

Leicester
City Council

WARDS AFFECTED
All

FREOPS
Cabinet

6 November 2003
24 November 2003

**LEGAL SERVICES BEST VALUE REVIEW -
SELF ASSESSMENT AND DRAFT IMPROVEMENT OPTIONS**

REPORT OF THE TOWN CLERK

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report follows the self assessment stage of the Legal Services Best Value Review, summarises emerging issues and improvement options, and recommends a way forward.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet is asked to:

- a. Note the report attached, including Executive Summary, emerging issues and recommended improvement options, noting that PI's need to be finalised once the broad options for improvement are determined.
- b. Confirm a wish to retain a sustainable in-house legal service, to provide specialist legal advice and support for all Council functions, as well as in support of Corporate Governance, whilst retaining, as at present, flexibility to commission external legal services where needed for specialist needs, peaks of work.
- c. Agree that Legal Services rebalances its staff profile to better match demand by increasing/reducing staff as set out in paragraph 4.8 on page 6 of the Executive Summary with a view to achieving the following:
 - Increasing productivity
 - Eradicating perceived bottle necks in some areas of service delivery
 - Creating "growing room"
 - Enabling legal staff to be more proactive and reduce unnecessary dependency by clients
 - Support departments in becoming better "clients"

- Strengthening and adequately funding the role of advice and support for Corporate Governance
- d. Agree that Departments and Legal Services work together to find ways of reducing the need for formal legal services.
- e. Agree that the Service Director (Legal Services) finalises the improvement plan in line with Cabinet's decision, and in consultation with Andrew Cozens, Scrutiny Director for this review.

3. HEADLINE FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

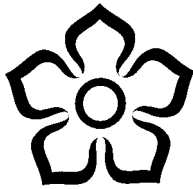
The service will need to ensure that the implementation of the recommended improvement plan will be at least cost neutral from a client perspective in the longer term. (Mark Noble, Chief Finance Officer)

4. REPORT AUTHOR

Peter Nicholls, Service Director, Legal Services, x6302

DECISION STATUS

Key Decision	No
Reason	
Appeared in Forward Plan	No
Executive or Council Decision	Executive (Cabinet)



Leicester
City Council

WARDS AFFECTED
ALL

REOPS
Cabinet

6 November 2003
24 November 2003

**LEGAL SERVICES BEST VALUE REVIEW -
SELF ASSESSMENT AND DRAFT IMPROVEMENT OPTIONS**

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1. REPORT

Attached is a full copy report, including Executive Summary.

It is clear that wholesale externalisation of the legal function would be unreasonably expensive, so this is not recommended.

Similarly, devolvement of legal staff to client departments is considered to be impractical, as well as, expensive.

The self-assessment process has, though, demonstrated that departments may be unnecessarily dependent on Legal Services. There is scope for further proactive work to explore what activities can be more efficiently handled within service departments without unnecessary regular engagement with Legal Services.

“Growing room” needs to be created to enable legal staff to address the concerns which have been made by Corporate Directors; to proactively reduce unnecessary dependency on this Service; to develop and grow our own Legal staff, so as to avoid unnecessary externalisation; to create a more flexible approach to service delivery; and also strengthen legal advice and support for Corporate Governance.

A draft improvement plan is shown as section 9 to the report. This includes alternative options for improvement in all the main areas which need to be addressed. Preferred options are identified as **recommended**.

2. FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS

i. Legal implications

Addressed in the report.

ii. Other Implications

OTHER IMPLICATIONS	YES/NO	Paragraph references within supporting information
Equal Opportunities	No	
Policy	No	
Sustainable and Environmental	No	
Crime and Disorder	No	
Human Rights Act	No	
Elderly/People on Low Income	No	

3. BACKGROUND PAPERS – LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Best Value research files held by Assistant Head of Legal Services.

4. REPORT AUTHOR

Peter Nicholls, Service Director, Legal Services, x6302
Pgn/jc/70