AGENDA

Please address any general enquiries on this agenda to Geoff Malcolm on Oxford 815904. Media enquiries should be directed to the Press Office on Oxford 815266. This agenda can also be viewed on the Council’s web site, oxfordshireonline (www.oxfordshire.gov.uk).

1. Election to Chair (Labour Group)

2. Apologies for Absence and Temporary Appointments

3. Declarations of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

4. Minutes

Minutes of the meeting held on 12 July 2000 (AUD4).

5. Matters arising from the Minutes

6. Petitions and Public Address

7. BV2 FORMS

The following draft BV2 project specifications AUD7(a)-7(h) set out the proposed focus of detailed review work:

(a) 10:15 am Support for Schools of Concern
(Note: This is not in the 'conventional' BV2 format. Much of the work of the Best Value review has already been undertaken as a result of the OFSTED inspection and Action Plan, so this flexible approach was adopted).

(b) 10:40 am Personnel

(c) 11:00 am Care Management and Commissioning Physical Disability

(d) 11:20 am Transport Capital Programme Procurement

(a) 11:40 am Early Years Education and Childcare

(f) 12:00 noon Special Needs Transport

(g) 12:20 pm ICT Support for Schools

(h) 1:45 pm County Legal Services

The Sub-Committee are RECOMMENDED to approve the BV2 forms.

8. TIMETABLE FOR BEST VALUE REVIEWS

Report by the Assistant Chief Executive (AUD8)
The projected timetable outlines this year's Best Value reviews, showing when each review proposes reporting to the Sub-Committee.

The Sub-Committee are RECOMMENDED to endorse the proposed timetable

JOHN HARWOOD
Chief Executive
County Hall
Oxford OX1 1ND

22 August 2000
Present:

Voting Members:
Councillors

Janet Godden, Neville F. Harris, Brian Law, Julie Mayhew-Archer, Anne Purse (in place of Councillor Dermot Roaf) C.H. Shouler and Sylvia Tompkins (in place of Councillor Tom Richardson).

Non-Voting Members:
Mr C. Quinton.

Ex Officio:
Councillors Margaret Godden and Tony Stockford (in place of Councillor Brian Hodgson).

Officers:
Whole of meeting: S. Capaldi, C. Atherstone and G. Malcolm (Chief Executive's Office); J. Barker (County Treasurer's Department);
Part of meeting: K. Bellew (County Treasurer's Department); J. Parry (Fire Service); Director of Environmental Services, R. Dix and J. Kimbrey; Director of Cultural Services.

By Invitation:
Councillor Craig Simmons;
Councillor John Farrow (for Agenda Item 7);
Councillor Sam Segaran (for Agenda Item 9(c)).

S. Warren (District Auditor), A. Blight, N. Gibson and M. Yates.

Observer
The Sub-Committee considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda for the meeting, together with a schedule of addenda tabled by the Chief Executive, copies of which agenda, reports and schedule are attached to the signed Minutes, and in relation thereto determined as follows:-

34/00 ELECTION TO CHAIR

RESOLVED: that Councillor Harris (Labour Group) be elected to chair the meeting.

35/00 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS

Apologies for absence, temporary appointments and Group Leader substitutions were reported as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Apology from</th>
<th>Temporary Appointment/Substitute</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Councillor Hodgson</td>
<td>Councillor Stockford</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Councillor Mitchell</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Councillor Purse</td>
<td>Councillor Roaf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Councillor Richardson</td>
<td>Councillor Tompkins</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

36/00 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Sub-Committee held on 24 May 2000 were approved and signed.

37/00 ORDER OF BUSINESS

RESOLVED: to rearrange the business of the meeting following Agenda Item 9(b) as follows:
- 12 noon Item 10, Best Value – Monitoring New Costs, Resources Deployed and Savings Accrued;
- 12.30pm Lunch;
- 1.30pm Item 9(c), Arts & Recreation BV2;
- 2.00pm Item 11, BBVPP: Draft Action Plan.

38/00 OUTCOME OF BEST VALUE REVIEW: FIRE SERVICE - SUPPORT SERVICES (Agenda Item 7)

The Sub-Committee considered the outcome (AUD7) of the Best Value Review on Fire Service Support Services, which had focused on fire hydrant maintenance and testing, and related health and safety, training and technical support.

Mr Parry gave a brief overview and circulated an additional paper setting out data relating to Hydrant testing and maintenance pricing (a copy of which is attached to the signed Minutes). He reported on progress and action taken since completion of the Review and responded to members’ questions which centred mainly on project work, the effectiveness of benchmarking, co-operation with other local authorities, initiatives to include communities in the provision of water supplies and the importance of continuing service improvement.

Members commended the team for their approach and work on this Review.
RESOLVED: (on a motion by Councillor Harris seconded by Councillor Law and carried unanimously) to:

(a) receive the oral report and endorse the recommended options set out in the BV3 form;

(b) endorse the action plan set out in the form BV4 and;

(c) RECOMMEND them to the Public Protection Committee at the earliest opportunity.

39/00 FIRE SERVICE BEST VALUE REVIEW - COMMUNICATIONS AND CONTROL: INTERIM REPORT
(Agenda Item 8)

The Sub-Committee considered progress with the Fire Service Best Value Review – Communications and Control, which was running in parallel with the Home Office requirement to review this function within the period 1 April 2000 to 31 March 2001.

With the agreement of the County Council's Review Team, further work on our review had been suspended for a period of four to six weeks until more information became available.

RESOLVED: (on a motion by Councillor Shouler seconded by Councillor Law and carried unanimously) to note the current position subject to the Assistant Chief Executive considering whether this BV Review should be permanently disbanded.

40/00 BV2 FORMS
(Agenda Item 9)

The following draft BV2 project specifications (AUD9 (a)-(c)) set out the proposed focus of detailed review work:

(a) Audit

Mr Barker introduced the BV2. The following main points emerged from discussion:

the inclusion of an independent team member from another local authority, a reciprocal arrangement, was commended;

the engagement of a facilitator (paragraph 14) was questioned, as to whether it was essential. Mr Barker considered that it was, in order to enable team members to contribute effectively, and undertook to notify members informally of costs.

RESOLVED: to approve the BV2.

(b) Highway Management

Mr Dix introduced the BV2 in the context of the Oxfordshire Plan 2000/01-2004/05 and the Local Transport Plan. The Review sought to make best value of available resources in the light of continuous improvement. The following main points emerged from discussion:-

after 14 July David Lines would succeed Jackie Kimbrey as PPRU lead officer;
the proposed core team membership should reflect the BV Handbook guidance in terms of independent membership.

**RESOLVED:** (on a motion by Councillor Shouler seconded by Councillor Law and amended by Councillor Mayhew-Archer with their and the Sub-Committee's consent) to approve the BV2 subject to the addition of an independent team member, perhaps from another local authority.

(c) Arts and Recreation

The Director of Cultural Services introduced the BV2. The following main points emerged from discussion:

the project specification had been drawn up in the context of the development of a Local Cultural Strategy for Oxfordshire;

the opportunities for partnerships with others and the possibilities of obtaining grants and funding would be explored as part of the Review.

**RESOLVED:** to approve the BV2 subject at page 2, paragraph 1, of the deletion of "this" in the * bracket.

41/00 BEST VALUE – MONITORING NEW COSTS, RESOURCES DEPLOYED AND SAVINGS ACCRUED

(Agenda Item 10)

The Sub-Committee had asked officers to record the cost of additional Best Value work across the County Council. The Sub-Committee considered a statement which took full account of new appointments, particularly to the PPRU team, as a consequence of funds made available in the council's budget strategy for 2000/01.

Mr Capaldi made a presentation with slides, copies of which were circulated, in relation to expenditure incurred and savings accruing from Best Value work so far. The Sub-Committee were concerned that the outcomes of Reviews should be monitored to ensure their achievement.

**RESOLVED:** to:

(a) note the report;

(b) ask officers to record the costs and savings of Best Value work, including each BV Review, for annual committee consideration.

42/00 BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE PLAN AUDIT: DRAFT ACTION PLAN

(Agenda Item 11)

The District Auditor had completed his audit of the Best Value Performance Plan (BVPP) which had been published on 30 June 2000 and circulated to all members. Ms Blight formally presented the key findings arising from the audit (AUD11(a)) against compliance with the statutory requirements, our systems for collecting/recording performance information; and the quality of our supporting performance management systems.
The Sub-Committee considered the County Council's draft Action Plan (AUD11(b)) proposed by the officers to address the statutory and other recommendations highlighted in the District Auditor's report. The County Council was required to publish the Action Plan within 6 weeks of the publication date of the District Auditor's report, i.e., by 11 August 2000.

**RESOLVED:** to:

(a) receive and note the District Auditor's report on the Best Value Performance Plan; and

(b) endorse the Action Plan subject to the Assistant Chief Executive incorporating references to 'corporate monitoring' as appropriate.

Date of signing 2000
BEST VALUE REVIEW
The Four Cs

Service area to be reviewed: Support for schools of concern

The following is a summary of a fuller document which has been circulated to Sub-Committee Group Spokespersons, Group Leaders and relevant officers and is available for public inspection on request from Mark Ginsburg, Chief Executive's Office (tel. 01865 816031).

CHALLENGE

Summary of evidence available

" The Ofsted inspection report of January 2000 found that this Education Authority had more strengths than weaknesses. One of the three functions not adequately exercised was support to schools in Ofsted special measures or with serious weaknesses. The focus of this review is support to these schools.

" The statutory basis for this service is in the provisions of the School Standards and Framework Act (1998), School Inspections Act (1996) and Education Act (1996). Procedures for schools and Local Education Authorities are explained in DfEE Circular No. 06/99 "Schools causing concern".

" The current service structure is described within the post Ofsted inspection action plan (May 2000) and the revised EDP (June 2000). The structure of the service described in these two documents is a revised version of that which existed previously. Each designated school has a task group attached to it to work with the school and coordinate others from across the Department in line with the school's and Authority's statement of action. Task group managers form the core membership of the County Steering Group for School Requiring Additional Support. The Steering Group reports to the Senior Management Team of the Department.

" At the time of the inspection there were eight schools subject to special measures and 14 with serious weaknesses. Ofsted identified LEA support to these schools as improving, with some schools being helped to make rapid progress. Headteachers of school supported reported that the LEA was increasingly providing a more considered and well coordinated response to the needs of schools. The Steering Group for Schools Requiring Additional Support (SRAS), which oversees and coordinates the support provided to schools, was identified as an effective mechanism for ensuring efficient allocation of additional resources to schools. Task groups, established to support individual schools, were more varied in their success. To improve support to Ofsted identified schools, the well coordinated, effective response experienced by some schools needed to be ensured for all identified schools.

" A school under Ofsted special measures can only be removed from that designation on the recommendation of HMI. A school with Ofsted serious weakness can only be removed from that designation by the outcome of a full Ofsted inspection. Oxfordshire currently has eight schools under special measures. Six schools formerly under special measures have been successfully removed from that designation and two have been closed. There are eleven schools in Oxfordshire currently with serious weaknesses. Five schools previously in this category have been successfully removed by full Ofsted inspection.
The staffing, capital and other unit costs of this activity are not associated with a distinct separate service. Personnel from across the branches and services of the Education Department contribute work to this area. The background papers to the Authority's Educational Development Plan for 2000/2001 as they relate to Priority 6 – Schools Causing Concern – indicate the staffing commitment as follows:

2000/2001

1821 days contact time with schools
With 210 days being 1 fte the total is 8.7 fte.

The associated costs are as follows:

Average costs (including Gross Pay, N.I., Super, Car allowance and overheads) are £235 a day (the unit cost)
Therefore total = £427,935 (£524,000 under this budget heading in EDP6 includes management, administration and recharge).

Priority 6 of the EDP has been costed and the resource requirements are included as a separate category. The Education Department costs under the Fair Funding Heading of School Improvement total £524,000. The total allocation for EDP6 is £876,000, the difference of £352,000 being accounted for by the Oxfordshire County Council contribution to DfEE Standards Grant 1B.

The Ofsted report on the Authority describes it as very lean and well run. If the budget for this activity were cut by 10% then the capacity to initiate the necessary improvements when working with schools of concern would be compromised. The Ofsted report on the Authority states that "the LEA delegates a higher than average proportion of funds to schools and has streamlined central services as far as it can whilst maintaining an effective discharge of most functions. It has retained the lowest amount per pupil for strategic services in the country at £17 per pupil compared to £42 statistical neighbours and £39 counties average".

Conclusions reached

The Authority has set in place a service designed to meet the needs of schools of concern. In order to improve the service further there is a need to address, within the recently revised structure, the following points:

- variability of expertise within and between task groups;
- variability in skills in setting interim targets for schools and exit strategies;
- process for informing elected members;
- the need to support headteachers in networking and learning with and from colleagues experiencing similar difficulties.

Areas for potential improvement

The post Ofsted inspection action plan was drawn up by May 2000 and accepted without revision by the DfEE. The actions are incorporated in the Authority's revised EDP and are currently underway from May onwards as shown.

The restructured service needs to ensure:

- a more effective strategic approach;
consistent and effective operation of the strategy with appropriate involvement and ownership of all branches;

- effective monitoring and evaluation of the strategy and its operation to ensure significant improvement in identified schools.

and the actions which need to be taken, in line with the Ofsted judgements, are:

- refocus the time of staff and other resources within the branches and services of the Education Department more effectively on schools with greatest need and ensure sufficient resources are made available to effect positive and necessary change (ongoing);
- review the nature, purpose and membership of the SRAS steering group (done);
- review the nature, purpose, membership and management of task groups (done);
- redefine the relationship between the task groups and the SRAS steering group (done);
- establish and make explicit the criteria whereby a school's weaknesses have been sufficiently addressed to warrant an exit strategy and set out precisely what an exit strategy will entail for both a school and the LEA (autumn);
- enable headteachers, chairs of governors and senior managers to share strategies and activities which successfully remove a school from concern (autumn);
- enable headteachers to inform the LEA's strategic and operational activities in this area (autumn).

COMPARE

Summary of evidence available

" Evidence of the pattern of service delivery in other authorities is drawn from an examination of their EDPs. Patterns and structures (eg the existence of school task groups and County steering groups) appear broadly similar. However, the collection of evidence in this way has been ad hoc and limited.

" This Authority has not systematically gathered evidence of performance of other authorities (structure, processes, costs). Four local councils have been given Beacon status for helping to raise standards by tackling school failure. They are North Tyneside, the London Borough of Camden, Suffolk and Blackburn with Darwen.

" In June 2000 each of the 91 Local Education Authorities to be so far inspected were provided with detailed statistical data based upon 45 different functions or performance indicators with each graded 1 (very good) to 7 (very poor – fails to provide effective support to schools). Gradings for Authorities are not in the public domain to enable identification of those who performed better than Oxfordshire.

" The strategy for working with schools of concern is part of the overall "school improvement strategy" in Oxfordshire. Oxfordshire's overall school improvement strategy was graded 2.5 (2=good, 3=satisfactory, few areas of major weakness). This was ranked as 4th best out of the 91 Authorities.

" The grade for "school improvement support" (the implementation of the strategy) was 3 and placed Oxfordshire in the top 25% of Authorities. School improvement support contains 16 factors of which working with schools of concern is graded 4 (satisfactory, strengths outweigh weaknesses) which compares with the Shire Authority Average grade of 4 and the National Average Grade of 4. Working with schools of concern therefore received an average grade, together with three other factors which also received this lowest of the grades for Oxfordshire.

