

SUPPORT SERVICES FOR SCHOOLS

1. Introduction

1.1 This review is one of five pilot “cross cutting” reviews being undertaken this year to assist the Council develop its Best Value process. This review was planned to cover the support services provided to schools as follows:

- (a) Finance
- (b) Information Technology
- (c) Human Resources
- (d) Landscaping
- (e) Cleaning
- (f) Architects and Maintenance
- (g) Purchasing
- (h) Communication
- (i) Legal Services

1.2 The review included the working arrangements between the different teams involved within Learning and Development Directorate and the teams in the Resources and Environment Directorates.

1.3 As the review progressed it became clear that a number of services (IT, Finance, Governor Support and Personnel) involved the majority of the charges levied to schools and were; as a consequence, a higher priority from a schools’ perspective. It was equally clear that the timetable for the review would prevent an in-depth analysis of every area. It was therefore agreed by the Reference Group to concentrate on IT, Finance, Personnel and Governor’s Support but to undertake further analysis of any other service identified in the questionnaire to schools as one that schools had concerns.

1.4 The questionnaire highlighted only one additional area of concern and this was in respect of building and landscape contracts support. This service area will now be reviewed further. The questionnaire showed that others services such as Legal, Communication and Purchasing were either not (or little) used and/or receive a high user satisfaction level.

2. **Current Position**

- 2.1 The consultation process is complete. It involved interviews with Members, Head Teachers, Heads of Service, the private sector and a questionnaire to all schools. The questionnaire received a 50% response, which together with other information received, enabled some firm conclusions to be drawn.
- 2.2 Detail costing information has been received from other LEAs and one of the private sector companies contacted. Whilst it is difficult to be certain, in some areas, that the comparisons are like for like, some useful benchmarks have been obtained.
- 2.3 Service providers have examined their approach to service provision and this may lead to some changes in the way services are currently provided and co-ordinated.
- 2.4 Two further Reference Group meetings are planned. The first meeting (in early January) will receive the outstanding officer presentations concerning service delivery and then draw overall conclusions to feed into the best value report. The final meeting has been arranged to consider the draft report.

3. **Conclusion**

- 3.1 The review, which focused on the services where higher spend is involved or where customer dissatisfaction was apparent, is broadly on timetable. The last of the evidence will be presented to the penultimate reference Group in early January, which will in turn allow overall conclusions to be drawn. The draft report will be completed in January.

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