

## **BEST VALUE – ROLLING PROGRAMME OF SERVICE REVIEWS**

### **1 SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report outlines a revised Rolling Programme of Best Value Reviews for Members' consideration and comment. There is a statutory requirement to have such a programme.

### **2 INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1 In autumn 1999, Members agreed to a rolling programme of service reviews as required under the Best Value legislation (Min. 398/99 and Min. 287/99). 2000/2001 represents the first year of the operation of this programme. At the time of agreeing the programme and determining priorities for review, Members were mindful of:-
- Contract renewal dates
  - Cost and budgetary implications
  - Fit with the Council's objectives and external drivers e.g. Government legislation, Audit Commission advice
  - Performance of services relative to national performance indicators and other benchmarks.
  - Public satisfaction, measured in terms of general complaints, Ombudsman decisions, etc.
  - Information/action from previous review work
  - Resource capacity in-house
- 2.2 This report presents for Members' consideration a progress report on the reviews that had been planned for year 1 of the programme. It also details proposed changes to the review programme for the next and subsequent years in the light of the experiences to date, and the needs of the Authority the changed guidelines now coming from the Audit Commission..

### **3 CONSIDERATIONS**

- 3.1 When the programme for inspecting Service Reviews was first set up, it was the Audit Commission's intention to inspect all reviews. However, the size of the review programme produced by Councils to meet statutory requirements, the resources available to the Audit Commission Best Value Inspectorate and the Inspectorate's experiences to date have resulted in the Audit Commission changing its guidance on the subject.
- 3.2 Many of the inspections that have been carried out to date have identified that Councils have been reviewing aspects of their work that do not have a direct customer focus and where step-change is not possible. This has added to resource problems experienced by the Best Value Inspectorate, with limited benefits resulting.
- 3.3 The approach adopted to date has also resulted in considerable resource commitments by local authorities as indicated in the report to the Budget Monitoring Sub Committee on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2001 (Min. 123/01).
- 3.4 As a consequence, the Audit Commission has now changed its approach and is advising that it is looking for approximately 4 reviews each year of a broader nature. These reviews will still need to cover all Council activities over the 5 year period but will permit more minor elements of service delivery to be picked up and considered as part of the bigger cross-cutting reviews, thereby reducing the resource requirements for both Councils and Inspection. They also want councils to focus more on the customer service aspects of their functions.

#### The Current Review Programme

- 3.5 The current approved programme of service reviews is outlined in Appendix A,
- 3.6 The current status of the reviews that were planned for 2000/01 is as follows:

Asset Management	Resources and action plan approved at Corporate Resources Sub-Committee on 28 November 2000. This review will be the subject of an Audit Commission Best Value Inspection in April, although the paperwork has been requested from March.
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Leisure	Action plan for contract renewal approved at Member Budget Monitoring Sub-Committee on 12 December 2000 and subsequently full Council on 19 <sup>th</sup> December. A report outlining proposed actions required in respect of those matters outside the Leisure Services Contract was considered at Community Services on 30 <sup>th</sup> January. The formal review will therefore now be signed off and it is anticipated will be the subject of a Best Value Inspection in June/July time, when the Inspectors will also be able to see how the agreed actions have been taken forward.
Strategic Housing and Housing Management	These have been the subject of reports to Community Services Committee in October 2000, and more recently 30 <sup>th</sup> January. Given the size of the topic, emerging Government Guidance in this area and the number and complexity of the issues involved, this review will need to roll over into 2001/2002. The Audit Commission's Best Value Inspectorate have been advised of this and will inspect when the review has eventually been completed.
Civic & Public Relations	Interim report planned for March 2001. Final report planned for June 2001
Document Production	Interim report to Corporate Resource Sub-Committee 28 November 2000. Final report due by April 2001
Cash collection Accounts payable Sundry debtors Insurance claims Treasury management	In view of the changes in guidance, these will now feed into the Finance Best Value Review outlined in the revised Best Value programme.

#### The New Programme

- 3.7 In the light of experiences to date, the resource commitments required and the revised guidance coming from the Audit Commission, it is now proposed that the Council set a programme for undertaking between 3

and 5 Service Reviews each year and reviews the programme annually to take account of:

- Any legislative changes and further guidance
- Proposals for additional joint reviews
- Issues identified within the Council that result in priority changes

The proposed programme for future reviews is contained within Appendix B.

- 3.8 In addition to these Best Value reviews, it is important that the Council continues to review its processes and procedures as appropriate. Consequently, in 2001/2002 it is also proposed to undertake internal process reviews on Personnel and Payroll, and Contract Management and Implementation (Building Works).

