

ASSET MANAGEMENT BEST VALUE REVIEW

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Council is obliged by statute to publish annual best value performance plans and to review all its services every five years. The Audit Commission has responsibility for inspecting these reviews to determine whether the authority has complied with the requirements of the best value legislation and associated guidance.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 Asset Management was the first Best Value Review to be completed by the Council and is the only review so far to have been inspected. A draft report was received and considered in detail by the Asset Management Working Group in September 2001. A copy of the Chief Executive's letter containing the Member's comments on the draft report is attached at Appendix 1.
- 2.2 The Working Group has now considered the final report and their comments are incorporated into this report.

3 INSPECTORS' RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The Inspectors' final report was received on 18 October 2001 and has been available in the Members' Lounge and at the Rochford offices since its publication. A copy of the summary and recommendations is attached at Appendix 2.
- 3.2 Members are now invited to consider the recommendations arising out of the final report.

(1) The Asset Management Plan

The Inspectors recommend that Rochford develops an asset management plan which compliments its key corporate objectives, is informed by consultation and comparison exercises and reflects DTLR guidance.

One of the first outcomes of the Asset Management Review was the development of a draft asset management plan approved and adopted by the Council in November 2000. In 2001 the plan was further developed in line with guidance and recommendations from DTLR and submitted in a bid for funding as part of the Single Capital Pot Round 1. The Inspectors were advised of this and provided with a copy. Together with the capital strategy, this bid has achieved a discretionary allocation of £75,000.

A copy of the revised Asset Management Plan (Appendix 3) and the feedback from GO-East (Appendix 4) is attached.

It is proposed that the plan should be further refined in line with the comments made by GO-East and submitted again in July 2002 for discretionary funding as part of the Single Capital Pot Round 2.

(2) Performance Indicators

Through its asset management plan, the Council should develop a series of performance indicators to monitor its progress over time. These should address government targets for the Disability Discrimination Act, e-government and the environmental agenda in as much as they relate to asset management.

The Property Maintenance & Highways Manager is currently reviewing local performance indicators. For the purposes of the next Single Capital Pot – Round 2 it would be appropriate for this review to be completed by the end of March 2002.

(3) Monitoring

The Council should develop a clear system for monitoring the progress of the asset management plan and the best value improvement plan.

The revised plan provides a clear system for monitoring Asset Management. The main problem in implementing this aspect of the plan has been the sheer workload of Members and Officers alike over the last year. In addition, staff vacancies have left little time for the Corporate Director (Law, Planning & Administration) to develop the role of Corporate Property Officer or to progress the plan.

(4) Condition Survey

The Council should complete a comprehensive usage and condition survey of all its operational and non-operational properties, examine the findings in conjunction with funding and partnership opportunities and then prioritise activities accordingly.

A full survey of the leisure buildings was completed in preparation for the tendering of the leisure contract. The Principal Officer (Architecture) has completed a review of the Rochford Offices including a basic condition survey. This should now be extended to other Council buildings. In the meantime, the Property Maintenance & Highway Manager should review and record information on individual Council Houses on the basis of the DTLR guidance. This need not be too onerous based on existing knowledge from cyclical repairs data, etc., with a system of scoring from grade “A” to “D”. This review

should be completed early in the new municipal year. In addition, consideration should be given to acquiring further information from users based on a simple occupier/tenant survey form.

(5) Strategic Influence

The Council should ensure that the roles of the Corporate Property Officer and Asset Management Group are of strategic influence and co-ordination, and that supporting procedures are communicated to and understood by all relevant stakeholders.

The Asset Management Action Plan envisaged a review of the current arrangements in May 2001. Pressure of work prevented this. Nevertheless the roles of the Corporate Property Officer and Asset Management Group have been clarified and reinforced in the revised plan. Work in relation to accommodation issues and the future of the Rochford and Rayleigh offices will further reinforce the strategic influence of the Asset Management Group.

The original Asset Management Plan envisaged that the post of Corporate Property Officer was to be held by the Corporate Director (Law, Planning & Administration) for an initial period only. The workload in relation to day to day management of property is likely to change following the letting of the leisure contract and outcome of the Housing Best Value Review. In considering the effect of these changes on the structure, consideration should be given to the office and responsibilities of the Corporate Property Officer.

4 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The successful submission of an Asset Management Plan as part of the Single Capital Pot – Round 1 has result in a discretionary grant payment of £75,000.
- 4.2 The principal resource implication is in officer time in developing and overseeing implementation of the plan. This is estimated at an average 30 hours a month including meetings of the Asset Management Group. The work involved in implementation of the plan is necessary in any event.

5 RECOMMENDATION

- 5.1 It is proposed that the Sub-Committee **RECOMMENDS**

(1) that the Asset Management Plan be endorsed and developed in line with the suggestions of the Government Office for the East of England for submission in the Single Capital Pot – Round 2.

(2) that further consideration be given to the position of Corporate Property Officer following the letting of the leisure contract and submission of the Single Capital Pot – Round 2 bid in July 2002. (CD(LPA))

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Background Papers:

None

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