

# OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

## *Committee Report*

**Public**

**Date of Meeting:**

**25 October 2001**

**Title: A PROTOCOL FOR CARRYING OUT BEST VALUE REVIEWS**

**Report of: THE CITY SOLICITOR AND SECRETARY**

**Report reference: TC.206/01**

### **Summary:**

The Report sets out a working protocol for carrying out Best Value Reviews following discussion at the last meeting of the Committee. It also sets out, as an Appendix, an Officer Protocol for servicing the Overview and Scrutiny process.

### **Recommendations:**

The Committee are recommended to adopt the working protocol for carrying out Best Value Reviews referred to in paragraph 2.2 of the Report and to note the Officer Protocol for servicing the Overview and Scrutiny process.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 At the last meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee, Members discussed the methodology for carrying out Best Value Reviews and the process to be adopted as between the various interested decision making bodies on the Council.

1.2 In settling any process, Members were mindful of the need to:

- Ensure that cohesion was built into the process and that each Overview and Scrutiny Committee undertaking Best Value Reviews had a sensible and deliverable work programme.
- Ensure that corporate and cross-cutting issues which span the responsibility of more than one Committee will be adequately dealt with.
- Carry out the reviews in a manner consistent with the responsibilities allocated to the relevant Committees under the Council's Constitution.

1.3 This brief Report endeavours to set out a working protocol designed to address the above issues.

## 2. ELEMENTS IN BEST VALUE REVIEWS

2.1 There are a number of key elements in carrying out Best Value Reviews. These can be summarised as follows:

- Identifying what precisely is to be reviewed, how the relevant services should be grouped and what key aspects should be focused on in the review. (This is sometimes referred to as the "scoping" phase).
- Identifying which Overview and Scrutiny Committee will have responsibility for the review and allocating the work to that Committee.
- Carrying out the review itself, including the detailed application of the 4 "C's".
- Receiving the final report and acting upon its findings.

2.2 It is proposed that Best Value Reviews are carried out in accordance with the following protocol in order to ensure that the objectives set out in paragraph 1.2 above are achieved:

- The Management Committee will decide on the grouping of services to be reviewed and the terms of reference for a review, taking into account any views which the Council or the Executive may express. The Management Committee will also specify any particular areas that it wishes the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee to concentrate on when undertaking any particular review. The leader or Executive Members nominated by him may attend this initial meeting (on a non-voting basis) to express the Executive's views and so provide their input. This initial stage will be informed by a report from officers setting out the current policy base; the financial context; relevant service issues and relevant performance indicators. This allocation of "scoping" responsibility to the Management Committee is consistent with the provisions of Articles 4.02(o) and 6.03(a)(vi) of the Constitution and paragraph 1(b)(i) of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

- The Management Committee, having scoped the review, will then allocate work to one of the three Overview and Scrutiny Committees in accordance with its powers under Article 6.03(a)(vi) and paragraph 1(b)(i) of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules and having regard to the areas of responsibility of each of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees as set out in the Constitution.
- The relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee will then carry out the detailed Best Value Review. In carrying out the review the Committee may, if it wishes, form a smaller Sub-Committee to facilitate a more intensive, hands on Member involvement in the detail of the review and may also seek views from external contributors if it feels this to be necessary. The function of the nominated Committee will be to ensure that the review is undertaken within the terms of reference, in accordance with the timetable and with appropriate officer, Member and external input as required. There will be a nominated senior "lead" officer for each review and he/she, working with an officer team and Members of the Committee, will carry out the detail of the review. The officer representation will include those with experience of Best Value reviews and overlapping services. The final report of the Committee should include an improvement plan for the service with costings where necessary. The nominated "lead" officer will be responsible for keeping both the Management Committee and the Executive advised of the progress of the review.
- It may transpire that there are corporate issues under a particular Best Value Review which extend beyond one single Overview and Scrutiny Committee's terms of reference. In order to address this, the Management Committee should nominate one lead Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be responsible for carrying out the review but that lead Committee, in turn, should co-opt Members of the other Overview and Scrutiny Committees having an interest in the review (on a non-voting basis only) to obtain views from those other Committees and so give more breadth and dimension to corporate issues. Co-opting the Chairman of the other relevant Committees would usually be the most appropriate course, but additional Members could be invited if the lead Committee thought it conducive to securing an effective review. Co-option would, of course, be for that item only but it would provide a wider, more comprehensive input into the process.
- The nominated lead Overview and Scrutiny Committee would report its draft findings initially to the Management Committee so that the latter could verify that the Best Value Review had been undertaken in accordance with the Management Committee's original directives and brief and that any corporate or cross cutting implications had been fully addressed.
- If the Management Committee was not so satisfied that all elements had been completed satisfactorily, the review would be referred back to the lead Committee for further work.
- Once the Management Committee was satisfied that the review has been fully completed, the findings would be reported to the Executive for any comments and then on to the full Council in accordance with Article 6.03(a)(vi) of the Constitution. The Council would receive the final report and agree any improvement plan flowing from the report. The relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee would then monitor the Executive's performance in implementing the improvement plan and any recommendations from the Inspector.

