

Meeting:	<b>Scrutiny Committee</b>
Date:	<b>18 February 2002</b>

**38. BEST VALUE REVIEW OF FINANCE.** The Committee considered the report of the Finance Best Value Review Team regarding the outcome of the Finance Best Value Review. Mrs S McHugh, Director of Finance and Corporate Resources and Councillor Bowker, Chairman of the Review Team, were in attendance to answer Member's questions.

Councillor Bowker expressed his appreciation on behalf of Councillor Skilton and himself for the efforts of Officers during the development of the Improvement Plan and throughout the Review.

Members were advised that the Finance and Corporate Service Department was created in October 2001 following the Corporate Management Review. Previously Financial Management was a division within Corporate Service Group, Audit and Financial Strategy were part of the Strategic Finance Division within Planning and Strategy Group. The creation of a new department was intended to achieve Members' desire for a strengthened finance function.

Members also noted that the review was timed to help define the agenda for change, which the department would need to work to.

The report included a brief summary of the three areas covered by the review. Members were advised that the four key challenges agreed by Cabinet were:

§ Recruitment and retention of appropriately qualified and skilled staff, providing opportunities for career development and technical specialisation.

§ Support to the local government agenda including best value and new decision-making arrangements

§ Use of technology in support of improved service delivery

§ Arrangements for ensuring S.151 responsibilities were met.

Members were advised that the review team added a further five as follows:

§ Whole of Government accounting (new requirement for faster production of accounts in standard format).

§ Opportunities for joint working

§ Understanding services and requirement

§ Adding value

§ Structure of finance department and links with finance staff in other areas

**RESOLVED:** That Cabinet be recommended to approve the Improvement Plan as set at appendix 2 of the report.

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