

ORGANISATIONAL ASSESSMENT
BEST VALUE REVIEW SUB-COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY 13 MARCH 2002 AT 2.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor Guest (Chairman), Councillors Bain (as substitute for Councillor Jefferson), Mrs Bradley and Mrs Parsons (as substitute for Councillor Mrs J Prest). Councillors Ellis and Mrs C Rutherford also attended the meeting as co-opted Members.

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor L Fisher attended the meeting on behalf of the Executive

OABV.10/02 CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

The Chairman welcomed and introduced Mr Gerald Davies of HACAS Chapman Hendy Ltd.

OABV.11/02 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs Blackadder, Jefferson and Mrs J Prest.

OABV.12/02 MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting of the Sub-Committee held on 22 February 2002 be noted.

OABV.13/02 ORGANISATIONAL REVIEW

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive submitted report TC.53/02 which had been prepared at the request of this Sub-Committee. The report outlined the recommendations of the Sub-Committee in respect of choices made to inform the Organisational Review of the Council. The report had been considered and endorsed by the Executive.

The Executive, in considering the report, had suggested that a Member of the Executive be present at meetings of the Sub-Committee and therefore Councillor L Fisher was attending this meeting.

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive added that he would submit regular reports to the Executive on the considerations of this Sub-Committee.

RESOLVED – (1) That it be noted that the Executive had endorsed the recommendations of this Sub-Committee in relation to Organisational Review.

(2) That this Sub-Committee has no objection to a Member of the Executive attending meetings in a non voting co-opted capacity, on the same basis as the Chairman of the other two Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

(3) That it be noted that the Town Clerk and Chief Executive would submit reports to future meetings of the Executive outlining the decisions made by this Sub-Committee.

OABV.14/02 FURTHER COMPARE INFORMATION FROM HACAS CHAPMAN HENDY

Mr Gerald Davies submitted a report by Hacas Chapman Hendy consultants providing information on the 15 Councils previously agreed by this Sub-Committee for inclusion in relation to the Compare part of the Best Value Review process. The report built on the work already undertaken by the District Auditor which was considered at the last meeting of the Sub-Committee. Mr Davies advised that there was a substantial amount of information and data available on these 15 Councils. In addition to the data included in this report he had further data which he could provide to Members if requested.

The Chairman suggested that a copy of this further data should be sent to each of the Group Leaders to be held in the Group Offices for Members to consider if they so wished.

Mr Davies then outlined the key findings which had arisen from the comparison of these 15 Councils' structures. In order to illustrate the different options and ideas which were currently being utilised, four of the Compare Authorities structures had been more closely examined and details of these Authorities structures were set out in the report. For ease of comparison the Carlisle structure had also been provided.

Mr Davies then went through each of the following Council's structures providing a structure chart for each Authority, describing each of the comparator Authorities and detailing comments which he had received from the Authorities on areas which were good and areas which were problematic in relation to these Authorities:

Chester

Exeter

Gloucester

Norwich

Carlisle.

Mr Davies commented that the principle facts arising from the exercise were:

- (a) That all but one of the compare list Authorities had undertaken a recent corporate re-structuring.
- (b) That the trend was on overwhelmingly towards a structure with a built in strategic tier.
- (c) That increasingly, Strategic Directors were being introduced in preference to Chief Officer/Director type positions.
- (d) That predominantly Heads of Service were freed up to get on with their day to day operational responsibilities.
- (e) That most Authorities were favouring a direct link to the new political arrangements with designated senior managers.
- (f) That a large number of Chief Executives were now freestanding some with strong direct strategic support.

Mr Davies then answered specific questions from various Members in relation to the individual structures of each of the above authorities.

During discussion on the various structures, the following points were made:

- The limitations of the comparisons were recognised. It was difficult to effectively analyse how well each of the structures were working. In addition, details were not available within this exercise of how budgets were devolved throughout the structure.
- The authorities had a strategic tier or a strong strategic centre under the Chief Executive. The relative benefits of these approaches were discussed. In an authority with a strong strategic centre headed by a Chief Executive with no departmental responsibilities, it was envisaged that officers were drawn together to deal with strategic projects. Whilst the benefits for individual officers and their career development were recognised, Members had concerns that this may cause problems if the authority was not fully staffed in the first place.
- In one of the authorities, the officer structure matched the new political structure, with alignment of the structure to portfolios and Overview and Scrutiny Committees. The problems of this approach were discussed in relation to Carlisle. As Carlisle has a strong leader who can choose their own portfolio areas, alignment of the organisational structure to portfolio areas would be difficult as a change of Leader may lead to a change of portfolios and consequently another change of organisational structure. To move away from a strong Leader model would require a change to the Constitution and as it was a significant change it would have to be fully consulted on.
- Members recognised that there was no benefit in selecting one of the organisational structures and copying it. Rather, it was best to learn from the general principles and decide what the specific needs were in Carlisle, before devising a structure to meet those needs. The Town Clerk and Chief Executive commented that there would be a workshop session after this meeting, at which a number of questions would be discussed. This would help to establish the general principles which should help inform the basis of any organisational structure. Staff and Members had also been given copies of the questions and asked to provide responses. There had been a number of responses to date.

Mr Davies would take the workshop outcomes and the responses of staff and produce a report on broad options for a structure for consideration at the next meeting of the Sub-Committee

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive then outlined the proposed timescale for the progression of the Review and highlighted the time pressures and key dates for decisions. After the workshop later in the afternoon, the timetable would be as follows:

Organisational Assessment Best Value Review Sub-Committee – consideration of broad options	22 March 2002
Consultation on broad options	22 March to 30 April 2002
Detailed Proposals	31 May 2002
Final Structure and Implementation Plan	31 July 2002

The Sub-Committee would undertake the Review, but the Implementation Plan would be the responsibility of the Executive and the Council. It was envisaged that the new structure would be implemented in Autumn.

Members expressed some concern at the tight timescale, but recognised that general principles of a structure did have to be agreed at a very early stage.

RESOLVED – (1) That Mr Davies send a copy of the additional data available on each of the authorities in the Compare exercise, to each of the Group Leaders to be held in Group Rooms.

(2) That the HACAS Chapman Hendy report be approved as providing a basis for comparison when the future structure of the City Council is considered later in the process.

OABV.15/02 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

RESOLVED – (1) That it be noted that the next meeting of the Sub-Committee will be held on 22 March 2002 at 2.00pm.

(2) That provisional agreement be given for subsequent meetings of the Sub-Committee to be held on 31 May 2002 and 24 July 2002, subject to the approval of the Chairman.

(The meeting ended at 3.35pm and a workshop session was then held.)

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