

BRIEFING NOTE

TO: Corporate Services Scrutiny and Performance Panel
DATE: 26 October 2006

RE: Review of VFM pilot with Revenues and Benefits Service

Purpose

As the pilot service area, this note provides feedback from the Revenues and Benefits service about how they found the value for money (vfm) assessment tool. It includes comments on the process as they have experienced it along with recommendations for consideration by the Corporate Services Scrutiny and Performance Panel prior to them consulting with other Scrutiny Panels on the potential use for this tool.

Feedback on the Process – key questions / comments raised

- How is the service area selected to undertake a vfm assessment? Should there be a criteria?
- How will the service area be informed that they have been chosen to complete an assessment?
- The process would have been better if there was a handover between member leading the review and officer responsible for completing the assessment was undertaken.
- Do members and officers require training or briefing on the purpose and process of the assessment tool?
- Officers would also like to complete the final assessment sheet to give their perspective on whether the service offers vfm and to state improvements already made or planned.
- The service area felt it would have been beneficial to arrange a hand back of the assessment tool to the lead member. This would have allowed for communication and discussion of the findings.

Feedback on the Form

- Could the form be used to create a base line level of performance for the service area?
- The form was not correctly aligned and some page breaks were messy, this led to a misunderstanding on some of the questions.
- Are all of the quality marks still relevant?
- Officers felt the form needs a summary to paint a full picture at the start of the assessment tool.
- Does the service area need to provide trends and historical perspectives with the PI data or just the current picture?
- Officers would like greater clarity on some of the questions as to whether they are asking for responses about the data or the processes in place.
- Officers would like the addition of a forward looking comments box on the final assessment sheet; this would enable the service area to provide members with additional information about any improvement plans.

- The guidance information for the benchmarking question should be positioned at the beginning of the document as some information was missed.

Recommendations

- A formal handover is agreed between the member leading the vfm review and the officer responsible for completing the assessment. This should cover:
 - Expectations and reasons for selection by the Panel
 - Clearly communicated aims and objectives
 - Agreed timeline for completion
 - Clarity about information to be prepared and presented
 - Agreed hand back date
- Officers should actively engage with support services including finance, HR and performance management to ensure accuracy and completeness of data.
- A summary should be included at the beginning of the assessment tool.
- A final assessment sheet should also be completed by the service area, this will allow for self assessment by the service and provide opportunity for comparison with members.
- A forward looking comments box should be added to the final assessment sheet. This will allow officers and members to comment on how they perceive the service will perform in the future.
- The formatting of document shall be changed to include better alignment of questions, page breaks and guidance moved to the front of the document.
- Certain questions will be re-worded to clarify whether data or process information is required.
- An officer from the performance management team should be available at the handover and hand back meetings to provide technical support on vfm and to answer any queries about the form or process.

Author

Simon Evans

Performance and Scrutiny Officer

☎ 01922 652140

evanssimon@walsall.gov.uk

Field Code Changed