

BEST VALUE SUB-COMMITTEE held at 6.00 pm at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN on 25 APRIL 2000

Present:- Councillor R P Chambers - Chairman
Councillors G R Brown, Mrs C A Cant, Mrs D Cornell,
Mrs C M Little and R W L Stone

Officers in attendance:- Mrs E Forbes, J B Dickson, Mrs J Postings and M T Purkiss

BV37 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2000 were received, confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

BV38 BUSINESS ARISING

(i) Minute BV31 - Best Value Workshop

Councillor Mrs Cornell reported that she had attended the Members' Seminar at Ipswich on 7 February 2000. Whilst she had found networking with other Councillors to be useful she had not found the content of the seminar to be particularly helpful.

(ii) Minute BV32 - Best Value Progress Report

At the last meeting concern had been expressed at the additional audit and inspection costs associated with Best Value. The Corporate Director - Finance reported that the District Auditor had stated that the audit of Best Value would cost £25,500, not including work associated with inspection and review. This figure was at the top of the range and the Corporate Director - Finance had taken this matter up with the District Valuer who had replied that due to the slow progress made by the Council there was much work to be done in the time available and there was therefore a greater risk. The District Auditor stated that risk was an important element of the calculation. The Sub-Committee was not satisfied with this explanation and was particularly concerned that this figure should not become the base figure for the calculation of fees in the future. The Leader of the Council stated that he would take this matter up again with the District Auditor.

BV39 PROGRESS REPORT

The Sub-Committee noted that the Best Value Performance Plan had been approved by Council on 15 March 2000. It was now appropriate to reflect on the Best Value process and to assess whether there were any lessons that could be learnt.

Members of the Sub-Committee considered that, in hindsight, there could have been fuller consultation with other Members at an earlier stage. It was hoped that the Best Value Reference Groups, which were being set up for the first year reviews, would achieve greater involvement of Members. It was also hoped that, now that Members had a greater understanding of the Best Value process, they would be able to become more involved and the process could be Member led to a greater extent.

It was also considered that it would be useful to have two Member Workshops, possibly in June and October, to assist Members in becoming more involved in performance planning and review.

Some external training would also be helpful and it was suggested that a one day training session for Members of the Sub-Committee be arranged. Separate training sessions were being set up for Members of the Best Value Reference Groups and Members of the Sub-Committee would also be invited to attend these sessions.

Members then discussed how the Sub-Committee should be involved in the future in dealing with recommendations arising from the Fundamental Service Reviews, performance monitoring and planning required under the Performance Plan. It was considered that, in the first instance, reports should be filtered through the Sub-Committee as it was able to consider these matters in more detail and could have an overarching role in Best Value. It was felt that this would be preferable to reporting to service committees individually particularly as some of the reviews, such as grants, were the responsibility of a number of different committees and sub-committees.

Members referred to the role of the Reference Groups and noted that these would act as a sounding board to help give Officers a steer in developing the Fundamental Service Reviews.

A question was raised as to whether there would be a conflict of interest if a Member of the Sub-Committee served on a Reference Group. It was considered that there would not be a conflict of interest and there was a need for flexibility and to take into account the political composition of the Council and the expertise of Members.

RECOMMENDED that the terms of reference of the Best Value Sub-Committee be amended to enable it to consider recommendations arising from the Fundamental Service Reviews and that this matter be considered at the Annual Council meeting on 9 May 2000.

The meeting ended at 6.55 pm.