

Date of Reporting: Wednesday 21 st November 2001		
Name of Review: Financial Strategy, Accountancy and Internal Audit		
Chairman: Councillor Bowker	Elected Member: Councillor Skilton	
Lead Officer: Sue McHugh – Director of Finance and Corporate Services		
Other Review Team Members:		
	Bruce Bird – Head of Financial Management Mickey Cairra – Support Services Manager, Tourism, Leisure and Amenities Ron Cussons – Sponsoring Director Martin Freeman – Chief Internal Auditor Diane Linsdell – Financial Strategy Accountant Janet Martin – Internal Auditor (Staff Representative) Stuart Russell – Head of Strategic Development Lisa Sargent – System Support Manager (Staff/Unison Representative)	
External Review Team member(s):		
Richard Smith – District Audit Manager		
Estimated Staff hours to date: 50 (excluding staff consultation exercises)		
Intended End Date (Scrutiny Committee Date): 18 th February 2002		
	Completed	Underway (estimated date of completion)
		Not Started

<p>1. Agreed the scope of the review</p> <p>- see item 2 of "Other Issues".</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>September 2001</p>	
<p>2. Fundamentally challenged the need for the service</p> <p>- to be dealt with within the challenge workshops (see item 6 of "Other Issues").</p>		<p>November 2001</p>	
<p>3. Identified how the service meets the corporate aims and how it can positively impact on the objectives</p> <p>- to be dealt with within the challenge workshops (see item 6 of "Other Issues").</p>		<p>November 2001</p>	
<p>4. Fully analyse the resources used in carrying out the service</p> <p>- to be dealt with within the challenge workshops (see item 6 of "Other Issues").</p>		<p>November 2001</p>	
<p>5. Considered the benefits of alternative means of service delivery</p>		<p>December 2001</p>	
<p>6. Identified national and local performance indicators for comparison</p> <p>- to be dealt with within the challenge workshops (see item 6 of "Other Issues").</p>		<p>November 2001</p>	
<p>7. Compared cost effectiveness with appropriate organisations</p> <p>- to be dealt with within the challenge workshops (see item 6 of "Other Issues").</p>		<p>November 2001</p>	

<p>8. The views of residents, users and stakeholders have been sought and specific proposals have been developed as a result</p> <p>- see items 4 and 5 of "Other Issues".</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>October 2001</p>	
<p>9. Results of Consultation fed back to Consultees</p>		<p>November 2001</p>	
<p>10. Staff have been fully involved in all stages of the reviews and have been encouraged to contribute.</p> <p>- see notes 4 and 5 of "Other Issues".</p> <p>Staff subsequently held a follow-up session on 6th November. Staff will be involved in the challenge workshops – see item 6 of "Other Issues".</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	
<p>11. Targets and standards to be reached have been proposed -</p> <p>to be dealt with within the challenge workshops (see item 6 of "Other Issues").</p>		<p>November 2001</p>	
<p>12. The key issues identified by Cabinet have been addressed</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	

<p>13. A rigorous action plan has been developed that:</p> <p>Prioritises areas for improvement, covers all significant areas of service weakness, and addresses the concerns raised through the consultation process</p>		February 2002	
<p>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</p>			
<p>15. The Action Plan identifies improvement in terms of Efficiency, Economy and Effectiveness.</p>		February 2002	
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<p>Other issues that the lead officer would like to draw to the attention of the Best Value Management Committee:</p>			
<p>1. Two full review meetings have been held to date</p>			

<p>2. At the first meeting - 27th September - the review</p> <p>Set by Cabinet</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> q recruitment and retention of appropriately qualified and skilled staff, providing opportunities for career development and technical specialisation q support to the new local government agenda including best value and new decision making arrangements q use of technology in support of improved service delivery q arrangements for ensuring section 151 responsibilities are met. <p>Additional key issues identified by the Review Team</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> q whole of government accounting q opportunities for joint working q understanding services and requirements q adding value q structure of finance department and links 	<p>team agreed the following key issues :</p> <p>with finance staff in other areas.</p>
<p>3. In addition to these key issues the first meeting also</p> <p>to cover the whole period of the review from first meeting in September up to the final report to Council in April 2002.</p>	<p>agreed a work programme</p>

<p>4. For October 2001 the work programme concentrated on the consultation "C".</p> <p>The following key people were identified :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> q Selected Members q Chief Executive q Directors q Heads of Service q Group Support Services Managers q Financial information system (Powersolve) user group q Finance staff q Wide ranging internal target audience specifically for an Internal Audit questionnaire q SRB Partners including EAVS and Sussex Careers. 	
<p>5. The second review team meeting - 26th October - considered the feedback from these consultation exercises.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> q Stuart Russell reported back the outcomes from the face to face meetings he had held with selected Members, the Chief Executive and the Directors. q Stuart also reported back the outcomes from the collective meeting held with the Heads of Service q Mickey Cairn reported back the outcomes from the meeting of the Group Support Services Managers which had been attended by Bruce Bird and Martin Freeman q Mickey also reported back the outcomes from the collective meeting held with the Powersolve User Group q Margaret Whitehead (Staff Development Officer) reported back the outcomes from the collective meeting held with Finance staff q Results from the Internal Audit questionnaire are not yet available. They are being collected and analysed by the Council's Consultation Officer and the results will be brought to a future review team meeting and presented by Louisa de Prey q Some common themes have emerged across all consultees - communication and customer care in particular - together with some more specific issues as one might expect - for example, corporate governance, innovation, consistency, skill levels, delegation and empowerment. 	

<p>6 The second review team meeting also considered options to progress the agreed work programme for November namely :</p> <p>q process benchmarking of key activities compared with other Councils, other organisations and best practice models</p> <p>q challenge workshops with staff to identify strengths and weaknesses, discuss other ways of doing things and agree appropriate performance indicators</p> <p>q these two will be largely undertaken together within the seven challenge workshops that the review team has agreed to set up. The outcomes from the consultation exercises will also be dealt with by these workshops and actions will be identified for inclusion within the Best Value Improvement Plan.</p>	
<p>7. The next meeting of the review team will be held on 3rd December. Mike Dwyer, until February this year our Acting Chief Finance Officer since the previous summer, will be attending to give a presentation on the strengths and weaknesses of our Finance function. Mike's presentation, together with initial feedback from the challenge workshops as well as some options/proposals for structural review, will be the main items to be dealt with at this third meeting.</p>	
<p>8. Beyond that a fourth meeting is planned for mid January with a fifth, and likely final, meeting set for early February 2002.</p>	