

Best Value Management Committee

Progress Report

Date of Reporting: 21 st November 2001			
Name of Review: Benefits			
Chairman & Lead Officer: Henry Walker – Best Value Manager	Elected Members: Councillor M Pooley Councillor B Higgins Councillor N Marsh (for one meeting only)		
	Lead Officer: See above		
	Other Review Team Members:		
	Sue McHugh – Sponsoring Director Martin Chilvers – Head of Community Finance Diane Linsdell – Financial Strategy Accountant Nick Ritson – Strategy Development Officer Ian Clarke – Divisional Support Officer Morag Freitas – Senior Benefits Officer Lisa Hammond – Benefits Officer Ann Slater – Senior Benefits Officer Barbara Pratt – Welfare Benefits Officer (until July 2001) Nick Murphy - Director of Housing Health and Community Finance (attended one meeting)		
	External Review Team member(s): Jean Saxby – Benefits Manager, Hastings Borough Council.		

	Estimated Staff hours to date: 900 hours (excluding staff consultation events)	
	Intended End Date (Scrutiny Committee Date): 18 February (revised from 12th December 2001)	
	<p>Other issues that the lead officer would like to draw to the attention of the Best Value Management Committee:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The main areas already covered, in depth, by the Review are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Procurement · Information Technology / e-commerce · Sickness · Performance Indicators · Benchmarking / costs · Brainstorming in preparation for the Action Plan · Analysis sheets covering - Community Needs and Means of Delivery, Service Objectives, Results, Process, Resources 2. There have been parallel meetings held with the Benefit staff, who are also Team members, chaired by the Lead Officer. They have considered from a practitioner's perspective many of the topics covered by the Review Team, but also: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Procedures · Site visits / questionnaires · A user's wish list 3. Further meetings have been held external companies, looking at competitive and partnership possibilities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · WS Atkins are due to make a second visit to Eastbourne on 22nd November · Other companies showing an interest last year were – FDML and Serco. 4. All Benefits staff have been consulted through a Best Value presentation or a series of Wednesday morning training sessions and their views have been fed back to the Review Team. 5. There are recent indications that Wealden District Council and possibly other East Sussex local authorities may be willing to re-open discussions with a view to joint working arrangements. A meeting has been booked for 9 November 2001 6. Visits to Guildford and Rother (internal and outsourced working respectively) are planned to allow the Team to look at other local authorities' best practices. These will not be complete until early December. 7. In view of the outstanding visits and associated discussions in respect of procurement issues indicated above, it is recommended that the final report now be put to the 18 February Scrutiny Committee. This will also allow officers within the Community Finance division to deal with a number of post-implementation issues arising from the mainframe migration project. 	

	Completed	Underway (estimated date of completion)	Not Started	
1. Agreed the scope of the review	Yes			
2. Fundamentally challenged the need for the service	Yes			
3. Identified how the service meets the corporate aims and how it can positively impact on the objectives	Yes			
4. Fully analysed the resources used in carrying out the service	Yes			
5. Considered the benefits of alternative means of service delivery		December 2001		
6. Identified national and local performance indicators for comparison	Yes			
7. Compared cost effectiveness with appropriate organisations	Yes			
8. The views of residents, users and stakeholders have been sought and specific proposals have been developed as a result		Views sought, proposals yet to be done		
9. Results of Consultation fed back to Consultees		Ongoing		

10. Staff have been fully involved in all stages of the reviews and have been encouraged to contribute.		Ongoing		
11. Targets and standards to be reached have been proposed		January 2002		
12. The key issues identified by Cabinet have been addressed	Yes			
13. A rigorous action plan has been developed that: Prioritises areas for improvement, covers all significant areas of service weakness, and addresses the concerns raised through the consultation process		January 2002		
14. The improvements identified in the Action Plan are sufficient to reach the top 25% against relevant Performance Indicators within a specified time scale that meets statutory requirements.		January 2002		
15. The Action Plan identifies improvement in terms of Efficiency, Economy and Effectiveness.		January 2002		