



Minutes of the meeting of the BEST VALUE SUB-COMMITTEE of the POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE held on MONDAY 20 MARCH 2000 at 6.30 pm

Present: Councillor Long (Chair)
Councillors Monk, Swepston, Tallack (substitute for I Henderson), I Wilson, K Wilson and White

Officers: H Miller (Chief Executive), P Coveney (Strategic Director Resources), A Flack (Director of Education and Early Years Services), D Nickless (Head of Neighbourhood Services (Housing)), M Hood (Assistant Treasurer (Audit and Customer Support)), G Snelson (Corporate Policy Manager), S Willson (Service Review Officer), and J Marshall (Committee Manager)

Apology: Councillor I Henderson

BV23/00 MINUTES

RESOLVED -

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Sub-Committee held on 21 February 2000 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

BV24/00 PHASE TWO BEST VALUE PILOT REVIEW - SUPPORT SERVICES TO SCHOOLS

The Sub-Committee considered the final report of the Best Value Pilot Review of Support Services to Schools. It was reported that data from private companies, other local authorities and internal sources had been used. There were gaps in the information as some sources were reluctant to provide data due to concerns about commercial sensitivity, or the data was unavailable. It was noted that internally where data had not existed as part of this Review, efforts had been made to generate it.

Councillor K Wilson expressed the opinion that in each of the Best Value Pilot Reviews there had not been clear proposals to encourage the 'competition' aspect of Best Value. It was felt that this was mainly due to the pilot nature of these Reviews. However M Hood indicated that with regard to the Support Services to Schools Review in

particular there was only one area in which there was a very clear difference in the performance of the current provider in comparison with the competitor who would provide best value, and here a change had been suggested.

Officers stated that pilot exercises had highlighted the need to collect data in advance. The need to amend the procurement policy was also mentioned.

Officers explained that the Best Value Review Guide would set out in detail the step by step process for Best Value Reviews. This would also set out the procurement strategy. It was felt that this would resolve a lot of issues, but the underlying problem that Best Value Reviews would only deal with parts of services would remain.

The Sub-Committee expressed its gratitude to all officers involved in the pilot Reviews, and noted that the process had been very helpful in highlighting issues which would otherwise have been overlooked.

RESOLVED –

That the report and its recommendations be approved.

BV25/00

MEMBER INVOLVEMENT IN THE BEST VALUE REVIEW PROCESS

The Sub-Committee considered a report on the mechanisms for Member involvement in the Best Value Review process under the Council's new democratic structures.

Although it was accepted that this report was based on assumptions as the new structures would not be formalised until April, it was felt that the particular issue of whether a lead Executive member would be assigned to oversee each Best Value Review needed to be given further consideration.

Some Members of the Sub-Committee expressed the view that it would be unrealistic to have Executive Members overseeing individual Reviews. Another suggestion was that one Executive Member should oversee all the Best Value Reviews. Equally it was felt that this needed to be given further consideration further into the restructuring process.

The Sub-Committee discussed the need to achieve a balance in terms of the role of the Scrutiny Committees in the Best Value process. It would be important to ensure that Scrutiny Members were involved early on in the decision making process in order that they did not feel excluded and potentially make unnecessary use of the call in procedure. However it would be equally important to ensure that decisions could be made and implemented expeditiously. It was noted that the Best Value Review process would have to work to a very rigid timetable, so that unnecessary delays would not only effect the particular Review in question but also all future Reviews.

The Sub-Committee expressed the opinion that it was important that the constitutional mechanisms were in place to ensure that the potential to challenge decisions at an early stage existed, but to build in checks and balances which would mean that Members only used this infrequently.

The Sub-Committee summarised the importance of the report as demonstrating that the Executive would lead the Best Value Review process, with the Scrutiny Committees scrutinising and periodically monitoring their progress.

RESOLVED –

That the proposed model for handling Best Value Reviews as set out in the report be approved.

THE CHAIR CLOSED THE MEETING AT 7.05 PM