Conclusions reached
The most recent detailed comparative data of the performance of the service has been provided by the Ofsted Inspection of Oxfordshire and shows strengths in school improvement overall with the factor of work with schools of concern to be satisfactory where strengths outweigh weaknesses (in line with Shire and National performance). These are qualitative judgements.

However, comparative information and data as it relates to structure, processes and costs is less evident.

Areas for potential improvement

- Gather detailed information and data in a systematic way from those authorities known to be performing particularly well (Beacon Status) and those authorities described as our statistical neighbours, as well as other providers, on structure, processes and costs to inform and improve the restructured approach to this area of work (incorporated in the Best Value project specification).

- Evaluate, with the assistance of external consultants, the implementation of the strategy with a view to improving the Ofsted grading from 4 to 3 or 2.

CONSULT

Summary of evidence available

- The service users are headteachers, governors, teachers and other staff within the designated schools. The community of children, parents and carers is served by the school and the governing body is accountable to them for standards and quality. Schools are encouraged to consult with their communities regularly.

- In July in advance of the Ofsted inspection of Oxfordshire in November 1999 an Audit Commission questionnaire was circulated to 108 schools with a response rate of 83%. The response showed that the Authority’s support for schools of concern was regarded as satisfactory to good – 2.6 on a grading from 3 (satisfactory) to 2 (good). Of the 17 LEAs surveyed at the time the Oxfordshire score was close to the mean for all schools of the 17 LEAs surveyed.

- The combination of Ofsted inspection and the consultations on the post Ofsted action plan and revised EDP have provided feedback which has resulted in the restructuring of the service to support schools of concern for implementation from May 2000 onwards.

- Task groups are intended to feedback to the County Steering Group on policy and practice as perceived by schools. It could be said that this cannot provide systematic and independent evaluation.

Conclusions reached

- The Authority has consulted widely on the preparation of its EDP and its subsequent revision as well as on its post Ofsted action plan. Both documents describe the service for schools of concern which has been restructured for implementation from May 2000 onwards.

- There is a need for more focussed consultation specifically with those schools designated by Ofsted as requiring special measures or having serious weaknesses to enable more immediate feedback on the development of policy and practice together with the monitoring and evaluation of the Authority’s work.
There is a need for an independent evaluation of how schools view the success or otherwise of the Authority's work with them.

**Areas for potential improvement**

Establish a network and forum for headteachers of the designated schools to share good practice, develop policy and its implementation and through monitoring and evaluation to improve the Authority's overall performance in this area. Establish consultation with headteachers (incorporated in the Best Value project specification).

External consultants who bring the necessary objectivity should be retained to survey designated schools on the success or otherwise of the Authority's service to support schools of concern.

**COMPETE**

**Summary of evidence available**

External providers, in the form of educational consultants and mentors, have been used on occasions. Their use has been determined by the individual needs of schools and pressures on the overall service at particular points in time.

This Authority is currently part of a local consortium of Buckinghamshire LEA and Oxford Brookes University for purposes including the professional development of headteachers, teachers and other staff. There have been no direct discussions as to how members of this consortium might provide services to each other or combine their services to improve schools in special measures or with serious weaknesses.

A feature of schools in special measures or with serious weaknesses is the exit of staff prior to and/or after Ofsted inspection. Locally it is proving difficult to recruit replacement headteachers and teachers to posts in such schools – even when additional incentive allowances are offered. In recent years independent commercial teacher employment agencies have appeared in the market place with the intention of supplying teachers on a short or longer term basis. To secure a teacher from such an agency a fee has to be paid. For a term the securement fee to the agency is typically £1,500 in addition to the salary to the teacher.

This Authority has attempted to compete in this situation in a number of ways.

- Advisers and Advisory Teachers from the Authority's Advisory and Inspection Service have filled vacancies.

- Governing bodies of successful schools have on occasions been persuaded to release their headteachers to work in schools of concern.

- The DTI has fully funded a two year post of a Recruitment Strategy Manager to work 50/50 in Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire. The funding of the post ceases in April 2001.

- From September 2000 the Authority will employ three support primary headteachers and five support primary class teachers to work in schools of concern where there are unfilled vacancies. 80% of salary costs will be met from school budgets with remaining costs met from the designated DTI grant.

**Conclusions reached**
Effective use has been made of external providers, albeit in a relatively limited way to date.

Recruitment of headteachers and teachers to schools in special measures and with serious weakness is problematic and, on occasions, potentially expensive particularly when addressed through teacher employment agencies.

Areas for potential improvement

To investigate more thoroughly any cost/quality benefits to be gained from involving other providers either at current or increased levels. Other providers include local education authorities whose performance is better than Oxfordshire and who wish to market their services, as well as independent national educational consultants such as CfBT (Centre for British Teachers) (incorporated in the Best Value project specification).

- Develop further the Authority’s drive on the recruitment and retention of headteachers and teachers by maintaining the post or at least the work of the Recruitment Strategy Manager beyond April 2001 and linking it with further innovative initiatives in this area. This may entail strengthening the work of the local Consortium of Education Authorities and Higher Education in support of schools of concern and recruitment to them as well as developing closer operational links with teacher recruitment agencies.

PROJECT SPECIFICATION AND THE WORK OF THE REVIEW TEAM

In order to inform and bring about the necessary improvements in this service, which has recently been restructured in the light of the Ofsted inspection findings, the review team intends to undertake the following activities.

- Gather detailed information and data in a systematic way on structure, processes and costs of other Authorities and providers identified as performing well. This will involve an investigation of the cost/quality benefits to be gained from involving other Authorities or providers who wish to market their services in this area. Other Authorities to be approached include North Tyneside, Camden, Suffolk and Blackburn with Darwen (Beacon Status Authorities) and Norfolk (also undertaking a Best Value Review of this work). Other providers to be approached include CfBT (independent educational consultants).

- Consult in a systematic and structured way with the headteachers of schools in special measures or with serious weaknesses on the effectiveness of the restructured approach to support. The outcomes of this consultation to directly influence the direction of the service. The consultation to take place in September.

These activities and their reported outcomes are intended to address the areas for potential improvement identified under the headings of challenge, compare, consult and compete.
Best Value Review
Review Specification
Project structure/organisation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service area</th>
<th>Personnel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proposed review</td>
<td>Start April 2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>timetable</td>
<td>Complete by 31 March 2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review Leader</td>
<td>Sue Corrigan, County Personnel Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(service)</td>
<td>Catherine Atherstone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPRU Lead Officer</td>
<td>Richard Ayres, Human Resources Manager, Buckinghamshire County Council.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent team</td>
<td>Richard Ayres, Human Resources Manager, Buckinghamshire County Council.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>member</td>
<td>Richard Ayres, Human Resources Manager, Buckinghamshire County Council.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposed core team</td>
<td>Yvonne McDonald, Assistant County Librarian, Cultural Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>membership</td>
<td>Evelyn Kaluza, Risk Manager, County Treasurers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sheila Parry, Assistant Financial Manager, County Treasurers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mark Fysh, Unison Branch Secretary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Val Farmer, Personnel and Training Manager, Environmental Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vicky Field, Personnel Manager, Social Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lizanne Ryder, Personnel Officer, PPRU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Designated Member</td>
<td>Cllr Margaret Godden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposed review</td>
<td>Target dates:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>milestones</td>
<td>■ Finalise Project Spec. (Form BV2) 30 August 2000</td>
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<td></td>
<td>■ Complete service improvement options (Form BV3) 17 November 2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>■ Develop action plan (Form BV4) 19 December 2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROJECT SCALE &amp; SCOPE FOR CHANGE</td>
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1. **What is the size of the service? Give details of**
   - **Budget size**: The personnel service serves the whole of the County Council which has a staffing complement of approximately 16,200 (11,350 FTE) and an annual paybill of £276,240 million.
   - **Staffing complement**: In terms of the budget for the personnel service, the County Treasurer is unable to identify expenditure on personnel from among general administrative support budgets.
However, through the recent Saratoga consultation exercise, detailed information has been gathered on employee time, salaries and on-costs. This shows that there are 79 employees (66.5 full time equivalents) working on personnel related activities. Although this is a relatively rough guide, as it was designed for benchmarking purposes and includes only staff who spend over 50% of their time on personnel related activities, it provides fairly good data on the major aspect of Personnel expenditure.

Based in part on this information, the budget for Personnel services is broken down as follows:

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<th>£</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff costs</td>
<td>1,564,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSL contract (pay roll, pensions etc.)</td>
<td>1,400,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proof Positive contract (advertising)</td>
<td>800,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Occupational Health physicians contract</td>
<td>15,600</td>
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<tr>
<td>Counsellors contracts</td>
<td>8,800</td>
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<tr>
<td>Management development (outsourced training)</td>
<td>229,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Departmental training budgets</td>
<td>1,036,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>£5,055,000</strong></td>
</tr>
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2. **To what extent is the service mandatory or discretionary?**

There is no mandatory requirement to have a personnel service, although there are legal requirements placed upon the Council as an employer which are currently fulfilled by Personnel.

Personnel policies and procedures provide a well developed universal framework for the management of employees. They lay down qualitative standards and processes which develop, guide and control the managerial culture of Oxfordshire County Council and which are seen across the board as fair and workable.

3. **How critical is the service? (e.g. state the potential implications if it was not provided at all)**

If the service ceased to exist there would be an impact on managers and non-personnel staff who would have to take on the statutory and discretionary requirements of the Council as an employer on top of their operational roles. The ‘corporate employer’ role, e.g. completing government returns, actioning pay awards, would have to be handled by other non-personnel staff. These moves would be likely to lead to a need for increased numbers of managers/administrative officers. The mechanism of arbitration provided by the Personnel function would be removed. The development of new systems would have to cease or be fulfilled through the use of consultants. In addition, the coordination of the Personnel function would either cease, or be undertaken by non-personnel staff, with the increased likelihood of lack of consistency in approach across the Council.

In general, if the service was not provided this would be likely to lead to:
- loss of control and expertise resulting in inefficiency – including higher absence rates and unregulated pay systems
- lower standards of staff performance due to poor recruitment, training and performance management
- worsened industrial relations – including disputes and strikes and increased numbers of referrals to Employment Tribunals
- lowered standards of health and safety – including higher accident rates and claims against the Council.

Oxfordshire’s expenditure on Personnel is below the average for the 14 County Councils who have completed the Saratoga exercise, being on the 43rd percentile. Any further reductions would amplify this situation.

As discussed above, the processes, policies and procedures in Personnel are focussed on adding value to the Council’s functions by improving efficiency and effectiveness. Reduction in standards would, therefore, impact on service delivery.
Certain personnel functions do not require qualified professional input, and might benefit from streamlining and a more ‘single-purpose’ approach. This might be provided by a dedicated external agency. An example of this is the initial handling of job applications which can be dealt with on a call-centre basis.

Other parts of the service – such as industrial relations – are likely to be less amenable to provision by external agencies. Within Oxfordshire, Personnel has been central in the development of a constructive employee relations culture and to the development of organisational values which promote the current harmonious relations. This is promoted by an in-depth understanding and knowledge of management culture and relationships built on trust. However, some Councils have taken a different view. For example, Lincolnshire have recently outsourced all of their support services to a major consultancy and Bedfordshire are planning to do the same. It is too soon to tell how well these new arrangements will perform.

The costs of the Personnel functions in councils are not published, so it is not possible to compare these against different structures.

The information from the Saratoga exercise gives broad comparative data on the costs of different activities. This indicates that overall personnel costs in Oxfordshire are lower than average (43rd percentile) compared to the other 14 County Councils who have completed the exercise. There is no published information available on how costs relate to structure. However, looking at individual activity costs per employee in Oxfordshire, health and safety is in the top quartile, whereas, costs for pay and benefits, employee relations/communication, and the computerised personnel information system are in the lowest quartile.

The way that Personnel Management is integrated into management structures varies substantially from one council to another. The extremes of this range from full devolution of personnel activities to line managers who have access to advice via a call centre, as in Hampshire, to total centralisation of all personnel activities as in West Sussex and Buckinghamshire. Alternatively, as mentioned above, Lincolnshire has out-sourced many of their support functions, including personnel, to a consultancy. We are not aware of any County Councils where personnel has been out-sourced on its own.

Day to day personnel management in Oxfordshire is highly devolved to departmental personnel officers with only a relatively small number of professional staff at the centre who focus mainly on corporate issues, policy and advice. This is in keeping with the Council’s overall policy of devolution of support services to service departments.

There is considerable scope for change in the way the Personnel function is undertaken. The system of decision making and devolution of personnel activities is a matter of organisational culture and management style.

Support services such as Finance and Personnel within Oxfordshire are currently substantially devolved to Service Departments in accordance with the Council’s ethos of delegation, although they are managed through a corporate framework. This enables Chief Officers to develop the departmental structures and service levels which they feel best suit their operational requirements. This could be replaced with a system of greater devolution to line managers or a system which re-centralised the personnel function in Chief Executive’s Office.

Personnel is a support service which exists to ensure the Council benefits from efficient and effective management of its employees. In most cases the effectiveness of the specific contribution of personnel management cannot be measured easily because the apparent outputs of the service are influenced by other factors. For example, sickness rates are affected by line
success criteria that are used)?

management and the type of service, turnover rates are affected by the local job market. However, there are qualitative aims as well as performance indicators which give some information on the effectiveness of personnel.

The Council's Employment Policy defines the aim of Personnel Management as follows:

1. Recruit, deploy, develop and retain employees who have the skill, abilities and commitment to provide good quality, effective and efficient services for the people of Oxfordshire.
2. Provide systems of employment, management and consultation which support and promote these objectives.
3. Fulfil the Council's responsibilities for preserving and advancing positive and productive working relations by treating employees fairly and with respect for their individual needs and health and safety.
4. Communicate to the employees the Council's expectation that they will treat their work colleagues and clients in a similar respectful and caring manner.

The Best Value Indicators stipulated by the Government for Personnel are:

- Percentage of senior posts filled by women
- Proportion of days lost through sickness absence
- Voluntary leavers as a percentage of staff in post
- Early retirements and ill health retirements as a percentage of staff in post
- Number of staff declaring that they meet the DDA disability definition as a percentage of the total workforce

In addition there are 'in-house' performance indicators which have been monitored by Personnel Sub-Committee over the past seven years. These overlap with the BVPIs above, but also include the following:

- Applicants for posts
- Information on gender and ethnic minorities in the workforce
- Services gaining IIP status
- Days training provided per employee
- Expenditure on training as a percentage of paybill
- Accident statistics
- Numbers of appeals to members and Employment Tribunals
- Days lost through industrial action

It is difficult to measure some of the key factors, such as good industrial relations or employee morale, in which personnel have a major input, working closely with managers.

Although the Government does not require the publication of data on the BVPIs until the end of this financial year, Oxfordshire has been collecting and publishing broadly comparable information for a number of years. Information available on these and the 'in-house' PIs is given below.

