

## OUR BEST VALUE REVIEW PROGRAMMES FOR 2001/2002

### Introduction

Best Value is a key element of the Government's programme to modernise local government. Local authorities are required to seek continuous improvement in the way in which they deliver services to local communities. One aspect of this is the statutory performance management framework which provides for a set of national performance indicators. Local authorities are also encouraged to put in place local performance indicators to measure responsiveness to local needs.

We are also required to review all services over a five year period under our Best Value Review Programmes. Each review will :

- Challenge why the service is provided and at what level
- Compare our services to other Councils and other providers wherever possible
- Consult with service users and other stakeholders
- Demonstrate that service delivery is competitive and if not consider real competition to ensure best value delivery of services

The full five year Best Value Review Programme is set out below with a commentary on completed reviews and outcomes.

### The Year 1 Review Programme 2000 - 2001

We have completed three Best Value Reviews in Year 1, they are:-

Best Value Review of IT Services  
 Best Value Review of Personnel Services  
 Best Value Review of Street Cleaning Service

The Year 1 review programme has resulted in improvement plans being adopted for I.T. Services and Personnel Services.

### *The IT Services Best Value Review Outcome*

For IT Services our consultation process revealed that for:

- Contact with IT staff
- Technical competence
- Responsive times
- Communication Channels
- Working Relationships

All users are very satisfied with the service.

And for:

- Resource planning for new systems
- Training
- User Participation

Users considered that improvements could be made.

**Alternatives considered:**

- Joint working with other local authorities
- External provision

Little interest was shown from private sector companies and opportunities for joint working can only be linked to contractual time scales. Therefore an improvement plan was developed for the existing "in house" service provision.

The key areas for improvement relating to the wider community impact are set out below:

- Implement the Council's e-government strategy to enable the public to carry out transactions electronically including payments to the council. Consult with the public on requirements as part of the corporate customer services strategy.
- To introduce electronic procurement
- To provide the delivery channels for public transport information and alternative transport choice.
- To provide the infrastructure to support home working as part of Local Transport Plan development.
- To develop the intranet further to improve information availability within the council.

The IT Services Best Value Review has been subject to an inspection by the Audit Best Value Inspectorate. We are currently awaiting their response and this will be reported in next year's Best Value Performance Plan.

### *The Personnel services Best Value Review Outcome*

For Personnel Services our consultation process revealed that:

- Managers were not entirely satisfied with existing training and development programmes
- Managers were satisfied generally with recruitment and resourcing
- Managers considered that employee relations and communication should be improved
- More assistance required in dealing with change
- More efforts required on consultation and negotiations with Trade Unions
- Managers required more assistance with health and absence management
- Managers want more effort put into organisational development
- More clarity of roles required in respect of health and safety management

### **Alternatives considered:**

- Joint working
- Private sector provision or partnership

Some interest was shown from private sector companies with possibilities for joint working. Both of these issues will be considered as part of the improvement plan.

### **The Key Areas for Improvements Include:**

- To ensure effective use of resources by exploring opportunities for joint working and partnerships
- Personnel Manager to work closely with Corporate Management Team on strategic issues.
- To develop the provision of Human Resources information and provide training on policies and practices

**The full improvement plans for Personnel Services and IT Services are shown at the back of this document in Appendix 1.**

The Street Cleaning Service was also subject to a Best Value Review following public concern over the current standards of performance and as a new street cleaning contract is required by October 2001. The draft improvement plan still has to be adopted by the Council and the outcome will be reported in next year's Best Value Performance Plan.

The Development Control Section Best Value Review will be completed in June 2001. Revenue Services will also complete in June 2001 and the outcome of both of these Best Value Reviews will be reported in next year's Best Value Performance Plan.

The Outdoor Amenities Service Review which is now due to complete in 2001/2002 has been slipped to Year 2 to accommodate the urgent need to review street cleaning for the reasons stated above.

### **The Year 2 Review Programme**

The original Year 2 programme was published in the Council's Best Value Performance Plan for 2000/2001, this has been revised following:

- A refocus onto the Council's Corporate Priorities
- Opportunities to participate in Interagency reviews also running in 2000/2001
- A re-prioritisation within the Council having regard to emerging circumstances
- Taking into account the results of community consultation
- More emphasis to focus the reviews at a "higher level" within the organisation i.e. Policies linked to action plans following latest guidance from the Best Value Inspectorate
- A more accurate assessment of resources available and workloads for the Year 2 Service Reviews

The effect of this change is that as we focus on fewer more strategic reviews they will become more manageable, cost less and be more likely to deliver significant improvements in service delivery to the local community.

