

ITEM 3
PARISH AND NEIGHBOURHOOD
CONSULTATIVE ASSEMBLY
16 SEPTEMBER 1999

BEST VALUE

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1. Purpose

1.1 To report on the Government's consultation paper of 'The Application of Best Value to Town and Parish Councils' and to consider how Local Councils would wish to pursue embracing the good practices encompassed within the Best Value proposals.

2. Summary

2.1 At its meeting on 24 June 1999 the Consultative Assembly received a presentation and report on the Government's proposals to place a new duty of best value on local authorities.

2.2 It was noted that the new duty of best value, as laid down in Part 1 of the Local Government Bill 1999, was expected to apply to all local authorities as from 1 April 2000. However, it was still unclear at that time whether smaller town and parish councils would be exempted from the full duty of best value where the costs of complying with it were considered to be excessive.

2.3 On 5 August 1999, the Local Government Minister launched the consultation paper 'The Application of Best Value to Town and Parish Councils' (copy attached at **Annex A**). The paper sets out the basis for a financial threshold at £500,000 (councils with a lower budgeted income are exempt from best value), and explains how the duty of best value will be adapted for town and parish councils.

2.4 It would appear, given the de minimus threshold of £500,000, that all Local Councils within Milton Keynes for the time being are being exempted from the legislation. However, as stated by the Local Government Minister, 'it remains in the interests of everyone that *all* local councils embrace best value - good management practices and the pursuit of excellence should be universal across the public sector'.

2.5 Local Councils may wish to consider the following main features of best value:

(a) Make arrangements to secure continuous improvement

(b) Consult people who have an interest in the area

- (c) Provide an assessment of performance by setting own performance indicators and targets in the light of local priorities and to draw up action plans to meet such targets
- (d) Review functions over a five year period
- (e) Produce a best value performance plan each year which will provide local people with an assessment of the Council's performance over the previous year.

2.6 A copy of the consultation paper was circulated with the August issue of the Newsletter. It is understood that some Local Councils have expressed an interest in pursuing Best Value further and have approached District Audit for guidance. District Audit have indicated that they are happy to arrange a seminar on this subject if that was the wish of Local Councils.

3. **Recommendations**

3.1 The views of Local Councils are sought as to how they wish to take Best Value forward.