

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND HOUSING COMMITTEE

BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2001/2002 - RESULT OF CONSULTATION

Purpose

1. To update the Committee following the consultation process recently undertaken on the National Assembly's Best Value Performance Indicators for 2001/2002, and to report the views of the consultees on the change to the publication date for the Best Value Performance Plans.

Recommendation

2. To note the responses to the recent consultation on Best Value Performance indicators for 2001/2002.

3. To note the publication of the Best Value Performance Plans will be on 30 June 2001, with the audit of these plans by 31 October 2001. This is the position as currently set out in the Local Government (Best Value) (Reviews and Performance Plans) (Wales) Order 2000 No. 1271 (W.97). There will not be a requirement to produce a draft plan by 31 March.

Timing

4. An Order is required to provide statutory force to the Performance Indicators for Best Value authorities in Wales for 2001-2002. This will be in force by 1 April 2001.

5. The Order will be accompanied by a detailed guidance document.

Background

6. The committee discussed the proposed Best Value Performance Indicators in its meeting on the 15 November 2000. The consultation document was issued on the 1st December with responses requested by the 31st January. 77 responses to the consultation exercise have been received to date and a summary of the replies is attached at **(Annex 1)**.

7. The consultation document set out a much reduced set of performance indicators which had been re-focussed to provide greater emphasis on the outcome and outputs of services provided by Best Value authorities. Consultees were asked to comment on the proposed set of indicators (reduced from 172 in 2000/2001 to 83 for 2001/2002).

8. The reduction in number, and the amalgamation of previous Audit Commission and Best Value indicators into one set of National Assembly indicators was supported by consultees. Concern was raised by some at the removal of cost-based indicators, although it was made clear in the covering paper that the cost / input based information should continue to be collected as information essential for robust day to day service management.

9. A number of consultees raised the issue of divergence from the English set, resulting in a reduced ability to make direct comparison across the border. However the set of performance indicators on which the Assembly consulted was refocused to incorporate the priorities and initiatives underway in Wales. It should not be difficult to establish comparative links with similar authorities in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland to facilitate useful and productive comparison.

10. Various points were raised by authorities on individual indicators and definitions, and many of these will be taken on board in drafting the Order and accompanying guidance.

11. Specific concerns raised by consultees have resulted in assessment and the re-inclusion of **two** indicators in order to ensure that particular service areas are represented.

12. The inclusion of a Trading Standards enforcement checklist indicator, which helps support the Cabinet Office initiative to implement an Enforcement Concordat across Britain. **(Annex 2)**

13. A strong lobby by the Ramblers Association (14 responses) requesting the re-insertion of the two Audit Commission indicators covering 'signposting' and 'ease of use' of Public Rights of Way. The DETR have re-introduced a combined indicator for this in England and it is proposed include this in the suite for Wales. **(Annex 3)**

14. Large scale support was voiced by the authorities to publish their Best Value Performance Plan on the 30 June without the need for the for a draft plan at 31 March.

Cross Cutting Themes

15. The revised set of indicators has been developed with the collaboration of many partner organisations covering, local government, technical bodies and the voluntary sector. The Assembly has been very keen to link the key areas of Equal Opportunities and Sustainable

Development into the Best Value regime.

16. The Equal Opportunity Commission, Disability Rights Commission and the Commission for Racial Equality were included in the consultation process to review the proposed set of indicators and to maintain emphasis in these areas. The equality bodies are currently undertaking work assessing generic equality standards for local government and looking at the most effective way to integrate equality into the best value framework. The findings and outcomes of these projects will be looked at for incorporation into the set of indicators for 2002-2003.

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