

Leicester  
City Council

**WARDS AFFECTED**  
**All - Corporate report**

**FORWARD TIMETABLE OF CONSULTATION AND MEETINGS:**  
**CABINET**

**14TH JANUARY 2002**

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**Best Value Reviews – Improvement Plans**

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**REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

**1 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 This report seeks Members' approval to the improvement plans from three Best Value reviews, Financial Management, Services to Homeless People and those Libraries & Information Services subject to service assessment.

**2 Summary**

- 2.1 These reviews have mainly followed the performance management route. The exception is that part of the libraries review covering the Records Office and Library Services to Education, which was subject to service assessment. The main part of the Libraries review was an integral part of the Library Plan, already considered by Members.
- 2.2 The reviews have now reached the stage of the production of an improvement plan. Reports on the scope and fundamental challenge stages having been considered by Members earlier in the year. The next stages of the process will be the implementation of the options and recommendations approved. This will require the development of a detailed action plan. The final stage of the review will be its submission to the Best Value Inspectorate for their inspection and judgement.
- 2.3 The reports setting out the improvement plans are on this meeting's agenda as separate items but for each review a synopsis of the recommendations is set out below:

**Best Value Review of Financial Management**

- 2.4 The key summary of the report is that:

- a) The service contributes to overall aims and objectives of the Council.
- b) The discretionary aspects of the service (except one honorary treasurership) can be justified in both financial and operational terms.
- c) Financial Services are generally well regarded by its customers with high levels of satisfaction.

- d) The costs are below average of other local authorities in the audit commission family comparator group for Leicester.
- e) The costs are just above the lowest quartile.
- f) Comparative performance with other authorities is difficult to establish, where benchmarking data is available the Council performs well.
- g) There is no major investment needed in the service.
- h) The performance management framework is well engrained into the culture of the service.
- i) The service relies heavily on professionally qualified and experienced staff. Recruitment, retention and training and development are major issues.
- j) There is a good understanding of the external market place although the market for financial services is immature it is developing. The authority's use of the external market closely matches that used by local authorities nationally. Alternative procurement options have been considered, but at this time there appears to be little benefit of further use of the market. This needs to be kept under close review.

### **Best Value Review of Services to Homeless People**

2.5 The key summary of the report is that:

- a) The 1996 Housing Act places a duty on the local housing authority to secure accommodation for a minimum of two years for any person who is in priority need and unintentionally homeless. Also that advice and information about homelessness and the prevention of homelessness is available free of charge to any person in their district. Benchmarking, self-assessment and external analysis has identified that the best-fit solutions are currently offered through the mixed economy approach adopted.
- b) The Members' Improvement Plan shown at Appendix 1 identifies fourteen overall improvements, each containing a number of measurable outcomes. Applied to each is a realistic agreed timescale and a named responsible officer. Each overall improvement consists of a number of more detailed improvements, again each with an individual timescale, named officer, and relevant performance indicators. An example of the performance indicators relevant to each overall improvement is also identified within Appendix 1 of the main report.

### **Best Value Review of Libraries & Information Services – Records Office and Services to Education**

2.6 The key summary of the report is that:

- a) For the joint arrangement for the Records Office to be renegotiated, after 2% best value savings, with a strong emphasis on ensuring improvements for City residents to address the weaknesses identified in the review
- b) The joint agreement on the Library Services to Education no longer offers Best Value and the recommendation is to withdraw. The report, after setting aside the target 2% savings for Best Value proposes the residual resources be redirected to support children's out of school hours learning through the public library network

### **3 Recommendations (or OPTIONS)**

3.1 Members are recommended to:

- ❖ Consider the improvement plans for Financial Management, Services to Homeless People and Libraries & Information Services – Records Office and Services to Education, in the individual reports on this meeting's agenda.
- ❖ Consider whether those proposed improvement plans meet the requirements of Best Value.

### **4 Headline Financial and legal Implications**

4.1 The financial implications are that each best value reviews save at least 2% the specific details are set out in the individual reports but in outline:

#### **Financial Management**

The 2% savings amount to £46,000 and these will be achieved in the 2002/03 financial year.

#### **Services to Homeless People**

It was highlighted to Members, in the Fundamental Challenge report, that a 2% saving could only be met by reductions in service or staffing. This would impact upon some of the most vulnerable, disadvantaged, isolated and excluded people in our society. However, it is important to note that the costs of implementing the improvement plan have been found within existing Capital and Revenue budgets. It is calculated that the value of costs will exceed 2% (£51,000). This in effect ensures efficiency savings are redirected to client centred service improvements and will assist the Best Value Inspectors to be confident that the improvement plan for services to homeless people will be met.

The option for achieving the 2% savings would be to:

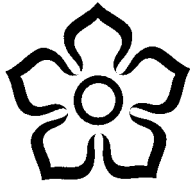
Cut back on the service developments that were introduced in 2001/2002 budget i.e.  
Housing Options Officer post (24k) and  
Community Care Officer post (24k)

#### **Libraries & Information Services – Records Office and Services to Education**

For this part of the review the proposed savings, of 2%, amount to £5548

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## **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

For this information see papers elsewhere on this agenda.

**1. Report**

**FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

**2. Financial Implications**

**3. Legal Implications**

**4. Other Implications**

OTHER IMPLICATIONS	YES/NO	Paragraph References Within Supporting information
Equal Opportunities		
Policy		
Sustainable and Environmental		
Crime and Disorder		
Human Rights Act		

**4. Background Papers – Local Government Act 1972**

**5. Consultations**

**6. Report Author**