#### **4 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 Some of the reviews will cover crime and disorder issues.

#### **5 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Some of the reviews will cover environmental issues.

#### **6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 Despite the change in the approach to inspection, the planned reviews will nevertheless impact upon both Members and staff resources.

#### **7 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 There is a statutory requirement for each Council to publish a 5 year programme of reviews within its Best Value Performance Plan.

#### **8 PARISH IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 They will be consulted on individual reviews as appropriate.

**9 RECOMMENDATION**

It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**

Subject to Member consideration and comments, that the programme of service reviews as set out in Appendix B of this report be agreed.

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## Programme for Best Value Service Reviews

<b>1</b>	<b>Civic and Public Relations</b>	<b>1</b>
	Provides a link between the Council and the public/media, including the publication of Rochford District Matters: manages the Chairman's activities.	
<b>2</b>	<b>Cash Collection</b>	<b>1</b>
	Cashiering of payments received by the Council	
<b>3</b>	<b>Housing Management</b>	<b>1</b>
	Rent setting and collection: allocation of housing and management of schemes	
<b>4</b>	<b>Strategic Housing</b>	<b>1</b>
	Production of the council's strategy for all housing, including caravans, in the district and liaison with agencies that provide housing	
<b>5</b>	<b>Leisure</b>	<b>1</b>
	Management and promotion of the Council's leisure facilities and provision of a range of social activities for residents	
<b>6</b>	<b>Document Production</b>	<b>1</b>
	Provision of a word processing, photocopying and printing service to support departments of the Council	
<b>7</b>	<b>Asset Management</b>	<b>1</b>
	Management of the ownership and usage of Council's buildings, housing stock, open spaces, car parks, and cemeteries	
<b>8</b>	<b>Accounts</b>	<b>1</b>
	Payments to suppliers and the collection of scheduled and ad hoc debts	
<b>9</b>	<b>Insurance Claims</b>	<b>1</b>
	Development and implementation of insurance claims procedures	
<b>10</b>	<b>Treasury Management</b>	<b>1</b>
	Management of the Council's cash flow and investments	

<b>11 Community Safety</b>	<b>2</b>
Preparation and implementation of the Crime and Disorder Strategy: plays an enabling role in a wide range of initiatives covering domestic violence, proof-of-age schemes and drug abuse	
<b>12 Economic Regeneration</b>	<b>2</b>
Development of strategies to encourage the growth of economic activity within the district	
<b>13 Private Sector Housing</b>	<b>2</b>
Monitoring conditions in privately owned housing and remedying defects in privately rented accommodation for disadvantaged groups: administration of grant schemes to improve and repair private homes and to provide adaptations for disabled occupants	
<b>14 Home Energy Efficiency</b>	<b>2</b>
Advice and initiatives to encourage householders to improve energy efficiency in the home	
<b>15 Banking Arrangements</b>	<b>2</b>
Control of the Council's banking activities	
<b>16 Planning and Development Control</b>	<b>2</b>
Assessment of planning applications: investigation and enforcement of breaches	
<b>17 Audit</b>	<b>2</b>
Provision of an independent service to ensure the integrity of Council systems	
<b>18 Personnel and Training, Payroll, and Health and Safety</b>	<b>2</b>
Management of the recruitment, development, welfare and payment of staff: employment policies and practices: health and safety requirements on Council premises	
<b>19 Emergency Plan</b>	<b>2</b>
Development of contingency arrangements to deal with public emergencies: management of the out-of-hours call-out service	
<b>20 Committee Services</b>	<b>2</b>
Production of documentation necessary to support meetings of the Council	

<b>21 Estate Management</b>	<b>2</b>
Assessment of the suitability of council owned property for occupation: management of remedial works	
<b>22 Building Maintenance</b>	<b>2</b>
Maintenance of the Council's buildings and housing stock	
<b>23 Budgeting and Financial Reporting</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>24 Environmental Stewardship</b>	<b>3</b>
Development of the means by which resources can be used in more sustainable ways to protect the environment for future generations	
<b>25 Corporate Policy</b>	<b>3</b>
Preparation of the Council's Corporate Plan outlining the authority's key objectives for a period of three to five years	
<b>26 Housing Benefit and Fraud Prevention</b>	<b>3</b>
Promotion of benefit take-up and the assessment of claims; investigation of possible cases of fraud	
<b>27 Land Charges</b>	<b>3</b>
The processing of search applications and enquiries: maintenance of required records and registers.	
<b>28 Transport Activities</b>	<b>3</b>
Community transport initiatives including dial-a-ride; concessionary fares and shop-mobility: taxi licensing and control	
<b>29 Parking</b>	<b>3</b>
Management of car parks and the policy for charges	
<b>30 Food Safety and Infectious Disease Investigation</b>	<b>3</b>
Provision of advice on food safety and enforcement of legal requirements for food businesses: investigation of illness caused by the consumption of food or drink	
<b>31 Licensing</b>	<b>3</b>
Regulation and licensing of entertainment activities, Sunday/street trading/markets, lotteries, collections, animal establishments and caravan sites	
<b>32 Health and Safety Enforcement</b>	<b>3</b>
Provision of advice and enforcement of legislation on health, safety and welfare in the workplace	
<b>33 Building Control</b>	<b>3</b>
Assessment of building regulation submissions: monitoring building works	
<b>34 Customer Complaints</b>	<b>3</b>
Administration of the complaints procedure	
<b>35 Other Central Services</b>	<b>3</b>



