

### **BEST VALUE REVIEWS – FRAMEWORK FOR MEMBER INVOLVEMENT**

#### **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This Appendix sets out a framework for Member involvement in Best Value and Improvement Reviews. It particularly relates to the three roles of Members in modernised Local Government, i.e. the executive role, scrutiny and the representational role.
- 1.2 It is also suggested for each Review that, within the overall framework specified here, a specific arrangement for Member involvement is set out in appropriate detail.

#### **2. ROLES OF MEMBERS**

- 2.1 Within modernised Local Government the executive role of Members covers the need within the policy and budget framework set by full Council for:-
  - (a) Executive decisions necessary within the framework;
  - (b) Ensuring the performance of services within the framework against objectives set by the Council;
  - (c) Ensuring that the activities of the Authority are co-ordinated and coherent in accordance with the framework.
- 2.2 The executive role is also about strategic leadership. This involves making recommendations to the Council on policy and budget issues, and representing the Council at a strategic level in its relationship with partner organisations, particularly as part of the Local Strategic Partnership, One Barnsley.
- 2.3 The scrutiny role of Members covers the need for Members to critically challenge Cabinet recommendations and decisions and the performance of the Authority's services. Members also have a role in scrutinising outside bodies, including the partnerships operated within Barnsley. The scrutiny role also includes pro-active policy investigations and advice to the Cabinet on forthcoming policy items.
- 2.4 The representative role of Members applies at both a borough wide and ward level. At borough wide level, Members have a role in representing the views and concerns of Barnsley people as a whole. They are also concerned with representing 'communities of interest', for example young people or the elderly, across the Borough.
- 2.5 At ward level, Members have a representative role in relation to issues which affect everyone, or groups of people, within their wards. Members also have a role in representing local people within wards on an individual and case by case basis.
- 2.6 The following paragraphs set out these three principal roles of Members with regard to Best Value and Improvement Reviews.

### **3. EXECUTIVE ROLE OF MEMBERS IN BEST VALUE REVIEWS**

- 3.1 The Cabinet will be responsible for the overall improvement programme and recommending the outcomes of Best Value and Improvement Reviews to Council.
- 3.2 Cabinet Spokespeople will carry the political responsibility for progressing Reviews within their individual portfolios.
- 3.3 Cabinet Spokespeople will be responsible for liaison arrangements on Reviews with other Members in their scrutiny and representative role, and for ensuring that the arrangements for the bespoke Member input for each individual Review are satisfactory.

### **4. SCRUTINY ROLE OF MEMBERS IN BEST VALUE REVIEWS**

- 4.1 Scrutiny Commissions should prepare proactive reports on issues they would wish examined in Best Value Reviews. Ideally this would happen prior to a Review starting. The Commissions can then check whether these issues have been covered in the Key Step reports.
- 4.2 Scrutiny Commissions will be able to consider each Review report after its agreement by Cabinet and prior to its submission to Council. Scrutiny Commissions will be able to react to Cabinet recommendations in the following ways:-
  - (a) Endorse the report;
  - (b) Report to Cabinet on issues to be addressed in subsequent stages or in ancillary reports;
  - (c) Agree that Chairs of Scrutiny Commissions or Scrutiny Officers raise issues with Cabinet Members and lead officers for attention within the Reviews; and
  - (d) Refer the report back to Cabinet.
- 4.3 As Councillors, all Members have an opportunity for scrutinising Reviews and addressing their concerns to the relevant Cabinet Spokesperson.

### **5. REPRESENTATIONAL ROLE OF MEMBERS IN BEST VALUE REVIEWS**

#### **AREA FORUMS**

- 5.1 Area Forums will receive presentations on the forthcoming Improvement programme. This enables issues to be picked up and fed through to the lead officers via the Best Value teams.
- 5.2 Area Forum Officers on behalf of their Forums will liaise with the lead officers to pick up emerging issues defined by local Members. In turn, Area Forum Officers will brief local Members on the progress of Reviews.
- 5.3 Area Forums or local Members will feed issued through to Cabinet Members.
- 5.4 Area Forums may wish to receive reports on completed Reviews for information.

5.5 Consultation with Area Forums and local Members will take many forms including surveys, workshops and in depth discussions. Arrangements should make it clear:-

- (a) That the consultation is in a representational role; and
- (b) How the results are to be used in the Review.

#### LOCAL MEMBERS

5.6 All Members will have an opportunity of involvement in Best Value and Improvement Reviews as set out above in terms of being Members of:-

- (a) The Council;
- (b) Area Forums;
- (c) Members of Scrutiny Commissions;
- (d) Individually or collectively bringing issues to the attention of Cabinet Members.

### **6. BESPOKE MEMBER FRAMEWORK FOR EACH INDIVIDUAL REVIEW**

6.1 This will normally be agreed in scoping the Review and will set out the details of the proposed Member input to each review covering aspects of the above set of roles in terms of:-

- (a) Timetable of meetings
- (b) Individual Member involvement in a representational role:-
  - On a liaison group;
  - In a consultation capacity; or
  - In a briefing capacity.

In this way the Cabinet Spokesperson, the lead officer and all the relevant Members will know the timetable and arrangements for their individual involvement. These arrangements will then be project managed as part of the overall management of the Reviews.

### **7. PARTICULAR IMPLICATIONS OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000**

7.1 The Local Government Act 2000 will require the Cabinet to establish a process for the publication of the Forward Plan of Key Decisions. The Forward Plan will set out all of the significant matters ('Key Decisions') which the Cabinet will consider over the coming four months, as far as they are known. This will be a rolling four months, with monthly updates published, with the addition of items as they become known.

7.2 The Forward Plan will need to identify:-

- (a) Who is responsible for taking the decisions and how they can be contacted.

- (b) What relevant reports and background papers are available.
  - (c) How and when the decision maker intends to consult and involve local stakeholders, those affected by it and those who can help deliver it.
- 7.3 The definition of the Key Decisions includes all matters which seek approval of or variation to Council policy and will be subject to approval at Full Council. The Forward Plan will therefore include all Best Value and Improvement Review reports, with up to four months notice given of the date of Cabinet consideration.
- 7.4 Copies of the Forward Plan will be made available to the public and the Scrutiny Commissions at least two weeks before the start of the periods covered. In effect, the Scrutiny Commission should therefore know in, say, mid-June that a report on a particular Review is coming forward in October.
- 7.5 With this advance warning, the Scrutiny Commissions will be able to consider issues relevant to particular Reviews at their meetings *in advance* of the report coming forward to Cabinet but taking account of the timetable for Cabinet consideration. Any views expressed by the Scrutiny Commission can then be processed through to Cabinet in line with the relevant protocol and be taken on board when the substantive report is submitted, as proposed above in paragraph 4.1.