- In 1998-9 28% of employees on Senior Management Grade or above were women rising to 37% in 1999-00
- The proportion of employees from ethnic minorities in the workforce rose from 3% in 1998-99, to 5.5% in 1999-00.
- Sickness absence rate for 1998-99 was 9.56 days or 4.19%, falling in 1999-00 to 8.85 days or 3.88%
- 1998-99 overall turnover rate was 14% rising slightly to 15% in 1999-00
- Efficiency and redundancy retirements in 1998-99 totaled 40 ie 30% of all retirements and in 1999-00 this fell to 15 ie 9% of all retirements. Ill health retirements for 1998-99 totaled 55 or 41% of all retirements, and in 1999-00 they totaled 54 or 32%
- Numbers of employees who meet DDA disability definition is not available.
The average number of applicants per post fell from 10 in 1998-99 to 6 in 1999-00.
- Services with IIP status rose from 3 (plus 15 schools) in 1998-99, to 5 (plus 36 schools) in 1999-00.
- Average training days per employee rose from 1.87 in 1998-99, to 2.48 in 1999-00.
- Training expenditure as a percentage of pay bill rose from 1.4% in 1998-99, to 1.5% in 1999-00.
- Major accidents stayed static at 15 and minor accidents fell from 1,664 in 1998-99, to 1,538 in 1999-00.
- Number of referrals to Employment Tribunals was 2 cases in 1999/00 (1 in 1998-99) with 3 grievance appeals to members (1 in 1998-99).
- Days lost through industrial action remained at nil over the last 2 years

8. How does this level of success or performance compare with other authorities (what comparative evidence is there)?

The following information is available.
- 1998-99 average sickness absence rate from the Employers' Organisation was 4.3% for all local authorities, and 5.1% for Counties, Mets, London Boroughs and Unitaries. Average from CBI for all employers in 1998-99 was 3.7%. Oxfordshire compares favourably to these rates.
- 1998-99 Audit Commission data shows that the average percentage of retirements due to efficiency and redundancy was two thirds or 66%. Oxfordshire's rate is now significantly below this.
- 1998-99 Audit Commission data for ill health retirements shows the national average percentage of retirements due to ill health was 37%.

9. In what areas is the OCC service successful or strong?

- Personnel provides an independent, 'off-line' service to both managers and employees which is valued by both sides.
- The personnel function is constantly reviewing its operation and identifying areas which require improvements. For example, the piloting of a call-centre approach to handling recruitment enquiries in Social Services.
- The strength of employee relations within the Council can be gauged from the successful implementation of substantial budget cuts over a number of years which have affected jobs and terms and conditions. These have been accomplished in a spirit of cooperation, without disputes.
- The Council’s sickness management procedure has been included in the Industrial Society's Best Practice guide and its family friendly policies have won 2 national awards.

Of all the personnel activities surveyed in the Saratoga exercise the feedback indicates that managers are most satisfied with recruitment.

10. In what areas is the OCC service in need of improvement?

- It is very difficult to set measurable targets for an integrated support service such as Personnel. More work needs to be done on this.
- The need for a new computer personnel information system has been identified and was reinforced by the very low scores given to the current system by managers in the Saratoga exercise. The replacement of this system is a major project which is currently linked to moves to replace a number of corporate computerised systems. This is a crucial area which requires commitment in order for the Council to fulfill its reporting obligations to central government and to develop modern management information systems.
- Current systems of delegation of decision making cause confusion and frustration to some managers and need to be reviewed.
- Current grading systems are open to equal pay challenges and are the source of frustration to managers and employees.
- The management of poor employee performance requires further development.
- Communication with employees and managers has been identified as requiring further development and this was reinforced by the results of the Employee Survey.

11. What were the conclusions from the most recent consultation exercise? This should show:
Not applicable.

The Employee Survey carried out last year indicated that 74% of employees were satisfied with their jobs, 76% were satisfied with OCC as an employer and only 7% compared the Council unfavorably to other employers.

Employee Survey results show that employees were most dissatisfied with communications and ‘poor management’. Action plans have been adopted and are being implemented to address these areas of dissatisfaction.

The Saratoga consultation exercise results show that managers are most satisfied with the recruiting process, pay and benefits, employee relations and health and safety.

This feedback also shows that managers are most dissatisfied with the computerised personnel information system, Organisational Development, redeployment, training and development and the speed of recruitment. An action plan has been drafted which will feed into this review.

Numerous comments have been made at Chief Executive’s informal consultation fora and training courses that indicate managers’ frustration with current systems of delegation of decision-making and the speed of recruitment processes.

Many aspects of personnel work are affected by external factors, such as the labour market, the budget situation and employment legislation.

**Proposed focus of the Best Value review**

**13. Proposed key service areas**

- **Structural/Strategic Issues.**
  - Structure of Personnel and system of delegation of decision-making
  - Proportionally high resource areas i.e. training / management development and recruitment
  - Grading structures and systems
  - Employee communications systems
  - Developing measurable targets and objectives by which to monitor personnel performance

- **Operational Issues**
  - Streamlining recruitment, including possible outsourcing of job applications handling
  - Redeployment processes
  - Management of poor performance

There will be a need for a sub-group to focus on training and development.

**14. Any other comments (e.g. any anticipated need for external consultancy input)**

There will be a need for a sub-group to focus on training and development.

**Date approved by Best Value & Audit Sub-Committee and relevant Chief Officer**

**BVASC**

**Chief Officer**

14 August 2000
BV2 FORMS – CARE MANAGEMENT AND COMMISSIONING PHYSICAL DISABILITY

Best Value Review
Review Specification

Project structure/organisation

Service area: Care Management and Commissioning Physical Disability

Proposed review timetable:
- Start - July 2000
- Complete by February 2001

Review Leader (service): Alan Sinclair – Head of Service

PPRU Lead Officer: David Lines

Independent team members:
- Carolyne McKinlay – Oxfordshire Health Authority
- Janet Mace – Oxfordshire Council of Disabled People
- Pip Giaretta – Chair Oxford and District Multiple Sclerosis Society
- Dr David Giaretta

Proposed core team membership:
- Robyn Noonan – Acting Service Manager
- Jon Wilcox – Finance Social Services

Designated Member: Cllr Olive Stedman

Proposed Milestones:
- Finalise Project Spec. (Form BV2) – 8th August
- BV Audit sub-committee – 30th August.
- Complete service improvement options (Form BV3) – 30th November.
- Develop action plan (Form BV4) – 20th December.
- Target Best Value and Audit Sub Committee meeting. – 21st February 2001
- Target Social Services Committee meeting – 6th March 2001

PROJECT SCALE & SCOPE FOR CHANGE

1. What is the size of the service? Give details of:
   - Budget size
   - Staffing complement

   The service comprises the assessment of physically disabled people, developing a care plan to meet individual needs, organising and purchasing the provision of services to meet those needs.

   Assessment and the development of a care plan is an internal activity, the majority of provision is delivered by external organisations.

   Currently the County Council supports around 600 people in this way.

   The available budget for this Service is £5.3m. This is broken down as follows:

   Staffing - £560,000.
Supporting people at home - £2.6m
Residential / Nursing Care - £1.1m
Funds transferred from OHA (Section 28a) - £1m (in respect of joint initiatives)

The staffing complement equates to 22 FTEs.

2. To what extent is the service mandatory or discretionary? Please list statutory references and/or relevant OCC policy statements

There is a statutory duty to assess the needs of those who apply for an assessment and ensure these needs are met. These duties flow from:

- National Assistance Act 1948
- NHS and Community Care Act 1990
- Carers (Recognition and Services) Act 1995
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995

The authority has discretion to determine the eligibility criteria for those seeking an assessment and for the circumstances where needs have to be addressed.

Discretion also exists in the method of service delivery, the specific services relating to Direct Payments and Joint Working with health services. This discretion is authorised by:

- Social Services Committee.
- Community Care (Direct Payments) Act 1996.

- Physical Disability Strategy and Service (partnership arrangement between Health and Social Services)
- Health Improvement Programme – promoting independence.

3. How critical is the service? (e.g. state the potential implications if it was not provided at all, it was provided to a lower standard or quantity, if some other organisation provided it on our behalf)

If the service was not provided then OCC would be in breach of its statutory duties of assessment, identifying needs and meeting those needs. The service objectives of supporting people to live independently would not be achieved.

In practical terms there would be a profound impact on the daily lives of disabled people as essential personal care was withdrawn. Outcomes include increased risks, social exclusion, isolation, family and carer breakdown.

In turn this could lead in many cases to deteriorating levels of health, creating an additional impact on the NHS.

If the service was provided to a lower quality or quantity, OCC may meet its statutory obligations but would be less likely to achieve the service objectives and SSI standards.

The impact on the daily lives of disabled people would be as indicated above, creating additional pressures on the NHS and have a negative effect on the drive to encourage a greater degree of partnership working.
If an external organisation provided the service, OCC's role would change to one of monitoring the entire process from assessment to the services provided, to ensure its statutory obligations were being met.

Whether this would result in budget savings needs to be investigated but expenditure would shift from 'in-house' to external providers. There would be the associated costs and issues of redundancy.

There are no details regarding the approaches adopted by other authorities, in terms of structure, objectives, discretion, specification or delivery.

There is anecdotal evidence which suggests that Local Authorities have different structures and eligibility criteria in place to meet their legal responsibilities under the NHS and Community Care Act 1990.

As the service is dictated by statute there is little scope for changing the numbers of people to whom it is delivered.

There is considerable scope for changing eligibility criteria in terms of both assessment and the circumstances in which a service is provided.

There is considerable scope for changing the method of delivery and the objectives written into the Disabilities Team Plan.

4. Is the service provided differently/to a different level by higher performing/lower cost authorities?

Give details of possible different structures, different eligibility criteria, alternative processes etc. as used by higher performing/lower cost authorities.

5. What is the scope for changing the nature (quality, quantity, service provider, method used) of the service?

As the service is dictated by statute there is little scope for changing the numbers of people to whom it is delivered.

There is considerable scope for changing eligibility criteria in terms of both assessment and the circumstances in which a service is provided.

There is considerable scope for changing the method of delivery and the objectives written into the Disabilities Team Plan.

CURRENT SERVICE CONDITION (taken from Form BV1)

6. What is the outcome that the service is trying to achieve (please list the service objectives or key performance measures/success criteria that are used)?

Oxfordshire Plan – 2000/01 – 2004/05

The Social Services department aim is to - 'promote independence by providing support within the community'.

The Social Services Medium Term Plan Objectives:-

Promoting independence by rehabilitation, prevention and maximising opportunities.

Physical Disability Team – Overall objective (team plan Jan 2000):-

The aim of the service is to work with individuals, families, groups and communities to maximise independence, minimise dependency on services and intervene when appropriate. The service will work with physically disabled people and their carers to live independently in the community, offering as much control over service delivery as possible.

SSI – Standards and Criteria:-

Independent Living Arrangements for younger disabled.

Outcomes:-
The service fulfills these duties by:

Seeking to ensure that every individual who applies for an assessment receives one and in appropriate cases develops a care plan to meet the needs of that individual.

Creating solutions, which address wherever possible, those needs within the community, allowing the individual to live at home, have personal control over the acquisition of services and lead to an increase in social inclusion.

Delivering services in conjunction with a range of external organisations, providing a 'seamless' service.

In a few, appropriate cases, support is given by the in-house team.

Monitoring the effectiveness of care plans to fulfill those needs by annual reviews with recipients.

7. How efficient/successful is the service at achieving this desired outcome (list evidence or performance against these success criteria which show this)?

There is no formal process to measure performance against the desired outcomes.

The SSI inspection of 1999 reported favorable outcomes against standards and criteria.

Currently the service is supporting approximately 600 people throughout the county. 500 of these live at home and 10% receive Direct Payments (0 in March 1998 to 49 in July 2000).

8. How does this level of success or performance compare with other authorities (what comparative evidence is there)?

For the PAF indicators listed the position is:-

(Comparing year on year may be difficult as the criteria have changed in some cases. Comparators between authorities are not yet available for 99/00.)

B16– (Unit cost of residential and nursing care for people with physical disabilities.)

OCC spend in 98/99 was £280 per week.

County average was £419, the lower quartile was £372.

OCC spend in 99/00 was £257.

OCC target is £300 by 2005.

(DOH guidance suggests this figure should be mid-range)

C29– (People with physical disabilities helped to live at home)

OCC helped 1.5 people in 98/99 with physical disabilities per 1000 of the population aged 18-65 to live at home.

County average was 1.8, top quartile was 2.3.

OCC helped 3.5 people in 99/00

OCC target is 1.7 by 2001.

L2a (Number of adults under 65 with physical disabilities helped to live at home)

OCC helped 1.62 people in 98/99 per 1000 of population
County Average is 1.88

OCC helped 3.5 people in 99/00

L5b (Number of adults under 65 with physical disabilities whom the local authority supports in residential care)

OCC helped 0.25 people in 98/99 per 1000 of population –

County average is .25

OCC helped .30 people in 99/00

L14a (Spend on people with physical disabilities)

OCC spent £9.22 in 98/99 per head of population.

County Average £11.52

Figures for 99/00 are unavailable at time of this report.

9. In what areas is the OCC service successful or strong?

Against the standards and criteria set by the SSI the conclusion was that the division had a number of strengths. These are:-

- Having a Direct Payments scheme.
- Having a multi-agency Physical Disability Strategy
- Overall vision of services, which facilitate independent living – led by the needs of service users.
- Divisional Structure, which gives a firm basis for providing services to promote independent living.
  - Staff have clear commitment to working with others.
  - Systematic approach to assessing, planning and reviews – good written procedures, practice guidelines and clear eligibility criteria.
  - Majority of assessments are needs led.

The service is perceived to have developed very effective working partnerships with external organisations.

Providing an independent information and advice service supporting people onto Direct Payments.

10. In what areas is the OCC service in need of improvement?

Against the standards and criteria set by the SSI the conclusion was that the division had some areas to develop. These are:-

- A need to establish clear protocols with a range of departments to sustain effective working across boundaries.
- Need for a clear corporate approach to service planning and development.
- Need for a clear commissioning strategy.
- Ongoing training for staff on independent living.
- Need to develop ‘tailor made’ services for individuals.
- Review the operation of the Direct Payments scheme.
- Ensure the complaint procedure is actively promoted.

(The action plan to address these issues has been completed.)

Performance Management techniques need to be developed to ensure:-

a) That statutory duties are fulfilled.

b) That the needs of those to whom a service has been provided, are met.
That there are systems to compare performance with targets, performance indicators, previous periods and other authorities.

No comparison has been undertaken with other authorities to determine what opportunities exist in different approaches (structure, discretion etc.) to both statutory duties and local objectives.

The application of discretion needs to be reviewed to ensure it is consistent with statutory duties, department objectives and budget constraints.

There is a need to ensure that the service focuses upon the right target group and that the eligibility criteria are appropriate.

11. What were the conclusions from the most recent consultation exercise? This should show:

- what taxpayers want from the service (what evidence is there)
- what service users/carers want from the service (what evidence is there)

Consultation is closely linked to specific projects, (e.g. service developments, to ensure users needs are fully understood) and to users of the service.

There is an annual 'Community Care User Survey'. As part of the SSI inspection in 1999, a user survey was undertaken.

These both record that service users find the quality of services as good.

There is no consultation 'plan' for the service, although there is considerable activity.

There is no public consultation on policy and strategy.

Some sources of feedback appear to be overlooked, e.g. complaints analysis.

The team concluded that with this type of service the prime target audiences for consultation were those receiving the service or supporting recipients of the service.

12. Any external factors to be taken account of?

There are a range of external factors which influence this area:

- Increasing expectations of service users.
- Outcomes from the Coughlan Judgement.
- Opportunities from implementation of the Health Act 99.
- Government review of charging schemes.
- Joint Investment Plan – Welfare to work for disabled people.
- Development of the Nuffield Trust Integrated Disability Centre.
- Primary Care Groups moving to Primary Care Trusts.
- Current projects under the 'Modernising Social Services Agenda, e.g. Community Brain Injury Services.
- PD Reference Group looking at improved user / carer consultation.

