources. Again this is more finite for the first 3 years and more indicative for the remaining years. This too will be reviewed on a regular basis.

The Council’s management team provides Members with savings options on an annual basis for consideration in setting the budget. The Council undertook a pilot of zero-based budgeting around 2 years ago however this did not prove helpful.

2. Consultation was undertaken with the general public for the 2013/14 budget process through a public meeting, an online consultation and a mobile approach via the use of a "budget bus" to seek views.

Consultation with Trades Unions was undertaken as part of the process and a number of employee meetings took place - again to seek views and ideas on options and alternatives.

For the HRA consultation was undertaken with Tenants Groups.

3. Outcomes of consultations were reported to Members via a report to the Council meeting at which the budget was being set, identifying the views of both the public and employees.

4. No direct use of consultants/advisers in the budget planning process. In terms of capital option planning some specialist advice has been utilised to develop project options where internal expertise was not available. This has assisted to develop projects which are now part of the capital plan. In terms of the HRA, consultants were used to develop a detailed resource planning model to identify resource requirements to allow the Council to achieve the SHQS

Consultants were used to review the Council’s approach to procurement, this has influenced how we plan to implement new procurement practice which is expected to allow efficiencies to be generated and these have been included in the budget planning process.

I hope these comments are useful.

Stephen West
Head of Finance & Resources