

## BEST VALUE REVIEWS

Report By: Corporate Policy and Research Manager

### Wards Affected

County-wide

### Purpose

1. To note the position in relation to Best Value reviews.

### Financial Implications

2. None

### Background

3. At its last meeting, the Committee asked for clarification of the approach of the Council to Best Value reviews of its services and functions.
4. The statutory requirement for local authorities to carry out such reviews remains in force. However, in 2002 the previous requirement for all functions to be reviewed on a five-year cycle was revoked. In the words of the ODPM guidance (Circular 03/2003), this was to "...enable them to focus on priority areas arising from their CPAs and other considerations."
5. The broad principles for Best Value reviews remain:
  - **challenge** why, how and by whom a service is being provided
  - **compare** performance with others, taking into account the views of both service users and potential suppliers
  - **consult with** local stakeholders as to their experience of local services and their aspirations for the future
  - use fair and open **competition** wherever necessary as a means of securing efficient and effective services
6. The guidance goes on to say that,

"Authorities should...adopt a proportionate approach to their review programming: it should focus on the areas that present the most serious challenges and biggest opportunities for service improvement. Where authorities have completed a Comprehensive Performance Assessment, they will be expected to draw up a review programme which reflects their pattern of strengths and weaknesses, and include this in their Performance Plan."

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Further information on the subject of this report is available from  
Steve Martin, Corporate Policy and Research Manager  
on 01432 261877

7. Following the Comprehensive Performance Assessment in 2002, an Improvement Plan was drawn up, performance against which has been reported regularly to the Committee. This has been substantially completed (as confirmed by the Council's external auditors).
8. The Council's Corporate Plan is now its Best Value and Improvement Plan. It therefore provides the basis for Best Value review. Examples of areas that should meet the Best Value requirements include the Service Improvement Programme and the associated Customer Service Strategy, the Accommodation Strategy and the Pay and Workforce Strategy.
9. Progress against the Corporate Plan is charted in the integrated performance reports to Cabinet and this Committee.
10. It is for the Committee and subject scrutiny committees to consider which areas of the Plan, including the elements that relate to Best Value review, should be the subject of particular attention in their own forward work programmes.

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- None