
REPORT TO:	FINANCE AND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM: 9
DATE OF MEETING:	16 OCTOBER 2003	CATEGORY: DELEGATED
REPORT FROM:	CHIEF EXECUTIVE	OPEN
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:	DAVID SOANES EXT 5714	DOC:
SUBJECT:	YORK CONSULTING REPORT	REF:
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	ALL	TERMS OF REFERENCE: FM01

1.0 Recommendations

- 1.1 That Members note the contents of the report and consider the issues raised

2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 To advise Members of the findings of the latest report on the Council's progress on Asset Management prepared by York Consulting

3.0 Executive Summary

- 3.1 In early 2001 the Council agreed to take part in a 3 year evaluation by York Consulting of the processes for dealing with Asset Management Planning and the Capital Strategy. In total 15 Authorities across the country have been evaluated.
- 3.2 York Consulting have visited the authority on a number of occasions, meeting with officers and Members involved in the Asset Management Planning process. They have subsequently produced reports setting out their findings, together with suggestions of how the Council can improve its performance.
- 3.3 Some of these suggestions have been taken on board, such as merging the Asset Management Steering Group and Capital Programme Working Group into a single Asset Management and Monitoring Group, and increasing Member involvement in Asset Management. Others have not been embraced, because they would involve substantial additional resources, or because they were not felt to be a priority.
- 3.4 The latest report (attached as annex A) was produced in July 2003, based on meetings held in March 2003.
- 3.5 The report does contain a few inaccuracies, such as where responsibility for certain assets lies, and these will be reported back to York Consulting.

- 3.6 The introduction to the report reviews York Consulting's earlier findings, and analyses the Council's progress in addressing them. It also sets out their evaluation framework for the development and implementation of corporate capital strategies and asset management plans by local authorities together with this authority's position in respect of the same.
- 3.7 The report then moves onto the Round 2 assessment process (i.e the submissions of Asset Management Plan (AMP) and Capital Strategy in July 2002).
- 3.8 Section 3 of the report covers the progress made by the Council since the first round of AMP and Capital Strategy submissions (in July 2001). It notes that the Council has amalgamated the two corporate groups for Asset Management and Capital Programme Monitoring; the completion of the Best Value Review; the developments in elected member responsibility for property issues; and the rationalisation of the Council's Asset Holdings.
- 3.9 However, it also notes that there remain two key barriers to change - the lack of additional resources committed to asset management, and the need to improve corporate working.
- 3.10 Section 4 looks at the 16 processes which the evaluation framework has identified need to be found in all local authorities and reviews the position of this authority in relation to each, whilst section 5 deals with process outputs.
- 3.11 The final section gives the key messages for the evaluation.
- The Council has started to generate momentum in its corporate asset management planning work, following the inevitable hiatus caused by the Best Value Review, and the challenge is to maintain this and implement the actions set out in the Best Value Improvement Plan.
 - They emphasise the importance of developing effective corporate working and support for the work of the Corporate Property Officer in driving the implementation of the Best Value Improvement Plan.
 - They note several areas of progress made by the authority
 - They note areas of weakness as being the lack of a clear strategic approach to the disposal of surplus land and property, the utilisation of space by staff (including flexible working) and co-location with partners and stakeholders, property reviews and option appraisal.

What the Council is already doing or needs to do address identified weaknesses

- 3.12 As the report has mentioned, the Best Value Improvement Plan has been prepared and is being implemented. This has included reviewing committee responsibilities, centralising asset data into an Excel based system, and reviewing the Council's performance with national and local indicators. Work is ongoing on the review of the council's buildings in respect of their compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act. Research is being undertaken prior to developing a home-working policy.
- 3.13 A draft corporate property strategy has been prepared and initial consultation is underway. Corporate guidance for the holding, disposal and management of assets has been prepared and is being considered by the Asset Management & Monitoring Group.
- 3.14 A review of current management arrangements for each group of assets has commenced. This is aiming to reduce confusion and provide clarity to customers.
- 3.15 A survey of the Civic Offices has been undertaken and the Corporate Property Officer is in the process of preparing options for future space usage. This also includes consideration of issues affecting the work environment, such as heating & ventilation and the condition of the building. Additional accommodation options at the Depot are also being explored.

3.16 Two issues which the Council does need to address are the level of resources committed to asset management and the need to further improve corporate working.

4.0 Financial Implications

4.1 There are clear potential implications should additional resources be committed to asset management as suggested in the report. However, additional resources will lead to an improved service which is likely to provide additional income and savings for the Council

5.0 Corporate Implications

5.1 The report refers specifically for the need for improved corporate working

6.0 Community Implications

6.1 None

7.0 Conclusions

7.1 The latest report from York Consulting provides a useful analysis of the authority's progress with Asset Management and the issues which still need to be addressed.

8.0 Background Papers

Previous York Consulting reports.

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