

COMMITTEE: Best Value Scrutiny Panel

DATE: 6th April 2004

SUBJECT: Best Value Review Programme

REPORT BY: Head of Policy and Performance

CONTACT OFFICER: Judith Ingham 546496

IMPLICATIONS:

LEGAL

COMMUNITY SAFETY

EQUALITIES

ENVIRONMENT

FINANCIAL

CONSULTATIONS

STAFFING

OTHER

WARDS AFFECTED: None

PURPOSE

1. To inform Members of the views of officers and the Executive Portfolio Holder concerning the Panel's proposals for the best value review programme and to finalise the programme.

BACKGROUND

2. At the last meeting of the Best Value Scrutiny Panel on 8 March 2004, Members discussed which services should undergo a best value review in 2004/05 and 2005/06. The Members made the following proposals and asked the Head of Policy and Performance to check on the feasibility of this programme:

2004/05

Waste collection and waste disposal
EITHER Regeneration (including deprivation) OR
Youth service

2005/06

Environmental Health and Licensing Mental health services

3. This report describes the views expressed by officers on the feasibility of the review programme proposed and also includes comments submitted by the Executive Portfolio Holder.
4. After the meeting of the Best Value Review Panel it was confirmed that **Mental Health** had recently undergone a best value review and the final report was to be presented to Scrutiny the next day. The Head of Policy and Performance therefore did not investigate the feasibility of such a review any further.

VIEWS OF CDMT

5. CDMT Improvement and Procurement Board were informed of the conclusions of the Best Value Scrutiny Panel concerning the best value review programme and commented as follows:
6. **Waste collection/disposal:** Little would be gained from carrying out a review of this service, as there is a 5 year improvement plan in place following the Street Services review two years ago, market testing to reduce costs is underway, and the Council is about to open a waste treatment facility on a 12-year contract with the private sector
7. **Regeneration, to incorporate deprivation:** This can be done, but it will be necessary to define the boundaries of the review tightly as the theme is cross-cutting and broad
8. **Youth service:** The service has just undergone a review by external consultants, who have just produced a hard-hitting draft report. There is little scope to achieve more from a further review, and no capacity to carry it out due to staffing shortage in the service, including the lack of a service manager. It is recommended that the Best Value Scrutiny Panel members consider the consultants' report, which will also be presented to the relevant Scrutiny Committee, before taking a decision to proceed with a best value review. If the Scrutiny Panel wants to proceed with a best value review, CDMT recommend that this should take place next year rather than this year, to allow time to recruit a manager and undertake the improvements recommended in the consultants' report.
9. **Environmental health and licensing:** This can be done. (*Note: the Head of Environmental and Consumer Services has asked that the review*

not include licensing as the service is about to undergo very substantial change from taking on responsibilities for alcohol licensing from the Magistrates' Court.)

10. The current, postponed review of **Engineering and Transportation** should be completed in 2004/05, but a different approach may be necessary due to the continued high level of vacancies in the service.

VIEWS OF THE EXECUTIVE PORTFOLIO HOLDER

11. The Executive Portfolio Holder for performance improvement, Cllr Pantling, gave the following views:
 - (i) We should complete the review of **Engineering and Transportation** as it has been on the schedule for two years
 - (ii) Support for a review of **Regeneration**, but prefer an emphasis on civic renewal, external funding and working in partnerships. The review should address the Council's approach to regeneration and achieving civic renewal as well as how well the regeneration division functions.
 - (iii) Support for a review of **Environmental Health**, particularly for environment strategy (air quality etc) but with an additional cross-cutting focus on how the Council can make the best use of its existing resources to improve people's health, to include drugs and alcohol strategy. [The Head of Service was consulted about this idea and was keen on the proposal]
12. As an alternative to the Environmental Health review, proposal for a review of **Housing** to consider the following issues:
 - Private sector housing grants; can the administration of these be speeded up?
 - Management costs for Council housing; can these be reduced?
 - Building works and repairs service; considering the specifications and way of working before tendering for forthcoming contract.
13. Defer **Youth Services** till the consultants' report has been considered; if the consultants' report does not address all the issues, re-consider a best value review.
14. Do not consider that a review of **Waste collection and disposal** would be worthwhile at this time.

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS
LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972, SECTION 100D

15. There are no background papers relating to this report other than exempt information as described in Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.