

**BEST VALUE SUB-COMMITTEE held at 7.30 pm at COUNCIL OFFICES
LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN on 24 JULY 2001**

Present:- Councillor R P Chambers – Chairman.
Councillors Mrs C A Cant, Mrs D Cornell, Mrs C M Little,
R J O'Neill and R W L Stone.

Also present at the invitation of the Chairman:- Councillors Mrs C A Bayley
and Mrs J E Menell

Officers in attendance:- R Chamberlain, J B Dickson, M T Purkiss,
R M Secker and A Stewart.

BV34 APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from Councillor P A Wilcock.

BV35 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 27 March 2001 were received, confirmed
and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

BV36 BEST VALUE REVIEWS 2001/02

The Chairman stated that, as part of the initiative to ensure that the Best
Value Reviews were Member-led, it was intended that the progress reports on
the four reviews included in the 2001/02 Plan would be presented by
Members.

(i) Health

Councillor Mrs Bayley introduced the report which set out the preferred
improvement options arising from the work so far on the Best Value Review of
Health.

She stated that it was intended the review should look at the following
options:-

- Working together with the local NHS, PCT and Social Services in co-ordinating joint funding for health related charities and support organisations.
- Working together with the local NHS, PCT and Local Transport Authority in co-ordinating funding for community transport initiatives specifically for access to health services.
- Working together with the local NHS, and PCT in promoting the areas identified in the Health Improvement Programmes and in obtaining

feedback from clients, maximising joint funding opportunities and identifying the Authority's new scrutiny role.

- Providing Officer support to Members representing the Authority on PCT Boards and CHCs.

Councillor Chambers said that the Government was proposing to reorganise regional health authorities from 1 April 2002 and it was likely that there would be one health authority for Essex. There was some concern about the possible impact this might have on health services and the work of the Primary Care Trust. Councillor Mrs Cant added that it was intended that scrutiny committees would take over part of the role of the Community Health Council and further clarification on this issue was being sought.

Councillor O'Neill felt that it was important that the amount which this Council spent on health related grants was identified and a decision could then be taken on whether support could be provided more effectively in other ways.

RESOLVED that the Review Team explore these options further and invite further input from Members and officers where appropriate and report on their findings to the relevant committee in the autumn.

(ii) Warden Services

The Housing Services Manager reported on the proposed improvement options identified by the Member Reference Group arising from the work so far carried out on the review of the warden services.

The following issues had been identified for the next stage of the review:-

- Restructure the way wardens provide an improved service which will include personal daily visits to tenants and the same level of service to residents at all sheltered sites.
- Consider the allocation of some difficult to let sheltered units at Barkers Mead, Little Hallingbury to people under retirement age and to consider the implications of not continuing allocating these vacancies to homeless families.
- Consider issues relating to extending the Lifeline service to some other vulnerable groups.
- Review the name of Warden and review basic duties.
- Ensure that the Council gets value for money regarding monitoring charges and purchase of equipment.

RESOLVED that the Review Team explore these options further and invite further input from Members and officers where appropriate and report on their findings to the relevant committee in the autumn.

(iii) Community Safety, Emergency Planning and Drug Prevention

Councillor Mrs Cornell presented a report on the progress of the Best Value Review of Community Safety, Emergency Planning and Drug Prevention.

In relation to Community Safety, the following options had been identified:-

- Restructure Community Safety and Emergency Planning
- Review existing arrangements with providers/partners for joint delivery of services
- Cessation of service in part or whole
- Out-Source all Community Safety

The following options had been identified in relation to Emergency Planning:-

- Stay as we are
- Restructure Emergency Planning and Community Safety
- Split Emergency Planning: Planning (Out-Source) and Response (In-house)
- Out-Source All Emergency Planning

The following options had been identified in relation to Drug Prevention:-

- Identify Service Area for Out-Sourcing, eg Transfer sharps collections to an internal or external agency
- Review and re-organise existing arrangements for district treatment/advisory services
- Offer expertise/facilities to others – generate income
- Review existing arrangements with partners/providers for joint delivery of services

RESOLVED that the Review Team explore these options further and invite input from Members and officers where appropriate and report on their findings to the relevant committee in the autumn.

(iv) Corporate Support

Councillor Chambers presented the progress report on the Best Value Review of Corporate Support Services. It outlined some significant options to investigate further which could lead to significant improvements in the cost effectiveness of the service provided, including meeting Government targets. The following initial options had been identified:-

- Investigate the centralisation of Council office accommodation including Great Dunmow without new building and pursue staff car parking arrangements.
- Improvements to corporate support work, either identified or required by Members such as relevant forward focused up to date information to assist them in their various roles.
- Investigate flexi time including hot desking and home-working arrangements
- Develop a corporate procurement function including the possibility of working with other organisations in order to achieve best value in service delivery.
- Investigate the most appropriate way of ensuring that, if possible, by 2005, all the Council's services are available electronically.

- Investigate ways of improving the information flow between staff, members and the public.
- Investigate the benefit of the Council self-insuring through the Council's own fund against certain risks and also review the excess levels contained in various policies.
- Develop a corporate risk management implementation strategy including assessing the benefits of introducing effective risk analysis.
- Investigate possible improvements to individual services by reviewing cross-cutting internal working arrangements.
- Ensure that the current investigation into payroll arrangements is concluded and best value obtained.
- Investigate partnership opportunities with other public authorities or the private sector at individual service level and/or also covering the whole of Corporate Support Services.

RESOLVED that the Review Team explore these options further and invite further input from Members and officers where appropriate and report on their findings to the relevant committee in the autumn.

BV37

BEST VALUE INSPECTIONS

The Chairman reported that he had attended a seminar on corporate governance. It was apparent from this that both the Government and the Audit Commission had recognised that the Best Value Review process was becoming very bureaucratic and were looking at ways of reducing the amount of inspection involved. An invitation was extended for pilot authorities to take part in an experiment involving the integration of audit and inspection work. The Chairman had discussed this matter with the Chief Executive and had stated that this Council would be willing to take part in any pilot arrangement.

RESOLVED that the action taken by the Chairman be confirmed.

The meeting ended at 8.55 pm.