
REPORT TO:	ENVIRONMENTAL & DEVELOPMENT SERVICES (SPECIAL - BUDGET)	AGENDA ITEM: 7
DATE OF MEETING:	9th JANUARY 2007	CATEGORY: DELEGATED
REPORT FROM:	DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES	OPEN:
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:	MARK ALFLAT (Ext. 5712)	DOC: s:\cent_serv\committee reports\environmental & development\9-january-07\audit commission best value review of cultural services.doc
SUBJECT:	AUDIT COMMISSION BEST VALUE REVIEW OF CULTURAL SERVICES	REF: MA/PMW
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	ALL	TERMS OF REFERENCE: EDS10 & 11

1.0 Recommendations

1.1 That Members note the implications and timeframe of the Best Value Review of Cultural Services. That all Members are invited to a seminar on the findings of the Best Value Review of Cultural Services Action Plan in February, 2007.

2.0 Purpose of Report

2.1 To inform Members of the Best Value Review of Cultural Services and of the programme of appraisal and Audit Commission inspection.

3.0 Detail

3.1 The Audit Commission will be carrying out a Best Value Review of Cultural Services at South Derbyshire District Council in March 2007.

3.2 The Cultural Services theme will "marble" across all Council services.

3.3 Under the theme of Cultural Services the Audit Commission will be looking at Value for Money, Human Resource Strategies, Heritage, IT, Tourism, Economic Development and the impact of Crime and Disorder and Leisure provision throughout the District. The initiatives that impact on the health of the population will also be examined. An Officer group representing all services has been established. The Audit Commission will submit a documentation request at the start of January 2007 that will have to be submitted by the month end.

- 3.4 Prior to inspection the Auditors will be taken on a tour of the District. The actual inspection of the service will take place during March, 2007. As in the Housing Best Value Review, a number of Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE) questions are used by the Audit Commission to examine services. A judgement will be formed on where the service is now and its likely prospects for improvement. The Best Value Review is being led by Mark Alflat, Director of Community Services.
- 3.5 As in previous Best Value Reviews, Member engagement is essential and it is proposed that the Chair and Vice Chairs of the relevant Committees are kept regularly involved in the progress and outcomes of the Review and work carried out by Officers. It is also proposed that all Members be invited to a seminar on the Officer findings and Action Plan prior to submission of the documentation.
- 3.6 Leisure & Community Development have already carried out some work regarding the "Towards an Excellent Service" Service Standard (TAES) and it is proposed that this standard be worked towards for accreditation as part of the service striving to improve. It is also proposed that the Authority join either the Association of Public Excellence (APSE) or the National Benchmarking Service (NBS) to enable out performance on leisure facility provision to be compared with other authorities.

The Performance Manager has been appointed as Project Manager and will be spending approximately 50% of her time until the Inspection on the Best Value Review. The postholder is Prince 2 qualified and has a successful track record on the delivery of the Housing Best Value Review.

- 3.7 A further report will be brought to this Committee in March 2007.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 There will be costs arising from the joining of APSE/NBS, working Towards an Excellent Service and, if necessary, the backfilling of the Performance Manager. These can be absorbed within existing budgets.

5.0 Corporate Implications

- 5.1 A positive score on the Review of Cultural Services will confirm the mounting evidence that the Council is rapidly improving in all areas. The Council will also use the inspection as an opportunity to further improve its services.

6.0 Conclusions

- 6.1 The resource implications of an inspection on a small District Council are considerable, but it is hoped that the Inspectors recommendations will aid SDDC to improve even further the services it provides to the Public.