Proposed focus of the Best Value review

13. Proposed key service areas to focus on (i.e. areas)

The review will focus on the following key areas:
Strategy:-

The strategy will be reviewed to ensure it is consistent with the declared objectives, 'meeting the needs of physically disabled people by enabling them to live independently' and ensuring that the authority's statutory duties are fulfilled.

The review will evaluate the County Eligibility Criteria for assessment and service.

Structure:-

The way in which the service is currently structured will be reviewed to ensure it is established in the most appropriate manner to achieve its objectives, statutory duties and performance targets in the most effective and efficient way.

The review will consider whether advantages lie in significantly different approaches to service delivery.

Operational Management:-

How the service is managed will be reviewed to ensure:

It focuses upon and measures performance against objectives and targets.

That all statutory duties are fulfilled.

That resources are used in the most effective and efficient manner, in particular purchasing support at home and contracting for residential nursing care.

Consultation:-

We will evaluate the current approach to consultation to ensure we capture the views and opinions of service users, carers, working partners, voluntary organisations and other statutory bodies, in the most appropriate way.

Within this review, budget savings of £547,000 have to be achieved by March 2003.

Seeking ways to achieve these savings will be a key part of the review in each of the above areas.

14. Any other comments (e.g. any anticipated need for external consultancy input)

Date approved by Best Value & Audit Sub-Committee and relevant Chief Officer

BVASC

Chief Officer

9th August 2000
Best Value Review
Review Specification

Project structure/organisation

Service area: Transport Capital Programme Procurement

Proposed review timetable:
Start: April 2000
Complete by 21st February 2001

Review Leader (service): Peter Brown – Group Engineer (Bridges)

PPRU Lead Officer: David Lines

Independent team members:
- Mike Petty (County Treasurer's Dept)
- Mike Gibbard (Babtie)
- Another Independent Member (to be confirmed)
- Andy Nellist (Traffic Engineering)

Proposed core team membership:
- Dariusz Seroczynski (Major Roads and Integrated Transport Strategies)
- Geoff Hampson (Contract and Programme Monitoring)
- Roger O'Neil (Local Transport Plan)
- Kathy Willcox (Service Accountant – Environmental Services)
- Anne Bulleid (Best Value/Performance Management Officer – Environmental Services)

Designated Member: Cllr Julie Mayhew-Archer

Proposed review milestones:
- Finalise Project Spec. (Form BV2) 30 August 2000
- Complete service improvement options (Form BV3) 15 December 2000
- Develop action plan (Form BV4) 19 January 2001
- Target Best Value and Audit Sub Committee meeting: 21 February 2001
- Target Environmental Committee meeting 14 March 2001

PROJECT SCALE & SCOPE FOR CHANGE

1. What is the size of the service? Give details of

- Budget size

Transport Capital Programme Procurement (TCPM) activities take place within two divisions of Environmental Services, Transport Development and Highway Management. Transport Development implements the schemes and strategies put forward in the Local Transport Plan (LTP) and from the same source Highway Management capital expenditure is used to maintain principal roads and bridges.

In essence the programme develops the transport infrastructure by a mix of smaller improvements through to major initiatives such as the A40 bus lane and Oxford Transport Strategy.
The current structure is the result of a mini-restructuring that took place on 1st June 2000; previously the service was delivered by three divisions. However the Environmental Committee budget headings have not yet been changed to reflect the re-structuring. This review includes elements from the EN1, EN2, EN3 and an appropriate proportion of overheads from EN8.

The TCPP develops a programme of improvement projects, prioritised in accordance with strategies documented within the LTP and against the capital funds made available by central government. The LTP settlement for 2000/01 gives approval for OCC to borrow up to £11.052M to fund local transport capital schemes. The equivalent capital financing settlements for the last three years were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1997/98</td>
<td>£4.537M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998/99</td>
<td>£5.510M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999/2000</td>
<td>£6.464M</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are ambitious proposals for the years 2001/02 through to 2005/06. The LTP for 2001-2006 is the basis of a bid for £90M – an average spend of around £18M per year.

To deliver this programme TCPP has an overall revenue budget of £1.54M. This covers mainly employee costs and a proportion of the overall cost of management and support services such as central charges (e.g. office accommodation) and personnel etc. Support services are not part of this review. Consultants’ fees are recharged to the Capital Programme – in the last financial year £0.979M was recharged.

Further funding is available from contributions secured from developers to provide the necessary infrastructure for their new developments. The April 2000 Environmental Capital Programme includes £22M of developer funding for schemes included for 1999/2000 and future years. This money is normally ring-fenced for a particular development or town.

### Staffing complement

As structured currently, 36.5 FTEs (Full Time Equivalent Staff) are directly employed on this service. This does not include departmental support services (equivalent to 4 FTEs).

### 2. To what extent is the service mandatory or discretionary?

There are no statutory duties to provide new highways or improvements to existing highways. However, the service supports the "Transport Vision for Oxfordshire" which is set out on page 1 of the Local Transport Plan (LTP) agreed by Environmental Committee on 31 May 2000.

A key part of the service is to implement road safety initiatives and the Government has set tough improvement targets for this area.

### 3. How critical is the service? (e.g. state the potential implications if it was not provided at all)

If the service was not provided the key outcome would be the failure of the County Council to deliver the programme of improvements set out in the LTP. This would result in:-

- increased fatalities and injuries in road accidents;
- increased road congestion;
- deteriorating environment (air quality, noise);
- economic activity within the County would be adversely affected;
- improvement to the transport infrastructure for new and existing developments would not take place or be procured elsewhere;
- the objectives of the structure plan and other local plans will not be met;
- the public image of the council would be damaged.

### It was not provided to a lower standard or quantity

Scheme designs have to meet statutory standards and codes of practice. Therefore, it would not be permissible to provide the service to a lower standard. The only discretion that exists is to complete a smaller programme or simpler projects with less design input. The implications would then be the same as not providing the service.
Reducing the size of the programme would require the LTP targets and priorities to be reassessed.

Once funding has been secured through the LTP or from developers, current Council policy is to set the level of the work at the maximum availability of funding. The Provisional LTP settlement for 2000/01 is considerably larger than previous TPP (Transport Policy and Programme) settlements (as shown in paragraph 1). Therefore, our commitments for the next five years are higher than before. However, delivery of the work programme could be jeopardised through inability to provide additional resources proportional to the increase in funding.

The full implications are unknown, but there are examples of this approach elsewhere e.g. Berkshire and Somerset.

Other public organisations such as the Ministry of Defence and Highways Agency have outsourced the majority of the procurement procedure into the private sector.

4.Is the service provided differently / to a different level by higher performing / lower cost authorities?

There are no national performance indicators that relate directly to this service; therefore it is unclear which are the authorities that perform well.

The perception is that the service is provided differently in all local authorities, some operating within broadly the same structures, and others very differently.

Capital funding is secured in a similar manner in all authorities through the LTP and developer funding. Some authorities supplement this funding from revenue.

Funding of TCPP varies widely with some authorities recovering all staff and consultants costs from the capital budget. Others operate like Oxfordshire with some staff being funded from revenue.

Give details of possible different structures, different eligibility criteria, alternative processes etc. as used by higher performing/lower cost authorities.

We are aware of different structures but we do not have any details at present.

5.What is the scope for changing the nature (quality, quantity, service provider, method used) of the service?

Quality of what is provided is dictated by national standards and there is no scope for changing these locally.

There is considerable scope for changing the quantity of work undertaken as there are no statutory responsibilities relating to this service.

There is considerable scope in changing the way in which this service is provided ranging from an in-house service through increased use of existing consultants to complete outsourcing to external agencies.

There may be scope to make use of modern technology in order to deliver the service more efficiently.

CURRENT SERVICE CONDITION (taken from Form BV1)

6.What is the outcome that the service is trying to achieve (please list the service objectives or key performance measures/ success criteria that are used)?

The service aims to secure and provide a safe and efficient transport network, by introducing schemes for major new roads and improvements to existing ones, including integrated transport studies.

The Oxfordshire Local Transport Plan sets out the strategic service objectives. Within this framework the Environmental Services Best Value Performance and Service Plan 2000/01 gives:

A. Specific objectives for the function
   a) Maximise the use of funds for highway improvements
   b) Manage delivery of projects within budget and to agreed programmes.
   c) Establish partnership working with term consultant Babtie and term highway management contractor Isis Accord.
B. Objectives delivered jointly with other teams

- Make significant progress towards achieving the targets set out in the Local Transport Plan for reducing road casualties.
- Maximise investment in transport by the public and private sectors to meet the continuing demands for growth in Oxfordshire.
- Reduce traffic growth and establish more sustainable accessibility, with in the constraints of limited resources and the lack of direct influence in many cases.

These objectives are set and reviewed annually.

There are no BVPIs that relate directly to the service.

There are a number of BVPIs that relate indirectly including:

- BVPIs 96 and 97 on the condition of principal and non-principal roads.
- The new BVPI 99 on road safety.
- AC F1 pedestrian crossings with facilities for the disabled.

The service is expected to meet a number of minimum design standards which are laid down in different legislation and national policy guidelines.

7. How efficient/successful is the service at achieving this desired outcome (list evidence or performance against these success criteria which show this)?

There is no formal process to monitor performance at several levels:

- There appears to be inadequate monitoring of the overall objective that seeks to utilise all of the funds available for improvements.
- Project management is poor with inadequate reporting and monitoring of cost and time. This area is perceived as a major weakness.

Performance against BVPI 96 (the % of principal roads in poor condition) was 14% for 1998/99 which is the same as the top quartile of other local authorities.

Performance against AC PI F1 (% of crossings with facilities for the disabled) was 71% in 1998/99, while the top quartile for other authorities was 79%.

The other BVPIs are new indicators and there is no data available.

8. How does this level of success or performance compare with other authorities (what comparative evidence is there)?

At present we do not have any comparisons on performance and this is an area that we will investigate further.

9. In what areas is the OCC service successful or strong?

- Consultation on individual schemes goes beyond the statutory minimum requirement.
- Principal Road Structural Maintenance is recognized to be good.
- Bridge strengthening and maintenance is innovative and the County is recognised as a centre of excellence in the use of new methods.
- Many of the chosen solutions are technically innovative.
- There are good working partnerships with our retained Consultant and Contractor. Represented on the LGA task force on 'rethinking construction' and are bidding to be a demonstration project.

10. In what areas is the OCC service in need of improvement?

- The current method of delivering the service cannot cope with increasing budgets. There is scope for putting more work out to the term consultant or other consultants, achieving an improvement in service delivery through partnering arrangements with our term consultant and contractor.
- Forward planning and project management are weaknesses. The criteria for
prioritising schemes are poor. There is considerable scope for improving capital programme management.

- This is a need to introduce formal processes to ensure compliance with the CDM Regulations.

The approval process, through Environmental Committee and its sub-committees can delay implementation of schemes.

11. What were the conclusions from the most recent consultation exercise?

Relevant points from the latest MORI survey are:

- 26% dissatisfied with OCC because of traffic management/congestion problems (highest reason for dissatisfaction)
- 21% dissatisfied with OCC because of the condition of roads and pavements (3rd highest reason)
- 3% dissatisfied with OCC due to road safety aspects.

The Local Transport Plan Oxfordshire Forum has been consulted during the preparation of the Local Transport Plan, and its views are reflected in the Plan's objectives and proposals.

11. What taxpayers want from the service (what evidence is there)

A MORI poll carried out in April 2000 on the Oxfordshire Transport Plan provides additional feedback. When asked 'How, if at all, could transport be improved in Oxfordshire' the following responses were given:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Buses</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traffic</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roads</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trains</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedestrianisation</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schemes</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyclists</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pollution</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11. What service users/carers want from the service (what evidence is there)

This service cuts across the majority of the categories listed in the above table with Transport capital being used to fund the desired improvements.

12. Any external factors to be taken account of?

- Historically the Government settlement on the LTP has been less than the bid. Improving transport is a high priority for the Government. We confidently expect to see a significant proportion of the LTP bid to be supported over the next five years.
- Development proposals within the County and the amount of developer contributions secured.
- Demographic changes, leading to increased pressure on the transport infrastructure.
- Government's expectations of "Re-thinking Construction" which will impact on all areas of this service.
- Changes to national design standards and codes of practice resulting in changes to current design procedures.
- The impact of national transport policies and developments in adjacent authorities
- Implications of the current Local Government Act.

Proposed focus of the Best Value review

13. Proposed key service areas to focus on (i.e. areas where options for service improvement might exist)

The capital programme for which the service is responsible for delivering is within an area being promoted by national government. The scale of the increases envisaged is identified is section 1 of this form. The outcomes of this review will have to ensure that the department is able to deliver a significantly larger programme to time and to budget.
For all of the options below we will be looking at how other authorities and organisations work and perform.

**STRUCTURE:**

We are aware that other authorities deliver the service in different ways. The advantages and disadvantages will be explored.

There is potential for a different use of the existing structure e.g. more or less use of consultants, different working arrangements between the client, consultants and contractor. The advantages and disadvantages will be explored.

**OPERATIONAL MANAGEMENT:**

**Performance management** – there is no formal process to compare the service outcomes with objectives on a regular basis. We will be reviewing the existing approach to performance management.

**Forward planning and programme management** performance is poor. We will be examining current practices to identify weaknesses in the control of in-house and external resources. We will also review Committee involvement in scheme prioritisation and how this might be streamlined to speed up the process.

**Project management** disciplines are not being followed. We will identify the reasons and recommend procedures that ensure that schemes of appropriate quality are delivered on time and to cost.

**CONSULTATION:**

**Examination of the current processes for consultation,** to improve efficiency and effectiveness. This will involve benchmarking with other providers to compare consultation processes, and a review of consultation techniques used by the service.

Involvement of Babtie and Isis Accord within working parties.

Any other comments (e.g. any anticipated need for external consultancy input)
Best Value Review
Review Specification
Project structure/organisation

Service area          Early Years Education and Childcare

Proposed review

   timetable
Start June 2000
Complete by January 2001

Review Leaders

Rick Harmes, Principal Education Officer
Mike Simm, Strategic Commissioning Officer, Social Services

PPRU Lead Officer

Mark Ginsburg, Best Value Officer

Independent team
members

Hilary Simpson, Head of Organisational Development in the Personnel, Policy and
Review Unit, Chief Executive’s Department. (Until recently national Chairperson of
Parents at Work.)