Certain strategies like LA21 Agenda will be rigorously tested in all Best Value Review Programmes from now on.

### **Resourcing the Reviews**

To improve the Management of the reviews and to improve the technical support to the Service Review Teams it is proposed to operate with a small "specialist" team of officers to provide guidance, data production and technical support during the review process. The financial strategy for 2001/2002 provides funding for administrative support to the review process. A Trade Union representative will also participate as a working officer in all reviews from now on.

A Corporate Budget for Best Value Reviews will be established and monitored.

The overall resource impact on Service Areas should be less during 2001/2002.

### **The Year 2 Service Reviews in Detail**

We have established (over arching) "lead scopes" for all Best Value Reviews and these are :

#### **Lead Scope**

- L1 The Best Value Reviews will examine the implementation of the Council's vision and Corporate Priorities taking into account outcomes from the District Audit's report 'Policy into Practice'.
- L2 The Council's Local Agenda 21 Strategy adoption in 2000/2001 requires the Best Value Review to consider emerging issues and sustainability and examine the application of the strategy in practice within the review area.
- L3 The Best Value Review will have regard to the Council's Asset Management Plan in line with the DETR Guidance where applicable as part of the review process.

The Year 2 Service Reviews are :

**Document Production Services** which is an interagency review involving joint working in the Welland Partnership. Start beginning April 2001, Finish end December 2001.

**Environment and Economic Development theme** – including Planning Policy, Economic Development Programmes and the Council's contribution to Local Transportation Policy considering linkages both externally and internally. Start beginning April 2001, Finish end October 2001.

**Health and Community Development theme** – including community use of Outdoor Amenity facilities, community safety which is an interagency review involving joint working. Sports and Recreation Development and Leisure Facilities – including the impact of developing the new Lutterworth Sports Centre. Start beginning September 2001, Finish end May 2002.

The Leicestershire County Council will be undertaking a **Highways Network Management Best Value Review** in 2001/2002. A significant input of resources will be required from District Council. Start beginning April 2001, Finish end March 2002.

Also during 2001/2002 specialist assistance will be provided to undertake a "short" review of the **Dog Warden and Pest Control Service** in preparation for a new contract. Start beginning April 2001, Finish end July 2001.

### Year 3 Programme

#### **Environment and Economic Development – Building Control Services**

**Resources theme.** – including Financial Strategy and Services, Capital Programmes, Legal and Land Charges, Emergency Planning and Disaster Recovery, Internal Audit.

**Community Services theme** – including Housing Strategy and Management, Teamharborough, refuse collection and recycling, private sector housing, Customer Services and energy management.

**Interagency emergency planning review** – a joint working review across Leicestershire.

Provisional Start date for all above beginning April 2002, Provision Finish date end March 2003.

### Year 4 Programme

**Health and community development theme** – including Arts and Leisure Strategy, Anti Poverty, Social Inclusion, Young People, Life long Learning, Health Promotion. Also environmental management, private sector housing, health and safety enforcement and food safety.

### Year 5 Programme

**Corporate Policy theme** – including electoral issues, parish reviews, public consultation, parish advice, community forums, public relations, political structure and decision making.

**Business Review theme** – including Best Value Strategies, Best Value Review process, Engineering services, Harborough Highways Partnership, Partnerships and project management, Performance Indicators and Local Performance Plans.

**Resources theme** – IT, Personnel Services.

**Health and Community Development theme** – Local Agenda 21 and Sustainability.

*Note:*

These programmes are only provisional and may be amended to take account of changing circumstances such as further Government guidance – inter agency working and local circumstances.

**More information.....**

The Best Value Performance Plan 2000/2001  
The Best Value Procurement Strategy  
The Best Value Toolkit  
The Best Value Review of Information Technology Services – October 2000  
The Best Value Review of Personnel Services – October 2000  
The Best Review of the Street Cleaning Service – March 2001  
The Highway Network Management Best Value Review Position Audit Document  
IT Services Improvements Plan  
Personnel Services Improvement Plan  
Business Review Achievements and Action Plans