

COMMITTEE:	BEST VALUE MANAGEMENT
DATE:	21ST NOVEMBER 2001
SUBJECT:	BEST VALUE REVIEW OF COLLECTION SERVICES
REPORT OF:	HEAD OF FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT
Ward(s):	All
Purpose:	To advise Members of the progress made on the Best Value Improvement Plan
Contact:	Bruce Bird, Telephone 01323 415146 or internally on extension 5146
Recommendations:	That Members note the progress being made on the improvement plan of this review

1.0	<u>Background</u>
1.1	The Best Value review of Collection Services was reported to Scrutiny Committee on 8 th March 2001 and approved by Cabinet on 18 th April 2001.
2.0	<u>Progress</u>
2.1	The Best Value Improvement Plan at the foot of this report details the progress made to date against the key actions approved as part of this review.

2.2	Three of the six key actions have been successfully achieved on or in advance of the approved implementation dates.
2.3	<p>Leasing a new folding machine by 1st October 2001 has not been achieved. With hindsight this target date may have been too ambitious.</p> <p>Operational priorities and pressures have necessarily redirected resources away from this action. Whilst some research and information gathering has been undertaken, including a site visit to Brighton and Hove City Council, further work is still required. The imperative for this action is to be ready in time for main Council Tax billing next February. I have now set a new internal target of 31st January 2002 to meet this objective.</p>
2.4	<p>Work is underway and on target to achieve 24 hour 7 day a week payment facilities before 1st April 2002. Officers carried out research and evaluation of the software market before settling on two providers - Academy and Radius. Following on-site demonstrations and negotiations, and references to existing local authority users, Radius was selected. The initial implementation meeting was held on Monday 12th November. The project team is being lead by Peter Byard; the Council's IT and E-Government Manager.</p>
2.5	<p>The sixth and final action in the plan is the permanent closure of the 1 Grove Road public cash counter by 1st October 2003. No further work has yet been undertaken although the experience of the recent reduction in opening hours will prove useful.</p>
3.0	<p><u>Best Value Inspection</u></p>
3.1	<p>In accordance with the decision of this Committee at its meeting on 25th September 2001, a copy of the Best Value report, together with the decisions made by Council, has been forwarded to the Best Value Inspectorate so that a desktop inspection can be undertaken. We are currently awaiting feedback from the Inspectors.</p>
4.0	<p><u>Consultations</u></p>

4.1	None other than operationally at officer level.
5.0	<u>Implications</u>
5.1	None
6.0	<u>Summary</u>
6.1	Good progress has been made in implementing the approved Best Value Improvement Plan. Five of the six actions will have been implemented by the end of this financial year. More importantly, key service objectives and cost reductions will be delivered. Further gains in Collection Services are likely in future years as the full benefits from this review, together with those which may arise from other reviews, are implemented.
Bruce Bird	
Head of Financial Management	
Background Papers:	
The Background Papers used in compiling this report were as follows:	
Best Value report to Scrutiny Committee on 8 th March 2001	
To inspect or obtain copies of background papers please refer to the contact officer listed above.	
OpenlinkCFO/reports/BV Management Committee Collection Review 011121 bb	

Best Value Improvement Plan

Action	Implementation Plan	Implementation date	Officer responsible

Close Winter Garden Cash Office and resite at 1 Grove Road.	Discuss with key internal customers, arrange physical changes, then do it.	By 31 st March 2001	Head of Financial Management and Collection Services Manager
J Achieved with effect from Monday 5th March 2001.			
Operated successfully throughout the busy summer season.			

Action	Implementation Plan	Implementation date	Officer responsible
Lease new folding machine.	Discuss with providers Select a provider Seek to internalise work through discussions with internal stakeholders.	Before 1 st October 2001	Collection Services Manager
K Initial research and site visit undertaken but further work is required and currently underway. Progress delayed by the need to focus on core business activities and to prioritise Best Value actions. Progress also hampered by the need to cover for long-term sickness absence.			
K Officers have set a new internal target of 31st January 2002 to be ready in advance of annual Council Tax billing.			

Action	Implementation Plan	Implementation date	Officer responsible
Transfer management of enquiry desk reception.	Continuing dialogue with Head of Community Finance.	1 st October 2001	Collection Services Manager
J Achieved with effect from Monday 1st October 2001.		Seamless transfer.	

Action	Implementation Plan	Implementation date	Officer responsible
Reduce opening hours at 1 Grove Road public cash counter.	Arrange publicity campaign Promote alternative payment options.	By 1 st October 2001	Head of Financial Management and Collection Services Manager

J	Achieved with effect from Monday 3 rd September - earlier introduction in line with Cabinet preference.
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Action	Implementation Plan	Implementation date	Officer responsible
Install 24 hour 7 day a week Debit/Credit card and Internet payment facilities.	Discuss with providers. Discuss with key internal staff (e.g. I.T. Manager). Select a provider. Arrange publicity campaign.	Before 1 st April 2002	Head of Financial Management and Collection Services Manager

K	Provider selected. Initial implementation meeting held on Monday 12 th November.
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Action	Implementation Plan	Implementation date	Officer responsible
Permanent closure of 1 Grove Road public cash counter.	Arrange publicity campaign. Promote alternative payment options.	By 1st October 2003	Head of Financial Management and Collection Services Manager

L	Not yet timetabled for action.
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J - Action completed

K - Action in progress

L - Action not started