

MANAGEMENT SERVICES UNIT
BEST VALUE REVIEW
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Purpose

To provide an internal Management Consultancy, utilising a wide range of business and analytical skills to achieve maximum efficiency and effectiveness of the Council's Departments and Services. Particular support is afforded to the Council's Best Value ethos and Performance Planning objectives.

2. Relevant Legislation

The service has been under the direct control of the Chief Executive since April 1990 and is independently available for every Department's use. The resource is, however, heavily employed in supporting the Council's responsibilities for securing Best Value.

3. Objectives

The Management Services Unit has prepared its own Service Plan, which identifies stepped progression to achieve continuous improvement and achievement over a five year period. Fundamental to this is the Improvement Plan, which sourced through self-analysis using the Excellence Model, has provided the following main objectives.

- To market the service with a view to bringing an increased awareness to the wide range of skills currently available, particular for those managers carrying out Best Value Service Reviews.
- To develop customer feedback with a view to building a wider but appropriate customer base.
- To continue developing MSU staff to ensure that skills are in line with current and future requirements and, in accordance with the Investors in People Standard.
- To lead and build upon the benchmarking activities, already underway with participating authorities in the Council's Audit Commission Family Group.

4. Service Review

A review of the Service has been performed in accordance with the guidance and time scale determined by the Council. As well as using the recommended 4 Cs, codification has been added to provide a clear vision of what the service actually does and thereby gives a sound basis for challenge and review. The main points acted upon in the review thus far are identified within this section.

4.1 Codification

All areas in which the MSU operate have been subject to accurate codification. It was considered absolutely essential for the appropriate Officer, responsible for each area of the section's workload, to perform this individually. The main areas subject to this process have been:

Accommodation

- Review procedures
- Office planning

Best Value

- Excellence Model implementation/guidance
- Departmental support (Chief Executive)
- Departmental support (other Departments)
- Pilot Group involvement
- BV Training - Procedure Writing, Process Mapping, Excellence Model implementation
- Performance Planning - Local Performance Plan
- Performance Indicators - monitoring, management and reporting

Client Corporate Consultancy

Contract Car Administration

- A wide range of functions under this area of work

Health and Safety compliance

IT Procurement

Administration

- Stationery, post, budget planning/monitoring etc.

Organisation charting

Risk assessments

SOSP procedures

Staff Suggestion Scheme

Working Group representation

4.2 Challenge

Considerable challenge has taken place in respect of the following:

Contract Car Administration

- Streamlining of processes
- Provision of standard information through 'Outlook'
- Full review of Car Scheme eligibility (for completion June 2001)

Performance Indicators

- Led to the development of a system for reporting bi-monthly statistical data (statutory PIs) to the Council's Management Team and quarterly reporting to the Council's Audit Committee
- Improved target setting
- Improved levels of productivity (66% of statutory PIs are at top quartile or above)

Marketing Document

- To be circulated before August 2001. This will undoubtedly lead to other significant areas for challenge

4.3 Compare

No benchmarking was initially available for Management Services functions, largely because the function is performed in many different ways throughout various organisations. All members of the Council's Audit Family Group were approached and from an initial interest from ten local authorities, six took part. The benchmarking authorities were Braintree DC, Spelthorne BC, Horsham BC, Test Valley BC, Elmbridge BC and Guildford BC.

Even within the six participating authorities, the areas of work covered Management Services Consultancy, Policy and Review and Corporate Support. It has, however, been possible from the 37 question benchmarking document to obtain comparative data in respect of:

- Costs, staffing levels, workload and processes
- Performance measures
- Areas of good practice
- Areas for service improvement

Consultancy can and has been compared to specialist external providers as well as to the District Audit Service. Management Services fares very competitively in most respects.

4.4 Consult

A marketing document has been prepared for circulation. This will be circulated shortly and responses are to be required by September 2001. When analysed, this will enable a questionnaire to be drafted to both existing and prospective clients. Our objective is to identify what is done well and most importantly, where improvements can be made.

4.5 Compete

Whilst much data shows areas where the MSU is performing well, there will of course, be areas where improvement is required. Particular attention will be paid to the work undertaken by the Unit and continual assessment against both public and private service providers.

5. Targets

- To undertake a review of the Unit's Administrative functions. In this respect, the administration of both Contract Hired Cars and IT support for the Chief Executive's Department will be completed by mid 2001.
- To achieve annual savings, either financial or indirect, through departmental consultancy to the order of £50,000.
- To develop the Council's Performance Management Information System, ensuring that all relevant data is made available for the production of the Council's Annual Performance Plan.

6. Performance

Completion of the Rapid Score version of the Excellence Model, priority goals have been highlighted and during the course of 2000/01 the following have been acted upon.

- A Mission Statement has been introduced
- The Service has undergone review and an action plan for continuous improvement is now in place
- Process targets have been introduced and monitoring is now being undertaken
- Professional training has been supported to ensure that the demands upon consultancy support can be readily met
- Benchmarking has been carried out to establish the Unit's value for money and ranking among similar support services in like minded authorities

7. Statistics

	<u>98/99</u>	<u>99/00</u>	<u>00/01</u>	<u>01/02</u>
• No of FTE salaries	3.11	3.10	3.09	3.09
• No of assignments	24	26	-	-
• Savings identified	£10,000	£50,000	-	-
• Departmental support	37%	63%	-	-
• Corporate support	35%	65%	-	-
• Basis of recharging – direct through timesheet allocation				
• Recharges to corporate budgets have increased through general support to Best Value, Performance Management and Monitoring				

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