### 3. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is felt that the above protocol set out in paragraph 2.2 will address the objectives referred to in paragraph 1.2 above and secure that there is clarity in the process for carrying out Best Value Reviews. The protocol is therefore recommended to the

Management Committee for adoption. The Officer Protocol for servicing the Overview and Scrutiny process attached as an Appendix is recommended to the Committee to note.

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CITY SOLICITOR AND SECRETARY

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## APPENDIX

### OFFICER PROTOCOL FOR SERVICING THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PROCESS

#### 1. OFFICER SUPPORT

1.1 The officer support will take the form of:

- dedicated lead support provided by the Head of Corporate Policy and Strategy and the Overview and Scrutiny Officer post, and
- an overarching directional support role provided by a nominated Chief Officer.

1.2 Chief Officer support has been allocated as follows to each Committee:

Management Committee John Egan

Community Committee Mike Battersby

Infrastructure Committee Euan Cartwright

Corporate Resources Committee Tony Bramley

1.3 The above allocations are intended to ensure that a Chief Officer is not nominated to support a Committee for whose workload he has primary operational responsibility. However, if it transpires that an area of work thrown up by a Committee significantly touches the nominated Chief Officer's own

areas of responsibility then he should inform CMT so that another Chief Officer might be nominated for that piece of work only. This is particularly so in the case of Best Value Reviews.

## 2. OFFICER ROLES

2.1 The role of the Head of Policy and Strategy and the Overview/Scrutiny Officer will be:

- to provide the lead "front line" support to the overview and scrutiny process including:
- liaising with and briefing the Committee Chairs;
- information gathering, report writing, research, advice on areas of investigation and questioning;
- liaising with the nominated Chief Officer to ensure corporate issues spanning more than one Committee are addressed;
- liaising with the nominated Chief Officer to feed to CMT any corporate issues and areas for questioning of which CMT should be aware to ensure that there is a linkage between the process and CMT as a whole.

2.2 The Chief Officer role will be twofold as follows:

- to give an overarching directional support to the Head of Corporate Strategy and the Committee.

Particularly, to make sure that the brief for any piece of work (whether in respect of Best Value or any other matter under review) is in place; the workload and timetable are sound; relevant areas of investigation and questioning have been identified; any blockages to information flow are resolved and the final outturn report fits the brief; and

- to act as a feeder of corporate issues to and be a critical friend of CMT/Chief Officers in respect of matters under consideration. This means ensuring CMT is fully informed of corporate issues arising from areas of the Committee's work as they are thrown up, and airing with CMT and individual Chief Officers in advance areas of investigation and questioning which are likely to be pursued by the Committee. This is to ensure officers called to give evidence are aware of the issues likely to be raised and also that any responses which are given pick up, as far as possible, the collective CMT view on a relevant issue insofar as it may span more than one discipline or area.

## 3. ROLE OF CMT

3.1 The role of CMT as a body will be to:

- provide collective support and advice to the overview and scrutiny process through feedback via the nominated Chief Officer on any corporate issues which he may flag up as having arisen from the Committee's work;
- provide support to the Committee by fielding an appropriate officer to speak on behalf of CMT if the Committee wants a collective (as opposed to a professional discipline)

view on any issue. In normal circumstances this would usually be the Chief Executive;

- provide support to any individual Chief Officer requested to give evidence to the Committee by rehearsing with him the responses to be given and testing the robustness of those responses.

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