

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE SERVICE

BEST VALUE

1. POLICY

It is the policy of the West Midlands Fire and Civil Defence Authority (WMFCDA) to comply with the legislation requirements of the Local Government Act (1999) and all subsequent statutory instruments and Office of the Deputy Prime Minister Circulars in order to demonstrate Best Value, covering both cost and quality, in the delivery of services to the communities of the West Midlands by the most effective, economic and efficient means available.

2. STRATEGY

2.1 General

The WMFCDA will demonstrate that it is seeking to secure continuous improvement in its performance in the exercise of all its functions, whether statutory or not, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

The Authority has developed strategies for meeting the duties required under 'Best Value' legislation and for tackling cross-cutting issues.

2.2 Best Value Reviews

WMFCDA will ensure that it is able to satisfy its external auditor that sufficient arrangements are in place to conduct Best Value Reviews (BVRs) and, in particular, the challenges of the 4Cs (Challenge, Compare, Consult and Compete).

Arrangements have been made to ensure the completion of Best Value Reviews of all the Brigade's functions. Where BVRs identify areas which are demonstrably poor, the Authority will respond speedily and effectively.

The Authority will ensure that BVRs are undertaken in accordance with statutory requirements. In addition, performance targets set for future years will be sufficiently challenging to ensure 'Best Value'.

BVRs will be targeted on functions identified in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment process as warranting improvement.

2.3 Best Value Performance Plan

The Authority will produce a Best Value Performance Plan (BVPP) annually, which will be published by 30th June each year.

The plan will include a clear statement about the services that the Authority will deliver to local people and how these will be delivered. In addition, the Plan will give details on the level of service currently provided, the levels of service the public should expect in the future and the plans in place to deliver these, including the timescales involved.

The plan will provide a summary of how successful the Authority has been in meeting the previous year's objectives and targets. This will include comparison with national targets/

indicators and will identify the Brigade's position in relation to other Brigades' performance, in particular to those within its family group.

The document will also detail performance targets for the following and, in some cases, future years and the extent to which the Authority is on track to meeting these targets. Where it is not on track, the plan will include details of remedial action being taken to address the situation.

Key results arising from BVRs conducted during the previous year will also be included in the plan.

The plan will be developed in line with the requirements of the Local Government Act 1999. The plan will be made available throughout the Authority and will be readily accessible to the public and other interested parties.

The Authority will make reasonably practical arrangements for the production of a summary of the BVPP. The summary will include details of how to gain access to a full copy of the plan.

3. PROCEDURES

3.1 Best Value Review Process

There are two distinct teams involved in the Best Value Review Process. These are the Best Value Team (BVT) and the Service (Area) Review Team (SRT).

The Best Value Team will ensure that the Best Value Review is properly carried out and that the application of the "4 Cs" (Challenge, Compare, Consult and Compete) is fully met. The BVT will convene initial meetings, help identify the detailed areas for review, provide external performance data, and organise appropriate consultation. The Team will take the lead and work in conjunction with the SRT ensuring that the review remains strategic. The BVT will not be closely involved in the implementation of recommendations arising from the Review. This is the responsibility of the lead officers identified within each report assisted by the Performance Management Section of the Performance and Planning Department.

The SRT will comprise a Service Team Leader (STL) and a cross section of members from the function under Review who will assist the Best Value Team in carrying out the Review process. The role of the STL is essential and it is vital that he/she meets regularly with the Service Area Review Team to keep them and all members of staff informed.

They will help identify performance data from within their area and have input into the application of the "4 Cs". The STL will champion the findings of the Review at senior level meetings within the Brigade and the SRT will act as expert advisors if required. When targets and Action Plans have been agreed and published, the STL will be responsible for monitoring the implementation and reporting progress on targets.

At the conclusion of each Best Value Review, a report explaining how the "4 Cs" have been applied will be submitted to the Authority. The report will be supported by the Lead Authority member, who will have been involved in the development of the recommendations along with the STL, SRT and relevant Director.

Once approved, recommendations from the report will be formulated into an Action Plan which will be monitored and reviewed in conjunction with the SRT.

Copies of Action Plans will be made available on the Brigade's Internet and Intranet sites.

3.2 Action Planning and Reporting Progress

Monitoring of Action Plans arising from Best Value Reviews is the responsibility of the Performance and Planning Department.

However, in order to assist understanding, representatives from the Performance and Planning Department along with the Lead Authority Member for Performance Management will be involved in the Best Value process from the point where recommendations are initially developed.

Appendix 1 explains the process.

3.3 Best Value Performance Plan

Development of the annual Best Value Performance Plan and Business Plan is the responsibility of the Administration Department.

The Business Plan element of the document is determined by Corporate Board each September where the Authority's Vision, Mission and Corporate Aims are reviewed and a ten year scan of topics identified. These topics are then prioritised into

- Brigade topics for full inclusion in the Business Plan
- Departmental topics, which are simply listed in the Business Plan
- Other topics likely to have major consequences for the Brigade in the following ten years

The Best Value Performance Plan element is developed between the months of February and May, ready for publication by 30th June each year. It includes a timetable for Best Value Reviews, an assessment of progress in meeting performance measurement targets and progress on action plans resulting from audits and/or inspections. Development involves liaison with:-

- Directors who have any responsibility for the setting and monitoring of Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs) and/or Local Indicators (LIs)
- Departmental managers responsible for specific action plans

4. CROSS REFERENCES

Standing Order 23/01 Performance Management Framework

5. RESPONSIBILITY AND REVIEW/AMENDMENT DETAILS

5.1 Responsible Director/Department

This Standing Order is the responsibility of the Director, Administration.

5.2 Created/Reviewed/Fully Amended

Created by the Business Process Manager, Administration Department, January 2005.
Review date January 2006.

JOINT APPROACH TO MANAGING ACTIONS ARISING FROM BEST VALUE REVIEWS