Georgina Glenny, Director of Studies, Department of Continuing Professional
Development, Oxford Brookes University, (lecturer in Early Childhood Development)

Team membership

Lorna Baxter, Financial Manager, Education

Annie Davy, Early Years Officer, Education

Julie Fisher, Early Years Adviser, Education

David Illingworth, Policy Analyst, Treasurer's

Amanda Powell, Childcare Development Manager, Social Services

Other persons associated
with the review

Caro Fickling, Senior Manager, Oxfordshire Health Visitor Service

Louise Goll, Principal Educational Psychologist

Roger Morgan, Chief Inspector, Social Services

Rosemary Peacocke, Chair, Oxfordshire Early Years Development and Childcare
Partnership

Designated Member

Councillor Dermot Roaf

Proposed review

milestones

- Finalise Project Spec. (Form BV2) - August 2000
- Complete service improvement options (Form BV3) - 30 October 2000
- Develop action plan (Form BV4) – 30 November 2000
- Target Best Value and Audit Sub Committee meetings:
  - 30 August, 2000
  - 8 January, 2001
- Target Children and Young Persons’ Sub Committee meeting:
  - 20 January, 2001

PROJECT SCALE & SCOPE FOR CHANGE

4. What is the size of the
   service? Give details of

   Budget size (2000/2001):

   - Education £12.24 m
   - Social Services £1.67 m*
Staffing complement

| Staffing complement | Total                      | £13.91 m |

Staffing complement (centrally employed staff only): 21.0 fte

* excludes expenditure on registration and inspection of childcare services for under eights

5. To what extent is the service mandatory or discretionary?

Please list statutory references and/or relevant OCC policy statements

a 7 out of 13 service activities are statutory duties:

- Drawing up early years development and childcare plan
  (School Standards and Framework Act (SSFA) 1998, Sections 120/121)
- Servicing the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership
  (SSFA 1998, Section 119)
- Registering and Inspecting Childcare settings
  (Children Act (CA) 1989, Sections 71-77)
- Providing advice and support for childcare development, including training
  (CA 1989, Section 18).
- Managing and securing family support provision through family centres and other services
  (Children Act 1989, Section 18)
- Paying national early years grant to non-LEA early years providers.
  (Nursery Education and Grant Maintained Schools Act (NEGMA) 1996,
  Section 1-3)
- Providing information to parents about early education and childcare
  (NEGMA 1996, Section 3)

b 4 out of 13 service activities are a mixture of statutory duties and powers:

- Managing and supporting early years educational provision in the LEA maintained sectors.
  (Education Act (EA) 1996, Sections 16 and 17)
- Securing nursery education through private and voluntary sector early years providers.
  (SSFA 1998, Section 118)
- Supporting children with special educational needs in early years and childcare settings
  (SSFA 1998, Section 123)
- Monitoring, evaluating and promoting the quality of early years educational provision across all sectors.
  (SSFA 1998, Section 5)

c Two of the 13 service activities are statutory powers:

- Providing early years educational provision in nursery schools and classes and in primary reception classes.
  (EA 1996, Section 16 and 17)
- Providing financial assistance to young children in need and their families.
  (CA 1989, Section 17)

3. How critical is the service? (e.g. state the potential implications if)

- it was not provided at all
- it was provided to a lower standard or quantity
- if some other

The service is very critical. It is a key part of the government’s current strategy for regenerating communities and supporting families (which includes getting people back into work) and for raising pupil achievement in schools.

If it was not provided at all, the County Council would either be failing in its statutory duty (in 7 out of 13 activities) or open to serious legal challenge for not exercising its statutory powers. Children, families and providers would not be receiving the services to which they are entitled in law.

If the service was provided to a lower standard or quantity, (e.g. higher staffing
If some other organisation provided particular parts of the service on the County Councils behalf, there is a possibility of market failure, particularly where there are few suitable organisations available to run a particular service effectively. This could have an adverse impact on users of the service. However, within the early years and childcare sector, there are already quite a number of examples of other organisations running services successfully on the County Council's behalf.

We know that in an increasing number of Authorities (e.g. Hampshire, Surrey, Milton Keynes), all Early Years Education and Childcare provision is being managed within a single organisational unit that spans Education and Social Services. This is something that we want to explore seriously as part of the Review.

Although, there is a strong mixed economy of early years provision on the ground in Oxfordshire, there may be scope for changing the current balance of provision in favour of either the statutory, the voluntary or the private sector. This will be explored as part of the Review.

Finally, given the experience of other Local Authorities, we believe that there is scope for combining the service within one integrated management structure. This would enable a more coherent service to be provided to parents, to establishments and to the general public (currently they often have to deal with two separate departments). It would also allow services in the field to be developed in a more integrated way (e.g. early childhood and family centres with one single set of pay rates and conditions of service for staff).

CURRENT SERVICE CONDITION (taken from Form BV1)

6. What is the outcome that the service is trying to achieve (please list the service objectives or key performance measures/success criteria that are used)?

The two overall aims of the service are:

- To ensure the provision of sufficient, high-quality early years education and childcare within the County, working in partnership with all relevant agencies and sectors.

- To reduce child poverty and to support children in need through early intervention and the provision of early years education and childcare services.

With these overall aims, two key County Council/Partnership objectives are:

- To increase the number of funded early education places for three year olds in the County from 12% in 1999/2000 to 13.3% in 2000/2001.
To increase the net number of new childcare places for children aged 0-14 in the County by a further 1280 (10.6%) in 2000/2001.

In addition – The County's EarlyYears Development Plan contains a total of 86 individual objectives for 2000/2001 covering the following:

- Partnership development
- Communication and consultation
- Early years education
- Childcare
- Quality
- Recruitment and training
- Information
- Funding
- Special needs
- Integration of early education, childcare and family support.

7. How effective/successful is the service at achieving this desired outcome (list evidence or performance against these success criteria which show this)?

As far as funded places for 3 year olds is concerned, the County Council and the early years providers represented on the Partnership have between them exceeded the target participation in term one of the current year. A rate of 15% was recorded for the summer term 2000. This promising start needs to be maintained in Autumn 2000 and in Spring 2001.

With regard to new childcare places, the first quarter figures for 2000/2001 show a net increase of 66 places. This is a disappointing return and it will need to be improved on considerably over the next three quarters if the county's overall target for the year (1280 places) is to be achieved.

8. How does this level of success or performance compare with other authorities (what comparative evidence is there)?

With regard to the two specific indicators mentioned above, we are taking steps to ascertain the current position in other similar shire counties.

9. In what areas is the OCC service successful or strong?

Oxfordshire has a diverse range of early years and childcare provision across all sectors: statutory, voluntary, private. This is a deliberate legacy of the 'mixed economy' approach that has been pursued in the County over the past fifteen years.

Oxfordshire has good partnership and collaborative arrangements going back over a long period, particularly across Education and Social Services. This goes back to the establishment of the original Under Fives Working Party in 1985.

Oxfordshire has a strong and coherent profile in the field of quality support and training for early years education.

10. In what areas is the OCC service in need of improvement?

- Not enough publicly funded, full-time early education and childcare places available
- More integration of early years education/childcare and family support services needed at user level
- Insufficient information about early education/childcare for parents
- Need to develop more early education provision for children aged 0-3
- Quality framework needed for family centres

14. What were the conclusions? According to the 1999 MORI poll of Oxfordshire residents, 39% of the tax from the most recent
consultation exercise?  This should show:

- what taxpayers want from the service (what evidence is there)
- what service users/carers want from the service (what evidence is there)

15. Any external factors to be taken account of?

**Local**
- Oxfordshire is a fast growing county with very low levels of unemployment. This has implications for the levels of provision needed, and even more importantly, for the availability of staff to work in early years and childcare settings.
- Relatively high level of immigrants and asylum seekers in Oxfordshire.

**National**
- Transfer of registration and inspection of childcare provision from Local Authorities to Ofsted in September 2001 as a result of the legislative proposals set out in the Care Standards Bill.
- Creation of the new Foundation Stage of Education covering children aged 3-6 years starting in September 2000. This will have major implications for the quality, resourcing and organisation of provision and for the progression of children between different settings.
- Extension of funded early years education to all three-year olds over the next five years.
- Changes in the structure of Local Government and in children's services planning arrangements, which are likely to increase the pressures for greater coherence across traditional council boundary lines in the organisation of services for children and their families.

- The government’s recent comprehensive spending review which has increased substantially the level of public funds to support early intervention for children, families and neighbourhoods which are in need.

Proposed focus of the Best Value review

16. Proposed key service areas to focus on (i.e. areas where options for service improvement might exist)

• Compare costs with other local authorities in order to establish whether our services are providing value for money.

• Establish long term comparative and benchmarking links with other Authorities/partnerships and use the information gathered from these to identify areas for improvement and development.

• Identify key strategic issues within the development of the service to be addressed as part of future plans e.g.:
  - implementation of the new Foundation Stage of learning.
  - expanding the number of early education places for 3 year olds
  - development of integrated early education/ childcare/ family support provision
  - improving information services for parents
  - expanding early years educational provision for 0-3 year olds.

• Consider the current balance of the mixed economy of early years and
childcare provision in Oxfordshire and how this might be changed/developed over the next few years.

- Consider carefully the extent to which early years education and childcare should be seen as a core part of the developing agenda for children and young people’s services and how they should be linked to family support generally.

- Explore in greater depth the arguments for and against developing integrated management of early education/childcare/family support across education and social services, and examine how this might be achieved in practical terms.

Any other comments (e.g. any anticipated need for external consultancy input)  n/a

Date approved by Best Value &BV&ASC Audit Sub-Committee and relevant Chief Officer

Chief Officer

11 August 2000, CEO
21 August 2000, DSS
BV2 FORMS – SPECIAL NEEDS TRANSPORT

Best Value Review
Review Specification

Project structure/organisation

Service area Special Needs Transport

Proposed review timetable
Start June 2000
Complete by March 2001

Review Leader (service)
Sian Rodway, Schools Officer, Education Department
Jerry Auton, Service Manager Special Transport, Social Services

PPRU Lead Officer
Mark Ginsburg

Independent team member
Dick Helling, Public Transport Officer, Environmental Services

Proposed core team membership
Michael Rolton, County Treasurers
Jon Wilcox, Social Services Finance
Stephen Ashworth, Education Officer
Graham Clare, Education Finance
Sandra Pearce, Education Transport Officer
Martin Pounce, Schools Officer

Designated Member
Councillor Brian Law

Proposed review Milestones
Target dates:

- Finalise Project Spec. (Form BV2)
  30 August 2000

- Complete service improvement options (Form BV3)
  16 November 2000

- Develop action plan (Form BV4)
  6 December 2000

- Target Best Value and Audit Sub Committee meeting
  8 January 2001
### PROJECT SCALE & SCOPE FOR CHANGE

1. **What is the size of the service?** Give details of
   - **Budget size**
   - **Staffing complement**

---

#### EDUCATION

- **To SEN Transport, the Transport Section have allocated**
- **Time may additionally be taken into account for the Education Officer decision makers on entitlement, but it is not appropriate for out-sourcing, and**

#### STAFFING COSTS

- **Direct Staff – Transport Section (two FTE)**
- **Other staff: % Of Schools & Resource Branch**
- **Overheads – Support Services Recharges**

**TOTAL**

#### SEN TRANSPORT BUDGET

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contract Hire / Season Tickets / Pupil Fares</td>
<td>2,954,900</td>
<td>3,182,400</td>
<td>3,590,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Escorts</td>
<td>36,900</td>
<td>36,500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equipment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>2,991,800</td>
<td>3,218,900</td>
<td>3,630,100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**(Budgeted)**

#### % Change

- **7.6%**

#### Staffing Costs

**TOTAL**

#### Number Of Pupils Conveyed As At 05.06.00

- **Contract Hire**
- **Season Tickets**
- **Petrol Allowance**

**TOTAL**

#### Unit Costs

- **Per pupil per annum**

**Per pupil per day**

#### OUT OF COUNTY TRANSPORT

- **i.e. Oxfordshire Children with SEN Statements educated outside the County.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Actual £</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1999/2000</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Contract Hire</strong></td>
<td>19,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Season Tickets</strong></td>
<td>56,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Petrol Allowance</strong></td>
<td>117,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>117,100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**1258**

**£2965**

**£15.61**
Number of pupils conveyed as at 05.06.00

Unit costs Per pupil *per annum*

(Unable to provide unit costs *per day* as Out Of County Pupils only travel weekends, half termly or termly, not daily)

### SOCIAL SERVICES

#### CENTRAL TRANSPORT BUDGET

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Actual £</th>
<th>Actual £</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fleet operations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee costs – drivers and escorts</td>
<td>649,400</td>
<td>696,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee costs – management and admin</td>
<td>93,300</td>
<td>69,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchase of vehicles</td>
<td>199,300</td>
<td>181,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vehicle running costs</td>
<td>319,500</td>
<td>281,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other expenditure</td>
<td>44,600</td>
<td>55,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support services</td>
<td>68,500</td>
<td>72,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL FLEET COSTS</strong></td>
<td>1,374,600</td>
<td>1,356,500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Fleet unit costs

Actual cost per passenger per mile: 1.85  1.73

#### Other transport costs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Actual £</th>
<th>Actual £</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employee costs</td>
<td>118,300</td>
<td>49,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hire of vehicles</td>
<td>373,400</td>
<td>403,800</td>
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<tr>
<td>Purchase of vehicles</td>
<td>98,700</td>
<td>186,600</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vehicle running costs</td>
<td>94,100</td>
<td>103,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other costs</td>
<td>109,700</td>
<td>109,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL OTHER TRANSPORT COSTS</strong></td>
<td>794,200</td>
<td>852,800</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL GROSS EXPENDITURE ON TRANSPORT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2,168,800</th>
<th>2,209,300</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recharge to education</td>
<td>-100,300</td>
<td>-103,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client and care management income</td>
<td>-157,500</td>
<td>-178,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL INCOME</strong></td>
<td>-257,800</td>
<td>-281,200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NET EXPENDITURE ON TRANSPORT**

|                           | 1,911,000| 1,928,100|

### Notes

1. The 2000-2001 budget for Drivers/Escorts and Client/Care management income are lower than previous years actuals because the actual income/demand arises during the year, and is met through expenditure as the need occurs. Since the income offsets the expenditure, the overall effect is cost neutral. Since it is hard to predict, it is not budgeted. There has not been a significant change in the budget.

2. The 2000-2001 budget for vehicle purchase is lower than previous years actuals because expenditure on transport is frequently funded from budgets held outside the transport section which are not identified as being for transport. This expenditure arises as the demand is identified, and hence is not budgeted.
2. To what extent is the service mandatory or discretionary? Please list statutory references and/or relevant OCC policy statements

**EDUCATION**

OCC has a statutory duty to provide a pupil with home to school transport free of charge if they attend the designated catchment area school and meet the qualifying distance by living more than 2 miles (for pupils aged five to seven) or 3 miles (for pupils aged eight to sixteen).

[Education Act 1944 Section 55(1) & Education Act 1993 Section 199(5)]

Also, OCC has a statutory duty to assess an individual pupil’s needs for the provision of transport. If a child with a statement of Special Educational Needs lives inside the specified distance, they will be entitled to free transport if the Schools Officer judges it necessary. There is discretion regarding the mode of transport which is allocated e.g. coach, taxi or minibus.

Statements can apply to children below the statutory school age. Unlike older pupils, OCC has no duty to provide transport if they live over the specified distance, but they have to be assessed like any other SEN pupil - and transport is then provided if judged to be necessary.

In 1995 it was decided by OCC that, in accordance with the above legislation, it was not necessary to provide transport for post-16s. Therefore, any transport provided would be subject to a charge to the student. The charge has been levied on all students, including Special Needs students.

**SOCIAL SERVICES**

Whereas in Education, if a child lives beyond the prescribed distance, the Authority automatically provides transport, all Social Services clients are individually assessed. If after assessment Social Services decides a client requires transport as a necessity to meet their need, then Social Services has a duty to provide the transport. *(R v Gloucestershire County Council 1997)*

This case also established that:

- Resources may be taken into account when establishing against eligibility criteria, people’s need and whether it is necessary to meet them – but resources must not be the sole factor determining the nature of eligibility criteria, which must reflect a balancing of needs and resources.
- The Local Authority can determine how to meet that need and take account of resources when deciding which service option to arrange.
- The Local Authority at a later date can reassess need and necessity against revised eligibility criteria.

