

SERVICE REVIEW GUIDELINES
(REVISED)

INTRODUCTION BY THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE
EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Reviewing key services and priorities is nothing new for East Cambridgeshire, whether under the statutory obligations placed on us by Best Value or the requirement to meet efficiency targets or the need to respond to particular events.

We have always undertaken these reviews with an open mind, nevertheless, always guided by our key corporate objectives of high quality value for money services, partnership and sustainable growth.

Many of these reviews have been externally inspected and verified and provided us with a framework for continual and sustained improvement. The transformation from an underperforming Development Control service cited by Government to a top quartile performer is one of the many notable examples.

This approach put us in good stead for Comprehensive Performance Assessment and will provide a useful framework for meeting the demands of the new performance management framework.

These revised guidelines are an essential part of the Council's continued commitment to improvement and I hope this will provide officers and Members alike, a structured methodology for understanding, challenging and where necessary, transforming our essential services to the community.

These guidelines have recently been revised to reflect the requirement to produce and approve a 'Statement of Consultation' as part of the Stage 1 report. This revision was agreed by Internal Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 29th March 2010 in response to the Review of Ely Markets. An example is attached as Appendix 4 to these guidelines.

1.0 **INTRODUCTION TO SERVICE REVIEWS**

1.1 This revised methodology seeks to answer three key questions:-

- Why should we undertake service reviews?
- When should we undertake service reviews?
- How should we undertake service reviews?

1.2 These guidelines set out the Council's methodology for carrying out service reviews. It seeks to build on the Council's long and evidenced legacy of flexibility, pragmatism and partnership. It is designed to be a flexible framework, accepting that each review will be unique. Nevertheless, the guidelines will help us ensure that we carry out reviews to the same high standards across the Authority. Most importantly, it is here to help you and to provide guidance when needed.

1.3 The introduction by the Chief Executive should in part, answer the '**why**' question. Fundamentally, service reviews recognise the realities of continual improvement as performance ebbs and flows, new legislative requirements and contract options become pertinent and opportunities for joint working and partnership arise.

1.4 '**When**' to undertake service reviews is a question for both Members and staff. Service reviews, if they are to be effective, require considerable resources, usually in house but not exclusively. They should not be embarked on without a clear understanding of the objectives and terms of reference of the review. The timetable should be realistic and achievable, recognising the paramount need to continue to deliver services to the local community. Key triggers and the process for instigating any review are detailed later in the document.

1.5 '**How**' to undertake service reviews is the fundamental purpose of these guidelines. The methodology unashamedly builds on the Best Value guidelines, which have served the Council well over the past few years. Nevertheless, it seeks to balance the requirements for the four C's with a recognition that the emphasis should be on learning from best practice authorities rather than benchmarking data for no other purpose than to tick a box!

2.0 **STAGES OF A SERVICE REVIEW**

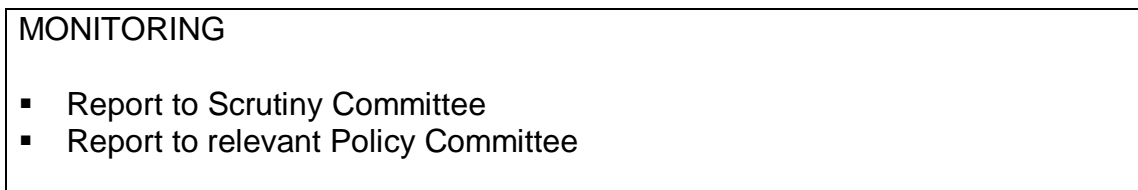
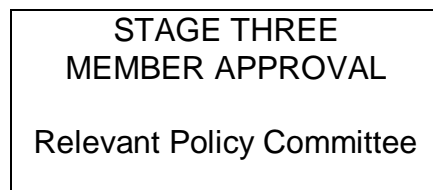
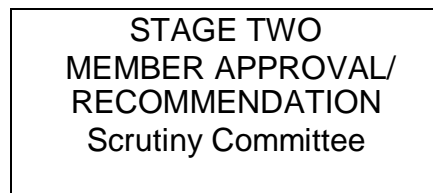
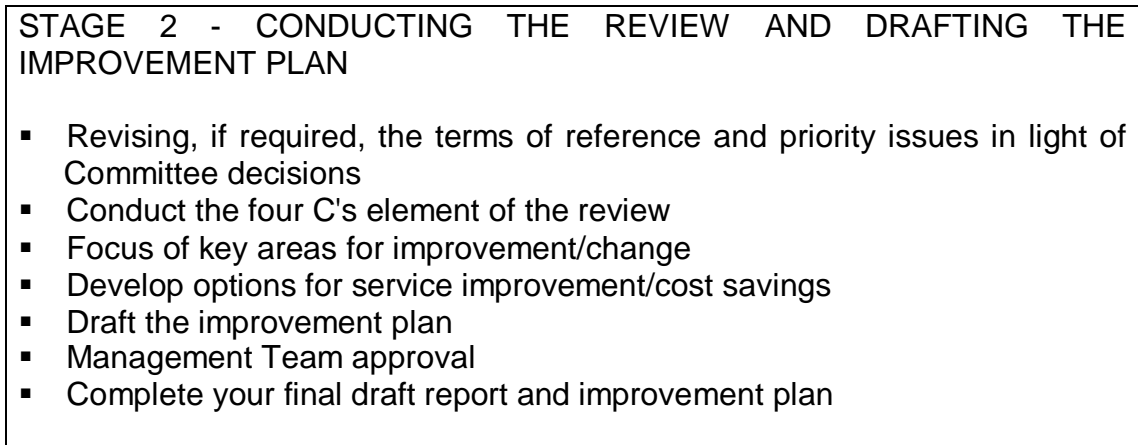
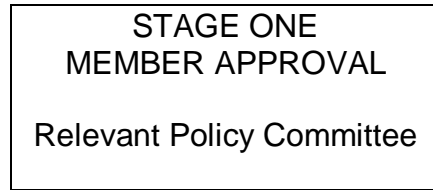
TRIGGERING A REVIEW

