

Cabinet – 7 February 2007

Joint Area Review

Service: Children's services

Wards: All

Summary of report

At a meeting of children's and young people scrutiny and performance panel on 7 September 2006 the panel received a detailed overview of the Joint Area Review (JAR). The panel were concerned that the inspection was intensive and may take resources away from already under funded services.

At its panel meeting on 21 December 2006, the children's and young people scrutiny and performance panel received a report on the likely costs to the Council of the forthcoming Joint Area Review, based on the experiences of other local authorities. The panel were also informed that the Council had been given the date of 28 January 2008 as the inspection date.

After considering a report on the cost of the Joint Area Review the panel requested that this report (**appendix 1**) was sent to portfolio holders Councillors O'Hare and Zahid.

Recommendations

The date of the Joint Area Review was not available to the Council when the comments and recommendations regarding the budget were put to Cabinet by the children's and young people scrutiny and performance panel. As a result of this, the scrutiny panel request that a reduction in savings required or a growth item of £200,000 is made available to children's services to support the facilitation of the Joint Area Review.

Resource and legal implications

The scrutiny panel are requesting that children's services are provided with £200,000 to support effective preparation for the Joint Area Review.

Citizen Impact

The Joint Area Review focuses on children and young people. Preparing for and achieving a good score will provide confidence that our governance is sound and supports good services and our services for children and young people are of a high standard.

Community Safety

The Every Child Matters outcomes framework covers five areas including 'stay safe'. A number of aims have been identified including safe from crime and anti-social behaviour in and out of school, safe from bullying and discrimination, safe from accidental injury and death.

Environment Impact

The Every Child Matters outcomes framework covers environmental issues under the achieving economic well being area which includes an aim to 'live in decent homes and sustainable communities'.

Performance and risk management issues

The Council will be responsible for any performance improvement actions that arise from the Joint Area Review.

Equality implications

The Every Child Matters outcomes framework covers equality issues across the five areas that it covers, including that children and young people are safe from discrimination.

Vision 2008

Effective preparation for the JAR will support the delivery of the council's vision for 2008 and a sound basis for the longer term vision for 2021 as it will ensure a strong infrastructure is in place.

Background papers


'Joint Area Review', presentation to Children's and Young People Scrutiny and Performance Panel – 07 09 06.

'Preparations for CPA Corporate Assessment and Joint Area Review 2007/08' report to Cabinet 20 12 06

'Joint Area Review', report to Children's and Young People Scrutiny and Performance Panel – 21 12 06

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Signed:



Councillor Arif

Chair of Children's and Young People Scrutiny and Performance Panel

Date: 29 January 2007

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE
SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL**

DATE: 21 December 2006

JOINT AREA REVIEW

Ward(s) All

Portfolios: Councillor Zahid Ali, Children's Services

Summary of report:

This report responds to the resolution of the children's and young people's scrutiny and performance panel "That the panel receive costing of the JAR, based on the experiences of other local authorities."

The report summarises the findings of a questionnaire sent to local authorities whose JAR has been completed and published, asking them to estimate the costs to them of preparing for and managing the inspection.

Background Papers

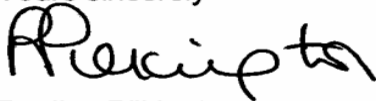
Questionnaire to other local authorities, and their responses.

Reason for Scrutiny:

Scrutiny requested a report on the likely costs to the council of the forthcoming Joint Area Review.

Signed:

Yours sincerely



Pauline Pilkington

Assistant Director

Date: 12 December 2006

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CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL

DATE: 21 December 2006

JOINT AREA REVIEW

At its meeting on 7 September 2006, the children and young people's scrutiny and performance panel requested "That the panel receive costing of the JAR, based on the experiences of other local authorities."

A short questionnaire was sent to those local authorities who by September 2006 had completed Joint Area Reviews with published reports. They were asked to estimate the direct and indirect costs of their JAR.

"Direct Costs" were defined as those additional to mainstream budgets, before, during and after the fieldwork. They included things like: use of external consultants, interims, short term appointments, honoraria, publicity and events.

"Indirect Costs" were defined as JAR related activity funded from within mainstream budgets, before, during and after the fieldwork. These included management and staff time, consultation, communications and printing.

A number of respondents found it difficult to provide figures and others had difficulty in splitting direct and indirect costs. However the results were:

Direct costs: range £10,000 - £100,000; average £60,000

Indirect costs: range £20,000 - £250,000; average £105,000

Total costs: range £75,000 - £260,000; average £160,000

There is no correlation between the size of the authority and the amounts spent. Nor is there any obvious correlation between the amounts spent and the JAR result. Some high performing authorities spent relatively little, while others spent a lot. The same was true for authorities whose JAR result was poor.

Members will be aware that Walsall is in the unique position of having a contracted out education service. While Education Walsall are full partners in our preparations for the JAR, the children's services directorate lacks the infrastructure that other authorities can call on to lead and support the preparatory work.

Walsall's JAR inspection will take place over a fortnight beginning on Monday 28 January 2008. Preparations have already begun and will steadily gather pace during 2007. A corporate CPA inspection will take place at the same time as the JAR (and probably an Enhanced Youth Service inspection as well). There will therefore be considerable pressure on key staff and managers during the latter half of 2007 and into 2008, notably in areas like finance, HR and performance management.