Significant change is underway in the delivery of Social (and Health) Care. Without adequate and appropriate modes of transport for people receiving services, it is not possible to achieve this change successfully. The impact of this on transport procurers and providers is felt in a number of ways. The need for transport is increasing and is more diverse, whilst the dependency of people using OCC transport is increasing.

Duties include provision for:

- Older People (Health Services and Public Health Act 1968).
- Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons (Sec. 2(1) CS & DP Act 1970, Sec. 29 National Assistance Act 1948).
National Policy Framework


Local Policy Framework

The *Community Care Plan*, jointly developed by Oxfordshire Social Services and Oxfordshire Health Authority, identifies the policy for meeting the needs of people in Oxfordshire up to the year 2003. Social Services’ own *Medium Term Plan* covers 1999–2002.

All Oxfordshire Social Services passenger transport activities will be measured against - and need to be set in context of - these local and national objectives.

3. How critical is the service? (e.g. state the potential implications if
   - It was not provided at all
   - It was provided to a lower standard or quantity
   - If some other organisation provided it on our behalf)

   **EDUCATION**

   If it was not provided at all
   - There is a statutory requirement to transport SEN pupils to school and college, if it is deemed necessary. If the service was not provided, OCC would be taken to court.
   - A lower standard of service could endanger the safety of the pupils and impact on Education i.e. the pupils not arriving/departing school on time.

   If it was provided to a lower standard or quantity
   - If the service was provided to a lower standard or quantity it would be less flexible which would restrict access to schools e.g. The Chinnor Unit and Northern House School (Special Schools with a County-wide remit). If fewer taxis were provided and/or fewer routes used, some pupils would have restricted access to specialist provision which could result in legal action against OCC.
   - Quantity could be reduced by tightening up eligibility criteria. Advantages could be clarity of information and decision making for parents and a more consistent and therefore fair decision. It could also be cheaper and therefore come in under budget.
   - However, there would be a lot of negative parental reaction if the criteria for transport were restricted.
   - The service is currently able to react quickly to requests for emergency transport. If the service were provided to a lower standard, such flexibility could be jeopardized.

   If some other organisation provided it on our behalf
   - Procurement could be provided by a third party but it remains to be seen whether this offers cost or service advantages.

   **SOCIAL SERVICES**

   Transport services are very tightly rationed and are part of a preventative strategy designed to reduce demand on more expensive statutory services i.e. Residential Care.
If it was not provided at all
The Social Services Department could not meet its statutory duty.

It was provided to a lower standard or quantity
A lower level of transport service could endanger clients for whom the Social Services Department has duty of care and 'corporate parent' responsibilities.

If some other organisation provided it on our behalf
Substantial elements of the transport service are already provided by third parties (Voluntary Organisations, Taxi and Private Hire Operators). The 1994 Service and Budget Review recommended a joint Education (SEN) and Social Services procurement unit, but this was not implemented.

EDUCATION
At this stage we have limited information regarding performance of other councils. However, focussed benchmarking visits to other councils as part of the review could answer this question. Some examples of different approaches, are shown below,

In-House/external split
Leicestershire provide transport in-house: 55 minibuses, topped up with private hire contractors (Shrewsbury are similar, but all other contacted councils contract in all SEN provision).

Eligibility criteria
Northumberland are concerned with managing large recent increase in SEN demand: so now clarifying eligibility criteria via a questionnaire.

Structure
Hampshire
- Mainstream, special needs & other transport provided from Surveyors Dept through service level agreements, e.g. with Education.
- Timeframe from request to allocation is ten days (Oxfordshire’s commitment is three weeks although usually transport is arranged within five days).

Wiltshire has both mainstream and special needs provided from the Passenger Transport Unit within the Environmental Services Department. Entitlement for SEN transport remains within Education.

Resources
Data on resources will be requested once relevant criteria are determined, e.g.:
Lincolnshire collect outcome measures:
- Satisfaction of parents/guardians of SN pupils with their transport provision (through a random survey this year, but could cover every pupil of selected schools)
- Pupil satisfaction
- School satisfaction
  And other performance measures, such as:
- Cost per pupil. But need to distinguish between in & out of county. Also sparsity indicator needs to be taken into account.
- Loading efficiency: i.e. percentage of seats which have been allocated.
- Administrative efficiency: their database measures the time it takes to process a request, from initiation to delivery.

NB Much of this is generated by bespoke IT database (Lincs use SEATS, Worcs use ANITE). Oxfordshire’s EMS system provides barely any data for SEN transport, so if regular data collection were required, a new database meeting their needs would be necessary.

Eligibility criteria are likely to differ since statutory guidelines are vague/subject to local interpretation, e.g. Oxfordshire currently has no eligibility criteria, but decisions are made by School Officer on a case by case basis. Northumberland are tackling this through a questionnaire for assessment. Those with in-house provision are very concerned to benchmark their costs, as are their neighbours who are keenly aware of the comparison. It will also be interesting to compare benchmarks where procurement is outsourced (e.g Hampshire & Wiltshire).

SOCIAL SERVICES
There are a variety of structures in place within other authorities, but the trend is towards greater integration of the procurement function (from separate departments into one central unit) and more recently an increase in In-House provision as Authorities attempt to control the rapidly rising cost of externally provided services. Reviews in 1993 (Taylor-Lightfoot), 1994 (Service & Budget) and 1996 (Steer, Davies & Gleave) found that OCC’s balance between External, In-House and Voluntary Sector provision provided a cost-effective solution. The balance needs to be reviewed regularly.

5. What is the scope for changing the nature (quality, quantity, service provider, method used) of the service?

EDUCATION
There is significant potential for change as the service currently has weaknesses in the following areas:
- Lack of specified criteria for judging need.
- Form and mode of transport
- Potential for better budgetary control
- There is also scope to externalise the procurement side, or integrate it with another OCC department.
- To fine tune existing systems e.g. greater use of ICT.

Criteria
- There are no set criteria at the moment, and therefore each Schools Officer makes individual judgements. If there were set criteria, there would be more consistency. At the moment, in some schools all clients have come to expect transport, whether it is essential or not. Introducing criteria could lead to a reduction in transport needs and greater transparency for parents, schools, and pupils.

- There is also the potential for offering parents a mileage allowance to convey their child to school. Following an earlier District Audit Report some work has been undertaken in exploring their suggestions. Some practical difficulties were encountered and the Review will revisit the recommendations to explore the potential for savings.

Budget
Currently decisions regarding mode of transport are made on receipt of a pro forma with a brief description of the child’s physical needs, age etc. The SEN transport budget has been overspending. This is because of the complexity of requests and frequent changes of school, as well as the higher rate of transport inflation. There is
a need for closer monitoring and review of provision linked to the establishment of more specific eligibility criteria with an aim to reduce the use of expensive forms of transport e.g. taxis and reduce the levels of expectation.

**Procurement**

There is opportunity via this review, and its links to the wider Transport BV Review, to look at externalising procurement or the establishment of a single special transport section or a central Transport Section across Oxfordshire County Council.

**Review Systems**

Currently staff are in two different sections, Transport Section (Resource Branch) and Schools Branch, but communication is good between the two (SEN Policy rests with Pupil Services). There is also the link with Social Services via SEN Transport. However, nearly all communication regarding SEN Transport is paper based as the use of IT is limited due to problems with the system in use. Oxfordshire uses the EMS modules within the Education Department. There is a Transport Module which is currently used to maintain the Mainstream School Transport records. However, due to the complexity of SEN Transport e.g. pupils only attending odd days and half days per week, the system is unable to hold this information in an easily accessible format. At present, all records are kept manually and statistical reports for monitoring and review are difficult to obtain. Other councils have encountered the same problems using EMS and have chosen to write in-house computer software or purchase alternative IT databases (at this stage we have no benchmarking information to assess the impact. However, focussed visits as part of the review could answer this question).

**SOCIAL SERVICES**

There is limited scope to change.

The quality of the service is dictated by statutory national standards and locally set minimum standards that are set to meet our "Duty of Care" responsibilities.

The quantity of service is dictated by overall Social Services service priorities, level of demand and budget provision.

The service procurement activity could be provided externally or from within an integrated unit. The service providers could change, subject to availability of suitable alternatives in the marketplace, and an assessment of the relative costs including an appropriate monitoring function. The stakeholders i.e. Clients, Carers, Commissioners, and Vehicle Maintenance contractor would need to be consulted.

**CURRENT SERVICE CONDITION (taken from Form BV1)**

6. **What is the outcome that the service is trying to achieve (please list the service objectives or key performance measures / success criteria that are used)?**

**EDUCATION**

The current aim is to provide SEN Transport which:

- commences within three weeks of the need being defined
- maximises value for money
- is safe and efficient i.e. no major accidents
- appropriate i.e. correct mode of transport is used to meet individual needs

As yet there are no performance indicators / success criteria available and will be addressed as part of this review.
7. **How efficient / successful is the service at achieving this desired outcome (list evidence or performance against these success criteria which show this)?**

**SOCIAL SERVICES**

To ensure availability of safe, appropriate and cost effective transport (within identified resources) for people with a mobility difficulty (and who are unable to make their own arrangements), to access services identified in their care plan, as determined by the Social Services Department's Medium Term plan. The quality is, as a minimum, set to achieve “duty of care” responsibilities and where possible “best practice” standards. When rescheduling routes, the aim is for journey times to be no longer than one hour.

**EDUCATION**

- **Effective.** All transport is arranged within three weeks of a request being made, usually within the same week of a request being made. (Some authorities set higher standards.)

- **Safe.** There have been no major accidents recorded, i.e. it has not been necessary for a pupil to visit a hospital, following an accident. Only a few minor incidents have been reported. In the future a diary will be kept logging all reported accidents.

- **Cost-efficient.** We have no comparative data to measure cost effectiveness. However, the SEN Transport Budget has been overspending. The complexity of the transport requests including frequent changes reflects the increasing demand for SEN Inclusion. There have been changes regarding the education of children with SEN:
  
  - There is a greater move to inclusion, which means more children with SEN (sometimes complex) are educated in mainstream schools. This means several taxis to varied locations instead of one bus trip, although travel distances are reduced.

  - Also taken into account are the rights of parents to express a preference regarding the school at which their child is educated. Parents are able to challenge the council through an SEN Tribunal. If the council loses the case then transport will be arranged to the school of parental preference.

  - Several special schools are County-wide facilities as well. Some children attend a school in Oxford and therefore in some cases have to travel long distances.

**SOCIAL SERVICES**

There are no national performance indicators available for this service therefore it measures its success by comparing activity and cost year on year. It has maintained and maintained its level of activity. The unit costs have been maintained in line with inflation. In 1999/2000 the fleet operation unit costs were reduced by 10% in comparison with 1998/99.

There are some areas where waiting lists exist for transport. This is partly due to service developments not adequately reflecting the transport resource that are necessary to support the service and partly to the effect that the increasing dependency of users has on the service. In addition Voluntary Organisations are having difficulty in recruiting taxi and minibus drivers to replace those no longer wishing to continue.

**EDUCATION / SOCIAL SERVICES**

There are no national performance indicators, no comparative evidence exists and this could form part of the review.

8. **How does this level of success or performance compare with other authorities (what comparative**
The Association of Transport Co-ordinating Officers (ATCO) are currently undertaking a Best Value Survey to try and establish some benchmarking within local authority passenger transport. The summary findings will be available in the late summer and will inform this review.

**EDUCATION**

We do not have full details on what others are doing and how we are performing, so at this stage it is difficult to quantify. This could be addressed as part of the review. The OCC service has successfully integrated some transport services and has already accomplished some of the service improvements aimed at by other authorities (e.g. Wiltshire who have organised a fully integrated unit). The two departments, Education and Social Services work together regarding Criminal Conviction Police Checks, operating Social Services vehicles to convey SEN Pupils to school.

**SOCIAL SERVICES**

We have no up to date detailed knowledge of competitors / other local authorities. However, the service provided appears to be of a good quality and consistent. Expenditure is contained within budget and has a low level of complaints and a good level of praise. The service standards are thorough and the monitoring arrangements are effective.

Management believe the service performs well, against a background of changing patterns of demand, the difficulties of recruitment being experienced by voluntary sector providers and the general economic situation in the Southeast which has seen a reduction in the number of people entering the social care and service industry sectors.

**EDUCATION**

There is an urgent need to establish a set of criteria by which it is judged whether a child is entitled to transport. Action is already in hand to establish a Resources Panel of Schools Branch Officers and Pupil Services Officers to begin the process of determining criteria and agreeing transport in a more systematic format as of September 2000. This is to be piloted for one academic term and reviewed in January 2001.

Budgetary control is currently a weakness which needs to be addressed. Clearer objectives need to be established.

We need to look at whether the provision of the service in-house can be made more efficient.

The procurement side of the service could be externalised, or combined with Social Services. This review's objectives should be integrated with the Transport Best Value Review already carried out (Public Transport and Mainstream Education Transport).

**SOCIAL SERVICES**

The benchmarking work being undertaken by ATCO may indicate areas where improvements could be made.

There are areas of the service where demand exceeds current resources.

More work needs to be done on the devolvement of the transport budget to Care Managers. It has long been considered that best value for money can be achieved, adequate budget monitoring systems would need to be put in place to ensure there would be a risk that the current tight control could be lost.
11. What were the conclusions from the most recent consultation exercise?

This should show:

- What taxpayers want from the service (what evidence is there)
- What service users / carers want from the service (what evidence is there)

EDUCATION

There has been no formal consultation. This is a weakness which should be addressed by this review.

SOCIAL SERVICES

The last consultation in relation to the transport service alone was in 1992 but the Social Services Department proactively involves service users, carers and their representatives with service planning, particularly in relation to the development of revised service strategy and provision, e.g. major consultation was undertaken in relation to the development of the 'New Directions' program for people with a learning difficulty. The transport provision was an integral part of this consultation.

We do not know what taxpayers want from the service, although any costs which impact on the level of Council Tax can be assumed to be a cause for concern.

Users and carers tell us that they want a safe, caring and consistent service that is provided in a non-stigmatising way.

They would also like the service to be available over the weekend and during the early evening. A significant change of this nature would have to be linked to a general policy and day care service development plan within the Social Services Medium Term Plan.

12. Any external factors to be taken account of?

EDUCATION

National - proposed changes to the SEN Code Of Practice
Local - taxi driver shortages
- taxi costs increasing
- policy regarding inclusion of SEN children in mainstream schools (need to be more flexible, hence more journeys could be more expensive).

SOCIAL SERVICES

The Social Services Medium Term Plan calls for changes to the pattern of service provision generally. They will inevitably have an effect on the service. It is anticipated that the numbers of individualised journeys will increase which is likely to lead to a reduction in operational efficiency if this continues to be measured using the current methods.

The widening of the "Direct Payments" scheme (currently only available to people with a physical disability) to other areas of service will bring about some changes although they are difficult to quantify at this time. In theory, people in receipt of direct payments will be able to buy the services they require from whatever source they wish (within acceptable standards).

Although the Social Services Medium Term Plan requires a substantial reduction in the Departments overall budget provision, increased availability of appropriate modes of transport would have an impact on the level of Council Tax.
transport is considered essential if the National and Local Policy objectives are to be met.

