

report

meeting	NOTTINGHAMSHIRE AND CITY OF NOTTINGHAM FIRE AUTHORITY		
date	30 April 2004	agenda item number	5

REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE PLAN 2003-2004 (BVPP)

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to present Members with the strategy for the publication of the 2003-04 Best Value Performance Plan (BVPP).

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Members will be aware that the Local Government Act 1999 requires all Best Value Authorities to prepare an Annual Performance Plan.
- 2.2 The statutory requirement to prepare a performance plan provides an opportunity for the Authority to articulate their proposals for future improvements and demonstrate their performance over the previous twelve months.
- 2.3 The primary audience for the plan is the Authority itself, as it gives Elected Members, and Officers responsible for delivery quality local services, an awareness of the Authority's improvement priorities and how they will be addressed over the coming year.
- 2.4 Although it is published externally, the BVPP issues and targets, being designed for internal consumption, can be difficult to understand for the majority of external stakeholders. There is a need therefore to summarise the contents into legible, clear and relevant information about their Fire and Rescue Service.

3. REPORT

- 3.1 There have been a number of changes to the format and contents of plans over recent years. The latest changes were in the ODPM Circular 03/2004 published in March 2004.
- 3.2 The crux of these changes related to the introduction of Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) into the Fire Service, and the requirement to base Best Value upon Service and Corporate judgements.
- 3.3 As a result of this in the future the Fire Authority's BVPP must include the following items:-
 - 3.3.1 A brief summary of the Authority's strategic objectives and priorities for improvement. This should be drawn from the Authority's overall vision, community strategy and its corporate planning process.

- 3.3.2 CPA scores as presented in the Audit Commission's scorecard.
 - 3.3.3 Progress in, and future plans for, developing local and national priorities.
 - 3.3.4 Details of past, current and planned performance against local and national performance indicators.
 - 3.3.5 A brief summary of financial information.
 - 3.3.6 A brief statement on contracts. Authorities should state and certify that all individual contracts awarded during the year, which involve a transfer of staff, comply with the requirements in the Code of Practice on Workforce Matters.
- 3.4 With the exception of 3.3.2 above, all the items will appear in the Authority's 2003/04 BVPP. Item 3.3.2 has been omitted this year as the CPA trial has not resulted in a point scoring system and as a trial, the findings have not been released for public consumption.
- 3.5 Members will be aware that last year the Authority approved the publication of the BVPP in internet format (paper versions were available on request). This strategy has proved to have been a success. The on-line version of the BVPP consists of around forty pages with each month receiving an average of 504 web page requests from the public (September 2003 was the highest with 902 web page requests). This is in comparison to previous years when hard copy requests average four/year.
- 3.6 The proposal therefore is to maintain this strategy, subject to Members' approval and publish the BVPP on the website. This will also aid the Authority's strategy in meeting Government targets with regard to IEG (Implementing Electronic Government) by December 2005.
- 3.7 The publication date for the BVPP is 30 June 2004. Members may recall the Government changed the deadline in 2001-2002 from 31 March so that Authorities could include an accurate out-turn rather than an estimate of performance.
- 3.8 Members will be pleased to know that the BVPP is nearing completion and a copy of the draft web pages is attached. It is intended to present the BVPP for final approval at the Fire Authority meeting in June.
- 3.9 Members will note that the financial BVPIs are not included in the attached draft. This is due to the time parameters needed to complete the accounts indicators.
- 3.10 Whilst the final accounts will be completed and included in the final plan, it is unlikely that they will be ready for the Fire Authority meeting in June. The proposal therefore is for Members to agree that the Chairman should approve this BVPI as soon as the information is available.
- 3.11 In addition to the publication of the BVPP and in recognition of the issues raised in paragraph 2.4 of this report relating to public understanding of the contents of the BVPP, with Members approval the intention is to supplement the BVPP with additional information.

- 3.12 Local people need access to relevant and clear information about their Authority's performance. Research suggests that a significant proportion of people do not feel informed about the standards of performance of the Local Authority and would like to know more about their Authority's performance.
- 3.13 In the Government's view it is important that local people are informed ahead of local elections each year as to how their Authority is performing in key areas. For this reason the Authority is required to publish a summary of their performance ahead of the BVPP.
- 3.14 Authorities have discretion over how such information should be presented and communicated.
- 3.15 With the performance being presented electronically via the Internet, it is felt that to summarise this information and represent it via the Internet would not be in the interests of Best Value.
- 3.16 The proposal therefore is to produce a poster that gives brief details of a number of key performance indicators and directs the reader to the Authority's website.
- 3.17 This poster will not only relate to the Best Value Performance Plan, but will provide the opportunity to publicise the Local Risk Management Plan, the recent ORS Public Survey and other important documents that the public may find of interest.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications arising from this report as both the Summary Information Poster and the Best Value Performance Plan are covered within existing budgets.

5. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct personnel implications arising from this report.

6. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

As with other documents recently published by the Authority, copies in the main languages spoken within Nottinghamshire are available on request.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

Publication of both the Summary Information Poster and the Best Value Performance Plan are a statutory requirement under Local Government legislation, failure to do so would result in a report to the Secretary of State by our auditors.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 That Members approve the draft format for the Fire Authority's 2003-04 BVPP (attached at Appendix A).
- 8.2 That Members approve the proposal to continue to present the BVPP electronically via the Internet, with a hard copy option for those who request it.
- 8.3 That Members authorise the Chairman to approve the outstanding page relating to the financial BVPI.

8.4 That Members approve the publication of the Summary Information Poster (attached at Appendix B).

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Local Government Act 1999
ODPM Circular 03/2004

P. Woods
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER