

VALUE FOR MONEY – ONGOING REVIEWS

REFUSE COLLECTION /STREET CLEANING – NEW WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

The initiative introduced a 4 day week and new working arrangements to:

- Reduce year on year costs by £65k per annum.
- To improve performance in the following areas:
 - BV199a % of land having combined deposits of litter/detritus that fall below an acceptable level.
 - BV199 b-d, which refers to graffiti, fly tipping and fly posting.
 - BV86 Cost of Collection per household
 - Bv89 % satisfaction of standards of cleanliness.

PRIDE IN EASINGTON

The “cleaner, safer, greener” theme is an established objective within the Stronger Safer Communities Block of the County Durham Local Area Agreement (LAA) and a priority for the Easington Community Safety Partnership and Local Strategic Partnership.

The theme is identified in recognition of the strong links between a poor environmental standard eg high levels of litter, detritus and graffiti etc and a disproportionate level of fear of crime with environmental conditions having a high level of impact on perceptions of quality of life.

Pride in Easington is proposed to have three objectives underpinning an over arching aim to improve the physical and social quality of life of people living and working in the district.

- To reduce the levels of fear of crime, which are currently disproportionate to actual crime rates ie Easington is a lower quartile area for recorded crime nationally but in the top quartile for perceptions of fear of crime. (figures based on national recording statistics, the British Crime Survey and the findings of a local fear of crime survey).
- To deliver cleaner greener neighbourhoods (Easington is in the bottom quartile for % of residents expressing satisfaction with standards of cleanliness in their area).
- To promote community cohesion ie to promote the positive aspects of community life in the district and to actively empower local community groups to improve the physical and social environment.

BEST VALUE REVIEW OF CORPORATE SERVICES

This is a traditional review based on the 4 C's approach: -

- Benchmarking cost and performance where data is available.
- Satisfaction data.
- Scoping day with stakeholders and critical friends.
- Process mapping to optimise use of resources
- Soft market testing across the private sector and public authorities.
- External review through the IDeA.
- Probe.

Efficiencies have been identified during the course of the review and will be redirected to increase capacity within the organisation.

PROVISION OF CARE SERVICES

Despite a good review under best value this service is subjected to continuous review as part of the overall Supporting People arrangements.

The Council recently submitted a bid for a contract to provide Care Services to the residents of Easington for a 3-year period from April 2007. The contract has been awarded to the Council and a focus group has been recently reformed to seek feedback on performance and future monitoring of the service.

The bid will require an innovative approach to delivering the service and we will be competing against other local authorities and the private sector.

BUSINESS PROCESS RE-ENGINEERING

The Council is currently implementing a contact centre approach to customer services whereby 80% of common enquiries is satisfied at the first point of contact.

This approach has required the examination of all service delivery processes to determine what can be handled in the centre.

Ultimately the contact centre will provide the customer interface freeing up the 'back office/professional functions to better use their skills to increase production.

In the longer term in conjunction with this exercise the back office transactional services could be considered for a shared service/collaborative approach to service delivery.

VALUE FOR MONEY EXERCISE WITH EAST DURHAM HOMES

East Durham Homes engaged a private sector company (Profit Focus Group) to carry out a commercial review of services provided by the Council covering corporate and operational costs including vehicle maintenance, environmental services and highways related services.

Whilst initially this review was difficult findings to date has not led to significant loss of service for the council because of poor value for money. Most operational services have been retained and signed up for a further 3 years.

Although there has been a loss of elements of corporate services this was not because of poor value for money. Transfers occurred mainly because in certain areas such as financial management and personnel services East Durham Homes had to needed to be in complete control of those services.

These reviews are still ongoing and in many areas the Company, East Durham Homes and the Council are now working together to explore costs and quality of delivery to prove value for money across the services.

PROCUREMENT

Corporately the Council is making good progress in meeting the Procurement National Guidelines and has recently received a positive review of progress by the IDEA.

A recent exercise carried out with the Profit Focus group to analyse our commodity spend has identified potential procurement efficiencies of up to £175,000.

In addition to the above we are also working closely with other authorities in the region and the NECE. Data will be submitted to a regional initiative to enable councils in the region to use joint purchasing power to secure efficiencies in the purchase of commodities.