Proposed focus of the Best Value review

13. Proposed key service areas to focus on (i.e. areas where options for service improvement might exist)

**EDUCATION**

**Define Entitlement**

The determination of entitlement criteria to increase budget control.

- Determination of criteria
  - Draw on examples of good practice from other councils
  - Use of Resources Panel from September 2000 to check and develop criteria.

- Clarify roles and responsibilities of Schools Officers and of the (procurement) Transport Section.

- Possible pilot project looking at transport provision for pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties. This will be undertaken as part of this review.

**Improve Budget Control**

- Tighter monitoring and control of the budget. This will be partly influenced by the development of the specific selection criteria and the use of the Resources Panel.

**Maximise Value For Money**

- Also focus on the use of specific type of transport – minimise the use of taxis, reduce parental expectation of transport as a right.

- Establish a better management information system.

**EDUCATION / SOCIAL SERVICES**

1) To assess the effects of combining the Education (SEN) and Social Services procurement function within one unit.

2) Benchmarking work to compare criteria and performance with similar and any identifiable best performing councils.

3) Explore if any benefits could arise from changing the way in which the defined service is delivered (In-house, External, Different Balance or New Organisation).

4) Consult with Commissioners, Users, Carers and Day Services Providers specifically about the following elements of the transport service:-

- Appropriateness
- Reliability
- Consistency
14. Any other comments (e.g. any anticipated need for external consultancy input)

- Drivers (courtesy, helpfulness and appearance)
- Administration (courtesy, helpfulness and speed of response)

EDUCATION / SOCIAL SERVICES

- As part of this review a joint Education and Social Services group are exploring the consultation issue.
- Integration with the Best Value (Mainstream Transport) Review 1999 recommendations.
- Consideration would need to be given to what resources are required to undertake the work identified above.

Date approved by Best Value & Audit Sub-Committee and relevant Chief Officer

BVASC Chief Officer

3 August 2000
Best Value Review

Review Specification

Project structure/organisation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service area</th>
<th>ICT Support for Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Proposed review timetable

Start: June 2000
Complete by: January 2001

Review Leader (service)

Sue Rossiter, Education

PPRU Lead Officer

Mark Ginsburg

Independent team member

To be confirmed prior to the investigative work – either an Oxfordshire governor with an understanding of the ICT support needs of schools, or a school support manager from a high performing LEA.

Proposed core team membership

Peter Martin, NGfL Project Manager
Pam Counsell, Adviser, ICT Specialist
Dave Tyrrell, Education Finance
David Illingworth, Treasurer’s

Designated Member

Councillor Dhall

Proposed review milestones

- Finalise Project Spec. (Form BV2) 30 August 2000
- Complete service improvement options (Form BV3) 16 November 2000
- Develop action plan (Form BV4) 6 December 2000 (and covering report by mid December)
- Target Best Value and Audit Sub Committee meeting 8 January 2001
- Target February 2001 Performance and Quality Sub-Committee and March 2001
PROJECT SCALE & SCOPE FOR CHANGE

1. What is the size of the service? Give details of
   - Budget size
   - Staffing complement

   The gross service budget for 2000/01 is estimated at £490,000 pa on staffing and related costs. This comprises 4.7 FTE within the Resources branch and 9 FTE within the Advisory and Inspection service from September 2000.

   Capita school support services have an estimated turnover of around £370,000 pa from Oxfordshire schools, involving some 12 FTE staff. (This excludes bursar services through which schools buy in financial or administrative staff support.)

   National Grid for Learning (NGfL) Standards Fund expenditure in 2000/01 is £2.4 million; most of this is devolved to schools for the purchase of ICT facilities.

   Additional services not costed here include computer security and internal audit but are of value to schools.

   Much of the service is discretionary. There is a statutory requirement to monitor standards, under the Schools Standards and Framework Act.

   LEAs are expected to prepare and annually update an ICT Development Plan in order to be eligible for Standards Fund grant for developing the National Grid for Learning (NGfL). Oxfordshire has such a plan.

   In addition, the ability to meet other statutory requirements eg attendance monitoring and performance data analysis is dependent on effective use of schools’ ICT systems.

   General comment

   The Education Development Plan highlights ICT exploitation as a high priority, and this has been reinforced by members’ recent budget decisions in relation to broadband ICT developments (high speed data networks linking schools within and beyond Oxfordshire).

   Given that schools need to use ICT effectively in both teaching and administration, and their very varied levels of ICT maturity and technical expertise, most of the services would be sought by schools whether or not the LEA provided some of them directly.

   Monitoring of ICT standards would need to continue as a statutory service.

   Advice on procurement of curriculum networks, plus basic ICT support, Round 3 comes to an end in late 2001.

   If the services were not provided at all

   A range of services would be purchased by schools from third parties, with management time in preparing specifications, letting and monitoring contracts etc. likely to increase. Services could suffer from the loss of economies of scale (particularly for services such as training), and schools would need to ensure that the quality of external services is monitored.

   There would be an impact on in-house staff roles (both positive and negative) and school staff would require significant training and development, particularly in the Primary sector.

   Services which are currently integrated (administrative and curriculum ICT; data collection and system development) would be at risk of fragmentation, with some effects on the LEA’s ability to perform data analysis.

   If the services were provided to a lower standard or quantity

   ...
Schools’ responses to the Ofsted inspectors suggest that service provision is perceived as low now, and that some schools (particularly Secondaries) feel their needs are not being met. The teams are endeavouring to cover all schools and a wide range of services. Reducing or deleting some of these other services to meet schools’ requirements more closely may be feasible. For example, the computer security audits of schools are highlighting a number of areas of deficiency which would benefit from additional support including training (eg in procurement and in network security measures). This change in emphasis will need to be considered before funding for some of the NGfL related services comes to an end during 2001.

If some other organisation provided the services on our behalf

Almost half of the services being reviewed here are already provided by a third party (Capita) under a framework agreement with the County Council which lasts until April 2003.

If more services were provided by a third party, greater staff time would be needed in relation to specification, tendering and contract monitoring. There would be risk of fragmentation as noted in an earlier response, and if more than one supplier was involved - of conflict between suppliers as to who should take responsibility for certain problems.

Price advantages are unlikely to accrue. At the time of tendering the current Capita services in 1997/8 only one supplier put in a bid for the tender and prices to schools increased significantly over the previous contract. Nationally selected ICT “managed service” providers are perceived as very expensive by schools and few LEAs and schools are working with such companies.

The PFI contract between Dudley Council and a consortium of ICT service providers equates to around £100 pa per pupil. The Capita charges and cost of LEA services equate to around £10 pa per pupil in Oxfordshire. The investment costs eg of purchasing new networks through NGfL or new administrative PCs may add another £30-35 pa, assuming a 3-4 year replacement cycle. Annual charges from other suppliers eg Research Machines may bring the total to just over £50 pa.

Potential advantages would be greater clarity of service objectives and levels, better quality assurance procedures and the ability to refocus staff time on other aspects of school improvement. In addition, a specialist organisation may be able to introduce more effective support procedures and benefit from experience in other areas. However, some of these potential advantages can be achieved without contracting out the service.

4. Is the service provided differently / to a different level by higher performing / lower cost authorities?

Give details of possible different structures, different eligibility criteria, alternative processes etc. as used by higher performing / lower cost authorities.

5. What is the scope for

There are no nationally published statistics relating to ICT support for schools so identification of higher performing/lower cost authorities is difficult and will need to be dealt with as part of this review.

However, one source of information is Ofsted, who have recently provided LEAs with data on the judgements made on individual services during each LEA inspection. This shows that ICT Support for Schools was graded 2 in Oxfordshire (on a 1 to 7 scale where 1 is very good; 2 is good) following the inspection conducted in Autumn 1999. Only one LEA has a grade 1; a further five have grade 2s. These LEAs will be contacted (although at present Ofsted will not divulge their names!) and will be used for comparison purposes as part of the review.

North Yorkshire has recently produced a leaflet on its “IT Team of the Year” following the Local Government Chronicle award. The team operates on a trading basis, with all income coming from schools’ purchases. Fifteen staff operate in 3 teams, under an IT Service Manager, although the document suggests that this may not cover curriculum ICT and NGfL as comprehensively as the Oxfordshire services being considered in this review. The computerised help desk system is operated in partnership with the council’s corporate IT service. The LGC Award judges commented particularly favourably on the procedures and structures which have been put in place to achieve this.

In most LEAs, as in North Yorkshire, all services are still provided in-house, often within a single management structure, and usually as a chargeable service. Further detailed work is needed to identify and evaluate the benefits of different structures, eligibility criteria, alternative processes etc.

There is significant potential for change in the following ways:
changing the nature (quality, quantity, service provider, method used) of the service?

- review of structure/single point of contact for all ICT support services
- review of service providers and specifications - in-house services could be brought in-house
- service quality in some areas could be improved either by reducing the range of services provided or by reducing the quantity of others or by increasing resources
- services could be added – eg technical support services to support ICT in teaching, to advise on computer security, network procurement and related issues

CURRENT SERVICE CONDITION (taken from Form BV1)

6. What is the outcome that the service is trying to achieve (please list the service objectives or key performance measures / success criteria that are used)?

The services are intended to support schools in the exploitation of ICT in teaching and management in order to improve pupils’ attainment, the management of information and the efficiency of communication.

Key performance measures set out in the Education Development Plan (EDP) 2000 include:

- By March 2001
  - 90% of schools to have access to local, national and global networks
  - 50% of teachers and pupils to have e-mail addresses
  - Schools value the central support and advice on procurement and ICT planning
  - Reliable pupil attainment data is available and analysed, with 60% of schools setting targets for pupils’ achievements in ICT
  - 60% of pupils to reach level 4+ in ICT at KS2 (age 11)
  - 80% of teachers to reach levels in ICT commensurate with their higher attaining pupils (level 3+ for KS1 teachers; level 5+ for KS2 teachers)

In addition, key performance measures for the Capita support are:

- % of calls getting through
- speed of response to calls
- speed of resolution of calls

Progress is being made towards all the objectives and is monitored at least annually as part of the EDP and post-Ofsted monitoring programme, and for the purposes of further bids against the NGfL funds.

However, progress is generally slower than targeted. This is partly as a result of insufficient baseline data at the outset from which to set targets (eg KS2 pupil attainments were found to be much lower than anticipated pre-NGfL) and partly as a result of insufficient resources in schools and in the LEA to implement all aspects of the plans within the originally anticipated timescales. In addition, many Primary schools are not sufficiently technically competent to manage new networks and their associated problems effectively.
Recent audits in Secondary schools are also causing concern at the levels of insecurity of systems and sensitive data in some schools.

Data from the first few months of 2000/01 shows that some 10% of calls to Capita do not get through first time and that 10% of calls are unresolved after 1 week (against a current target by October 2000 of 3.5%).

As noted earlier, there are no national performance indicators and comparative evidence is limited to Ofsted inspection judgements. This shows Oxfordshire to be one of the top 7 authorities in respect of these services of the 91 for which data is currently available.

The SW Education Benchmarking group meets in September 2000 for the first time and should be a useful source of comparative information.

It is difficult to answer this question without the further comparative information which will be sought as part of the review. However, Oxfordshire seems to be one of few LEAs which have provided basic ICT skills training for teachers as part of the NGfL developments; early indications are that this is giving teachers a good start when they embark on the NOF funded training on the use of ICT in curriculum areas.

The Ofsted report indicated that greater support was required for Secondary schools.

Progress on achieving the EDP objectives appears to be limited to some extent by the lack of affordable technical support available to Primary schools.

Computer security audits are highlighting significant deficiencies in Secondary schools which suggests that greater attention needs to be paid to this aspect of schools' development eg through training and specialist advice.

The Capita service is not meeting the target performance for speed of problem resolution.

Benchmarking and consultation processes need to be improved; other areas for improvement may be revealed once further comparative and consultation data has been collected as part of the review.

Consultation is fragmented and irregular. The most recent exercise related to the experiences of NGfL in 1998/99 and showed that schools (headteachers and ICT co-ordinators ie service users) felt that LEA support was important, with around 80% satisfaction with the services delivered.

There is no consultation with taxpayers (other than those who are school governors) as this is a service to schools rather than the public generally.

A structural and service review will be needed given the ending of NGfL funding in 2001. The focus on "broadband" (ie high speed network) developments nationally will have technical support implications locally.
The DfEE’s Information Management Strategy, under which all data collection from schools will be electronic from late 2002, will require a review and development of current processes, ICT facilities and skills.

Proposed focus of the Best Value review

13. Proposed key service areas to focus on (i.e. areas where options for service improvement might exist)

1. Develop a regular benchmarking approach for the service against other providers to identify ways of improving.

2. Develop consultation and feedback mechanisms with users and other stakeholders – initially to identify their views on current needs and the extent to which services meet these needs or could be improved.

3. Identify what further technical support should be provided or brokered by the LEA for schools.

following the work in areas 1 to 3, then:

4. Review the structure of service delivery (including the in-house/external split) in the light of benchmarking, users’ needs and other external factors (including the completion of the NGfL programme in Primary schools in 2001).

14. Any other comments (e.g. any anticipated need for external consultancy input)

It is anticipated that the investigative work will take about 30 days. An outline timetable is available. This will include visits to other providers. External consultancy support will be purchased from within existing departmental resources in order to complete the work within the timescale.

Date approved by Best Value & Audit Sub-Committee and relevant Chief Officer

BVASC Chief Officer

5 August 2000
BEST VALUE & AUDIT SUB-COMMITTEE – 30 AUGUST 2000
AGENDA ITEM AUD7h

BV2 FORMS – COUNTY LEGAL SERVICES

Best Value Review
Review Specification

Project structure/organisation

Service area
County Legal Services

Proposed review timetable
Start : 6 July 2000
Complete by : February 2001

Review Leader (service)
Peter G Clark, Joint Head of Legal Services

PPRU Lead Officer
Paul Spencer/Ian Wilson

Independent team member
No independent team member appointed in view of the commercial sensitivity of the information. Officers from other client departments however form the basis of the core team membership.

Proposed core team membership
Lyndie Hayes, Independent Treasurers Representative
Tim Paul, Financial Manager, Treasurers Department
Kate Hart, Principal Officer – Service Development, Social Services Department
John Wilby, Assistant Property Officer, Environmental Department

Proposed review milestones
Target dates:
• Finalise Project Spec. (Form BV2) – 30 August 2000.
• Complete service improvement options (Form BV3) – December 2000.
• Develop action plan (Form BV4) – January 2001.
• Target Best Value and Audit Sub Committee meeting – 21 February 2001.
• Target Committee meeting - Operations Sub-committee meeting – Spring 2001.

PROJECT SCALE & SCOPE FOR CHANGE

1. What is the size of the service?
   Staffing costs 1999/00 £783,480
   Other hired or contracted services £58,524
   Counsel and legal fees £293,333
   Total cost of service including staffing costs £1,380,410

   Budget size
   Outturn 1999/2000

2. To what extent is the service mandatory or discretionary?
   Mandatory or discretionary
   There is no legal requirement for the Council to have a legal service. However, the Council and its services can only operate within specific legal frameworks and they require legal services to deliver their work. There is therefore a crucial operating requirement for a legal service.

1. What is the size of the service?
   Staffing costs 1999/00 £783,480
   Other hired or contracted services £58,524
   Counsel and legal fees £293,333
   Total cost of service including staffing costs £1,380,410

   Budget size
   Outturn 1999/2000

2. To what extent is the service mandatory or discretionary?
   Mandatory or discretionary
   There is no legal requirement for the Council to have a legal service. However, the Council and its services can only operate within specific legal frameworks and they require legal services to deliver their work. There is therefore a crucial operating requirement for a legal service.
relevant OCC policy statements

- **Statutory references**
  All council services are provided on the basis of and governed by specific legal requirements. A list of relevant acts etc is available on form BV1.

