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**CARLISLE  
CITY COUNCIL**



## REPORT TO EXECUTIVE

### PORTFOLIO AREA: STRATEGY & PERFORMANCE

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**Date of Meeting:** 5th November 2001

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**Public**

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**Key Decision:** No

**Recorded in Forward Plan:**

**Yes**

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**Inside Policy Framework**

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**Title:** SUPPORT FOR BEST VALUE

**Report of:** TOWN CLERK & CHIEF EXECUTIVE

**Report reference:** TC 224/01

**Summary:**

The Council allocated £100,000 to Best Value consultancy support for 2001/2. The attached report sets out a recommended breakdown of that budget. It has been focused on the strategic and cross-cutting reviews in order to achieve the maximum benefit to the Authority.

**Recommendations:**

That the Executive agree to the recommended allocation of the Best Value consultancy budget and release the total amount to the Town Clerk and Chief Executive to administer, in consultation with the appropriate Portfolio holder.

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**Note:** in compliance with section 100d of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 the report has been prepared in part from the following papers: None

## **1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The Council awarded £100,000 to Best Value in this year's budget process to facilitate consultancy and other support for the eight Best Value reviews being undertaken during 2001/2002. It should be noted that any consultants who are engaged to work on Best Value reviews will be selected through a competitive process in line with the Authority's procurement requirements.

The move to a thematic basis for reviews this year enables the Authority to focus Best Value funding on strategic issues, which means that the potential benefit from the £100,000 spend is greater than that of last year, when reviews and associated consultancy support were service-based. This report recommends a funding allocation that concentrates on the cross-cutting reviews which should generate the maximum benefit to Best Value, and the Authority, from the budget.

The recommended allocation is:-

<b>Review Title</b>	<b>Amount Allocated (£)</b>	<b>Responsible Officer</b>
<b>Risk Management</b>	20,000	Dir. Of Environment & Development
<b>Regeneration</b>	25,000	To be finalised
<b>Customer Contact</b>	25,000	Head of IT
<b>Focus Groups</b>	13,000	Policy & Strategy Unit
<b>Best Value Performance Plan</b>	8,000	Policy & Strategy Unit
<b>Surveys, One-off consultancy support</b>	9,000	Policy & Strategy Unit
<b><u>Grand Total</u></b>	100,000	

Taking each heading in turn:-

### **1.1 Risk Management**

Risk Management is the process of identifying risks, evaluating their probability and potential consequences and determining the most effective methods of controlling and/or responding to them. Those risks can be physical, financial or organisational. The Authority already has a number of risk management procedures but they are not comprehensive or co-ordinated and need strengthened. Indeed, District Audit, in its review of the Millennium Project, identified risk management as one of the key areas for improvement. External expertise is needed to ensure that any strategy developed will have the effect of minimising risk (which should have a beneficial impact on insurance

costs) and strengthen the management procedures if and when risks occur, thereby reducing adverse effects. It is recommended that £20,000 is allocated to the Risk Management review.

## **1.2 Regeneration**

In their final report on the Economic Development Best Value Review, the Best Value inspectors stated that *“the lack of an integrated approach to regeneration by the Council and its partners means that initiatives are failing to connect and good schemes have fallen by the wayside”*. There are four urban wards where deprivation is concentrated (Currock, Morton, Botcherby and Upperby) and the future prosperity of some rural wards is at risk due to the impact of the Foot and Mouth epidemic. The Council does undertake services that make a positive contribution to regeneration, but a more strategic and co-ordinated approach would make the most of the resources used. External input from a regeneration specialist is necessary to contribute policy and good practice expertise, a knowledge of what works elsewhere and a focus on key regeneration issues, as well as general assistance in undertaking this far-reaching review, including benchmarking, consultation etc. which will free up internal resources. An allocation of £25,000 is recommended for this review.

## **1.3 Customer Contact**

It is envisaged that, due to the specialised nature of modern customer contact, coupled with the requirement that all services should be capable of being delivered electronically by 2005, external consultants will be required to bring expertise in modern customer service to the Authority, be that during the review period itself or at the point of implementing any recommendations arising out of the review. £25,000 has been set aside for this work.

## **1.4 Focus Groups**

Last year's reviews demonstrated that focus groups were an efficient and effective way of contributing to both the Consult and Challenge elements of a Best Value review. This approach is supported by Best Value inspectors. Focus groups cost approximately £400 each and 4 have been allocated to each of the 8 reviews this year, giving a total recommended allocation of £13,000.

## **1.5 Best Value Performance Plan**

The Council is required to produce a Best Value Performance Plan and associated summary by 31 March each year, published and made available to the local community. The recommended allocation of £8,000 allows for this year's Performance Plan to be enhanced and expanded by incorporating the Corporate Plan within it.