Provision of a central office facility that supports the Council's operations including telephones/switchboard, central ordering/stationery, central filing, reception, cleaning, vending and caretaking

<b>36 Best Value and Process Review</b>	<b>3</b>
Development of management systems to meet the requirements of Best Value: facilitation of their implementation	
<b>37 Woodlands &amp; Open Spaces</b>	<b>3</b>
Management, promotion of use, and maintenance of the district's woodlands and open spaces, and protection of trees.	
<b>38 Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates</b>	<b>3/4</b>
Tax setting and collection	
<b>39 Homelessness and Housing Advice</b>	<b>4</b>
Assessment of applications from people claiming homelessness and providing advice to help prevent homelessness	
<b>40 Pest Control</b>	<b>4</b>
Provision of advice and assistance to householders on rodent and insect infestations	
<b>41 Pollution</b>	<b>4</b>
Monitoring, regulation and enforcement of district matters relating to pollution of land, air or water	
<b>42 Waste Strategy &amp; Recycling</b>	<b>4</b>
Provision of recycling services and promotion of waste reduction	
<b>43 Rochford Local Plan</b>	<b>4</b>
Preparation of the Local Plan, a planning document which guides the Council's approach to the development of land in the district	
<b>44 Grounds Maintenance</b>	<b>4</b>
Maintenance of Council-owned open spaces: management of sports pitches and pavilions	
<b>45 Street Cleaning</b>	<b>4</b>
Provision of a highways cleaning service and the collection and disposal of street litter bin refuse: abandoned vehicles	
<b>46 Refuse</b>	<b>4</b>
Provision of a waste collection service for domestic properties	
<b>47 Engineering Services</b>	<b>4</b>
Support to County Council on highways maintenance within the district: maintenance of play equipment.	
<b>48 IT and Support Services</b>	<b>4</b>
Development and utilisation of information technology to support Council services and day-to-day operation of the system: maintenance of the Geographic Information System: control of mobile and radio phones.	
<b>49 Elections</b>	<b>4</b>

Preparation and maintenance of the electoral register; administration of the European, national and local elections

**50 Legal Services** 4

Provision of legal services to support the Council in contractual, civil and criminal law; maintenance of the land terrier: conveyancing

**51 Insurance Strategy** 4

Assessment of the Council's insurance requirements

## Appendix B

### Year 2 (2001/2002)

Community Safety	Approaches to improving safety, including reduction in crime and disorder, domestic violence and drug abuse: reducing the fear of crime
Economic Regeneration	Encouraging the growth of economic activity in the District
Emergency Planning	Contingency arrangements to deal with public emergencies
Strategic Housing (continuing from year 1)	The Council's strategy for housing including private sector housing, the homeless and housing advice
Housing Management (continuing from year 1)	The management of the Council's own stock including rent setting, allocations, and maintenance
Development and Building Control	Assessment of planning applications and building control applications

Community Safety, Economic Regeneration, and Emergency Planning are being undertaken by a number of other Essex local authorities and partners. It would, therefore, appear appropriate to look at the potential for joint working with these and other organisations. Joint working might include:

- Service options and delivery
- Consultation
- Bench-marking
- Best practice

### **Year 3 (2002/2003)**

Financial Management	The ways and means of managing all monies moving into, through and out of the organisation
Public Regulation, Inspection and Protection	Those issues that affect the public including licensing, food safety, health and safety enforcement, pollution, planning enforcement
Environmental Stewardship	Means for using resources to protect the environment for future generations

### **Year 4 (2003/2004)**

Managing our Environment	The operational issues of managing the Council's environmental contracts/services
Communications	The means for developing corporate thinking throughout the organisation, and the Council's interface with the public
Transport Activities and Parking	Community transport initiatives, taxis and parking within the District
Democratic Renewal	Operation of committee, elections and electoral registration, and review how the new political structure is bedding in

### **Year 5 (2004/2005)**

Support Services	What goes on behind the scenes to support front-line delivery
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