

To: BEST VALUE SUB-COMMITTEE – 30 JANUARY 2001

Agenda Item No: 7

Title: Best Value Performance Plan 2001/02 - Update

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Summary

- 1 The Best Value Performance Plan for 2001/02 is due for publication by the end of March this year. This report seeks approval of the draft Best Value Performance Plan (Appendix 1).

Background

- 2 Members attended a workshop to discuss a draft of the Best Value Performance Plan on 17 Jan 2001 and commented on three areas of the plan: the Best Value Review Programme (page 40), key issues for 2001/02 (to be included in Chapter 5) and action planning from the Improvement and Development Agency report (to be inserted at page 42).
- 3 There follows a summary of the discussion and Members' comments from the workshop:

Best Value Review Programme:

- Members asked whether the review of Leisure and Culture was perhaps covering too much ground and suggested that services provided for young people be reviewed separately. Officers advised that these services had been grouped together in response to the best value inspectorate's suggestion to do less reviews in total and to try to review from the customer's perspective. Officers agreed to look at the viability of a separate review of youth services in a future year.
- Members asked why, with the acknowledged problem with the turn around of planning applications, officers had decided to review the planning service in 2002/03. Officers advised that a review of workload and resources had recently been carried out in development control, and Members had agreed additional resources were required. These now needed to be introduced with a concentration on service delivery rather than any formal review this year. It was the advice of the inspectorate that it was better to review the local plan and development control functions together and that improvements in services did not need to wait for the best value review. The expected pressures on the planning service in the coming year would make it impracticable to undertake a review of the whole service in 2001.
- Members asked whether the leisure & culture and sport & recreation reviews could be linked. Officers said that, while it is true that there are links between

these services, a combined review of these services would be very large in scope and somewhat unwieldy.

4 **Key issues to be included in Chapter 5.** Members discussed the following issues:

- a. New leisure centres at Great Dunmow and Stansted and refurbished facilities at Saffron Walden
- b. New Local Plan
- c. Quicker planning decisions
- d. Improved performance to customers in dealing with housing benefit
- e. Quicker political decisions
- f. Partner commitment to community priorities through community strategy
- g. Increased amounts of recycled materials
- h. Improved communication/involvement with our community
- i. Decide future of Council housing
- j. New political structures

Points raised at the workshop:

- Planning – Members asked whether quicker planning decisions were possible and whether more resources were needed to improve the service. There was a discussion about the conflict between the drive for speed and the need for quality decisions.
- Officers confirmed that overall the key issues were deliverable within the resources already identified by the council.
- Members suggested merging the two actions on political management (e & j) and substituting “effective political structures” and stating that the Council will achieve this by May 2002.
- There was discussion of the development of the community strategy and agreement that there needed to be a clearer timetable for this activity over the next year. A report to Policy & Resources Committee was planned.
- Members discussed whether there should be a new key issue regarding Stansted Airport.
- Members suggested that for each of these key issues measurable outcomes should be identified. In a number of instances, they were already reflected in the targets and priorities in the plan.

5 **Issues arising from the IDeA Report.** It was noted that many of the actions for Members could be clarified by the Member workshop on 29 January 2001. Members will have received an action plan in table form showing the actions

carried out so far and already planned. Discussion at the workshop mainly centred on the IDeA's proposal *Work more closely with all parties on future of Stansted Airport*. The question was raised as to whether the Council should take a more active role in encouraging a fair and informed debate on the future of the airport. The issue was what that might mean in practical terms. Officers advised Members of Government consultations during the year relating to aviation and that officers were also looking at the issue of a referendum.

- 6 Officers are requesting Members to consider the current draft of the Best Value Performance Plan in the light of these suggestions and decide whether there are further suggestions they wish to make.

RECOMMENDED that the draft Best Value Performance Plan be recommended to Policy and Resources Committee on 13 February 2001 for approval by the Council on 27 February 2001.