  In addition to the principal Acts, the powers, duties and responsibilities of Local Authorities are further defined by Regulations and these are supplemented by advice in the form of Government Departmental Circulars. Circulars do not have the force of law but Local Authorities are expected to act under the general guidance of a Government Department and Circulars are admissible in evidence against a Local Authority who fail to comply.

- **OCC policy statements**
  There are no policy statements as such. The nature of the service has been determined locally over time. At present the Solicitor to the Council has delegated power under Standing Orders for the conduct of and representation at legal proceedings. He has power to authorise and settle legal proceedings.

  The work of County Legal Services is governed by Internal Service Agreements agreed between the Solicitor to the Council and Client Departments. At present, the Council has determined to have legal services substantially provided in-house (save for insurance work).

  The Legal Service is a critical component in the delivery of Council Services.

3. **How critical is the service? (e.g. state the potential implications if it was not provided at all)**

   - **Ceasing to provide this service**
     The Council require legal services in order to fulfil its functions and to operate within the law. If it did not have such services the Council would be at risk of acting unlawfully or ineffectively with consequential financial and other costs.

   - **Providing the service – to a lower standard or quantity**
     The service is subject to professional conduct rules through the Law Society. The service is also, subject to legal process standards particularly in litigation where Courts and Tribunals are involved. However for the most part, the standard to which the service is provided is a matter of judgement by Senior Legal Management about the time, resources and expertise needed to ensure effective legal outcomes. If standards are lowered then there is an increasing risk that those outcomes maybe unsatisfactory with consequential adverse effects on services.

     The quantity of the service provided is for the most part determined by demand e.g. by departments in operating their services or by the public in initiating legal action. It is therefore difficult to control the level of demand except at the margins. That element of the service which involves a monitoring, scrutiny, overview, and advisory role to ensure that the Council is operating lawfully at individual, departmental and corporate levels i.e. the corporate role is more controllable if no less necessary.

4. **Is the service provided differently/to a different level by**

   - **Commissioning another organisation to provide it on our behalf**
     Most areas of legal work could be externalised as there is likely to be an external market that could conduct this work on behalf of the Authority. The essential factors that need to be considered include effectiveness, sensitivity, cost and monitoring but hourly charges are likely to be significantly higher than in-house charges.

     However the monitoring, scrutiny, overview and advisory role both at a corporate and departmental level is more difficult to externalise, and divorcing this from the operational legal service diminishes the effectiveness of the former.

   - **Comparisons with higher performing/lower cost authorities**
     There is no national comparative data to show how the legal service in Oxfordshire compares to other local authorities on the basis of performance levels as against
higher performing/lower cost authorities?

costs. The Audit Commission amongst others, has been looking at national performance indicators, but none have yet been published.

Give details of possible different structures, different eligibility criteria, alternative processes etc. as used by higher performing/lower cost authorities.

Some comparative data is available from local or adhoc benchmarking exercises (for details see BV1). The areas covered included Childcare, conveyancing and debt collection. They showed that Oxfordshire compared favourably or were broadly similar in terms of:-
- hourly rates charged
- legal expenditure per head of population
- income generation
- staff numbers

However there were some differences in practices between Oxfordshire and other Legal Services including:-
- the use of a flat rate charge for all fee earners.
- the level of debt handled by the Legal Service.
- the use of support staff as opposed to Legal Executives or Solicitors.

However there was no evidence that Oxfordshire is providing Legal Services significantly differently or to different levels than other local authorities. Further enquiries are being pursued with a number of selected authorities e.g. those who have won awards or have adopted innovative practices to see whether more up-to-date comparisons can be drawn in areas of costs, staffing and practices. Comparisons are also being sought with the private sector.

- Different structures etc. used by other authorities.

structure - The structure of the Legal Services Unit in Oxfordshire is broadly similar to most other Authorities who tend to arrange work in Teams e.g. Conveyancing and Child Care.

However having Joint Heads of Legal Services is unique in the local Benchmarking Group and possibly in the Country. One Head is responsible for non-contentious work e.g. conveyancing, planning, environmental, contracts and the other is responsible for litigation matters. This raises issues about the effective use of senior management time and also encourages the division between the two teams. There is a need to review the Joint Head arrangement.

eligibility criteria - The use of Legal Executives and other non-Solicitor staff varies markedly between Local Authorities. Most (like Oxfordshire) use Legal Executives for conveyancing work and Solicitors for child care work. A number of Local Authorities use Legal Executives in addition to qualified Solicitors with limited powers of attendance at Court.

From feedback within the local benchmarking group "SCONDWAG" it is clear that the Litigation Team in Oxfordshire use support staff for work which other Local Authorities require Legal Executives.

in-house/external split - From comparisons within the SCONDWAG Group it is clear that Oxfordshire buy in more legal services than other shire counties. Our use of retained Solicitors is unique as is our tender process for Counsel.

5. What is the scope for changing the service provider?

There are a number of options for changing the way the service is provided
nature (quality, quantity, service provider, method used) of the service?

including:-

private practice - private practice could undertake all or some of the legal services on a contract basis. The level of service would need to be specified in the contract and considerable monitoring will be required by Client Departments. This has implications for the corporate role.

core legal group with additional work externalised - this model envisages a central core remaining in-house and thus providing a level of expertise direct to the Council but with similar work also sent out to private practice either on a case by case basis or under contract arrangements. This would enable comparisons to be made that could help improve in-house performance. It would reduce the need to carry staff permanently in order to cope with surge in demand that may not be consistent. County Legal Services already partly operate in this way with work "put out" when workloads are high in using external Solicitors, Counsel and private practice.

partnership model - in-house legal services could work with a private practice firm thus ensuring legal expertise is retained for the benefit of the Council. This model needs further investigation and has implications for the corporate role.

reorganisation of in-house provision - break up legal services and allocate specific legal advisers to be placed within individual Client Departments to work exclusively for them. This has implications for the corporate role.

disband in-house provision and authorise Client Departments to instruct and monitor private practice as and when required.

grow the business e.g by bidding for other public sector work, amalgamating/partnering with other public or private sector partners, actively seeking new business from new sources, developing the business to the advantage of existing department clients and maximising external income.

• Change quality or quantity of service

There is less scope for changing the quality or quantity of the service provided. Some of the areas that could be considered include:-

different eligibility criteria - It may be possible to have certain legal work undertaken by less qualified staff (and, therefore, at a lower cost) such as Legal Executives. However, usually such staff would still have to work under the supervision of a Solicitor. Care would have to be given to ensure that this did not breach Law Society Guidelines and there would have to be a costs benefit analysis to ensure that this did not result in the increased use and reliance on Counsel for advocacy.

In County Legal Services the scope for saving by using Legal Executive's is limited given little differential between Legal Executive and Solicitor salary scales.

reduction in support staff - Support staff costs might be reduced by increased reliance on IT. Care would need to be given to ensure that such a proposal did not increase the length of time a fee earner spends on a case as a direct result of doing their own typing etc.

different referral level – ensuring legal services are only used for more appropriate legal work i.e. service departments take more responsibility for preparation before referring work to Legal Service. This might require Service Departments to become clearer about how and when legal services should be used.
6. What is the outcome that the service is trying to achieve (please list the service objectives or key performance measures/success criteria that are used)?

- **Change method used**
  Although the service promotes job sharing and part-time working, there could be scope for pursuing these further together with the use of home working.

**CURRENT SERVICE CONDITION (taken from Form BV1)**

The objectives and performance indicators for County Legal Services are contained in the annual Business Plan.

**Service objectives**

The aim of the County Legal Services is to maintain consistently high standards by ensuring the prompt, efficient and cost-effective delivery of legal services. Its objectives are:

1. To retain Investors In People Accreditation.
2. To satisfy the Law Society's Practice Management Standards and to work towards achieving LEXCEL Accreditation by December 2000. [LEXCEL is the Law Society's independent scheme for evaluating legal practice against the Practice Management Standards]
3. All fee earners to have access in their own offices to suitable IT equipment and to have sufficient IT skills to make use of new equipment in their day to day work.
4. To ensure Client Departments are kept informed of significant developments in the law affecting their activities/responsibilities.
5. To be proactive in training fee earners and appropriate officers in service departments in the effects of the Human Rights Act.
6. Full implementation of the County Legal Services Training and Development Plan.
7. To effectively monitor and review staff levels within County Legal Services.
8. To establish and monitor at regular intervals the financial spending plan for County Legal Services.
9. To ensure County Legal Services is staffed and skilled to meet the demand for legal services of Client Departments.
10. To discuss with each client department how legal services can assist them in achieving the service objectives set out in their medium term plan for 1999/02.
11. To implement the Unit's action plan for ensuring compliance with the County Council's Beacon Programme objectives.
12. To undertake a Best Value review of legal services in order to comply with and implement the recommendations contained within the Council's best value performance plan.

**Performance indicators**

1. To ensure that all client departments acknowledge that in at least 85% of cases the standard of service offered by the Legal Services Unit is "excellent", "very good" or "good". This standard will be based on the quality of service offered by fee earners and the support offered by the legal support staff.
2. To ensure that all client departments acknowledge that in at least 85% of cases their requests for legal services are acted upon "promptly".
3. To ensure that all fee earners record the equivalent of 1245 chargeable hours (FT) per annum.
4. To ensure that 100% recovery of the cost of service delivery is achieved and that the Legal Services Unit continues to be self-financing at the lowest possible charging rates (currently £47.30 per hour in accordance with Service Level Agreements).
5. To strive for improvements in the quality of service delivery by eliminating all complaints raised by client departments.
6. To provide legal services in accordance with the Service Level Agreements.
7. In the interests of efficiency, prudence and economy to ensure that Chief Officers involve the Legal Services Unit and seek advice as early as possible through close and effective liaison with client departments.

7. How efficient/ successful is the service at achieving this desired outcome (list evidence or performance against these success criteria which show this)?

- The service regularly surveys customer satisfaction, and this shows very high levels of user contentment (details of survey results can be made available on request).
- However, a recent survey carried out specifically for this BV review has identified a number of areas where improvements are needed, or where different approaches might be explored (see section 11 below).

8. How does this level of success or performance compare with other authorities (what comparative evidence is there)?

- The responses to question 4 above show that there are some variations in the way that legal services are managed within different authorities. There is limited information on which to make comparisons of performance, although the SCONDWAG benchmarking initiative is improving matters.

9. In what areas is the OCC service successful or strong?

- Highly skilled and enthusiastic staff some of whom have been retained by the Authority for a long period of time.
- Very low sickness rates (2% for 99/00).
- Very positive Client Department feedback and support.
- Good reputation with outside Solicitors and Courts with regard to quality of work.
- Strong management procedures in place.
- Investors In People Accreditation.
- Positive progress on LEXCEL Accreditation (Law Society Practice Management Standards).
- Good links with other Local Authorities (SCONDWAG).
- Low charging rates.

10. In what areas is the OCC service in need of improvement?

1. Need to review internal management arrangements including:
   - team structures
   - joint heads
   - salary differentials

2. Need to review trading organisation status and charging arrangements to ensure:
   - flexibility in terms of staff and expertise to respond to client requirements and workflow changes.
   - that clients understand and agree the nature and level of the service to be provided.
   - that clients meet the costs of that service whilst ensuring incentives to drive down costs.

3. Need to broaden the resource base of the service in terms of staff and expertise in order to meet client requirements.

4. Need to improve the way in which the corporate role (monitoring, scrutinising, advising and overseeing) is undertaken in order to ensure that the Council, as a whole, operates lawfully.

11. What were the conclusions from the most recent consultation

In July 2000, a specific questionnaire was circulated to senior managers within all client departments in order to ascertain user views on the focus of this BV review ie where could the service be improved.
What should show:

- support for further exploration of the potential for externalisation/cost comparison with private practice, especially in areas, such as contracts and conveyancing where the private sector has strong experience

- a need to improve financial information given to client departments, both in terms of strategic budget information, and spending on individual cases

- a need to improve individual service agreements with service departments for legal work

- a review of the existing management arrangements, specifically the split management responsibility and the current "trading unit" operation which did not encourage an emphasis on cost efficiency

12. Any external factors to take account of?

None – although it is anticipated that there might be difficulty in negotiating with private contractors given the market-sensitive nature of unit costs and other financial information.

13. Proposed key service areas to focus on (i.e. areas where options for service improvement might exist)

It is proposed that the review should focus on the key improvement options identified by the service's key customers (paragraph 11) together with the areas identified for improvement in paragraph 10. These are:

- exploration of the opportunities of working with other public/private partners/providers to ensure depth and consistency of service and its cost effective provision.

- improving financial information given to client departments, both in terms of strategic budget information, and spending on individual cases

- improving individual service agreements with service departments for legal work

- a review of the existing management arrangements, including the split management responsibility and the current "trading unit" operation to encourage cost efficiency

- a review of the way in which the corporate role is undertaken in order to ensure the Council as a whole operates lawfully.

In addition an opportunity has arisen for direct comparison and competition between general litigation work and private practice by virtue of the fact that the County's insurance work is about to be offered up for tender. An in-house bid for this work would provide direct comparisons with private practice both in quality and price.

14. Any other comments (e.g. any anticipated need for external consultancy input)

None

Date approved by BVASC Chief Officer

17 August 2000
**Timetable for Year 1 Best Value Reviews**

The table below presents the projected timetable for each of this year’s Best Value reviews which has been shared with our Best Value inspectors. It may be appropriate to amend the projected timetable for individual reviews as they develop.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Review</th>
<th>BV&amp;ASC considers BV2</th>
<th>BV&amp;ASC receives final report</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student Support</td>
<td>08-Mar-00</td>
<td>30-Nov-00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Care</td>
<td>24-May-00</td>
<td>30-Nov-00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer Care</td>
<td>24-May-00</td>
<td>30-Nov-00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arts &amp; Recreation</td>
<td>12-Jul-00</td>
<td>30-Nov-00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Legal Unit</td>
<td>30-Aug-00</td>
<td>08-Jan-00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Early Years /childcare</td>
<td>30-Aug-00</td>
<td>08-Jan-01</td>
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<tr>
<td>Special needs transport</td>
<td>30-Aug-00</td>
<td>08-Jan-01</td>
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<tr>
<td>Support for ICT in schools</td>
<td>30-Aug-00</td>
<td>08-Jan-01</td>
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<tr>
<td>Schools of Concern</td>
<td>30-Aug-00</td>
<td>08-Jan-01</td>
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<tr>
<td>Audit</td>
<td>12-Jul-00</td>
<td>08-Jan-00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Highways Management</td>
<td>12-Jul-00</td>
<td>08-Jan-01</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physical Disability</td>
<td>30-Aug-00</td>
<td>21-Feb-01</td>
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<td>Transport Capital</td>
<td>30-Aug-00</td>
<td>21-Feb-01</td>
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<td>Programme Procurement</td>
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<td>Social Inclusion</td>
<td>24-May-00</td>
<td>21-Feb-01</td>
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<td>Personnel</td>
<td>30-Aug-00</td>
<td>21-Feb-01</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fire Service C&amp;C</td>
<td></td>
<td>Currently on hold awaiting national direction.</td>
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