- Management Team approval - utilising the project methodology toolkit
- Recommendation from Scrutiny Committee
- Relevant Policy Committee approval



STAGE ONE - PREPARING AND SCOPING THE REVIEW

- Identify key officers and Members, if appropriate, for the review team
- Establish timetable for the review
- Agree draft terms of reference for the review
- Scope the review in terms of description of service, resources and initial issues
- Initial views on the expected outcome of the review in terms of Policy, Performance/Operation and Resources
- Complete your Stage One report



3.0 **THE KEY STAGES**

3.1 **TRIGGERING A REVIEW**

3.1.1 There can be a number of drivers, which may trigger a review, specifically:-

- Decision/recommendation of relevant Policy Committee and/or Scrutiny Committee
- Recommendations arising from Management Team, Corporate Issues Forum and/or Team Briefings
- Review of performance data
- External inspection and audit in particular, Direction of Travel and/or Use of Resources
- Contract renewal timetable
- Significant new/changing legislative framework
- Opportunities for joint working/partnership arrangements

This list is not of course exhaustive.

3.1.2 To formally trigger a formal review, this process must be followed:-

- Approval by Management Team including agreement of an outline business case, project plan and risk assessment (if applicable).
- Recommendations directly from Scrutiny Committee will be considered by the relevant Policy Committee.
- Relevant Policy Committee approval required in all cases (this can be secured by the Chief Executive through authorised delegated powers).

3.2 **STAGE ONE - PREPARING AND SCOPING THE REVIEW**

3.2.1 The full involvement of Members in the review process is essential and fully embedded in the methodology. In most cases, a Member of the Council, appointed by the Leader of the Council, will assist the lead officer in the review team. It may be appropriate, in a number of limited cases, to formally establish a Working Party for the purposes of the review.

3.2.2 All reviews will be led by either a member of Management Team or Head of Service (appointed by the Chief Executive or relevant Executive Director).

3.2.3 The composition of the review team will be agreed by the project lead, in consultation with Management Team and relevant Member, if appropriate. It is recommended that the review team is kept relatively small in number, with other relevant expertise brought in when required.

3.2.4 Consideration should be given at this early stage to the involvement of staff currently delivering the service, an initial Strengths/Weaknesses/Opportunities/Threats analysis of the service is invaluable in scoping the review and identifying improvement options for further consideration. UNISON will be informed of the review through the Chief Executive's regular informal briefings.

3.2.5 The timetable for the review should be drafted by the project team taking into account the evidence requirements for the review. The timetable should specifically identify the following dates:-

- Relevant Service Committee - Stage 1 approval
- Relevant Committee briefing - Progress report
- Internal Scrutiny Committee - Stage 2 approval
- Relevant Service Committee - Final Report and Improvement Plan

Whilst each case should be considered on its merits, the duration of the most recent reviews are outlined below:-

- Press and PR 20th December 2005 - 28th June 2006
- Economic Development 30th January 2008 - 2nd October 2008
- Office Cleaning 23rd April 2008 - 29th September 2008

Any changes to the timetable, subsequent to Stage One approval, should be reported to the relevant Chairman's briefing and announced at the next Committee meeting.

3.2.6 The draft terms of reference of the review outline the three stages (see Appendix 1 para 1.4).

3.2.7 The Stage One report should detail the following:-

- Description of the service including the primary objective from the latest service plan and key functions
- Links to the Corporate Objectives (See para 2.2 Appendix 1)
- Budget and staffing resources
- Service planning targets and the most recent full year performance
- Statement of Consultation

3.2.8 It will be appropriate at this stage to identify initial issues, which can form the basis of the discussion at the relevant Service Committee. It would be useful at this stage to cross reference the reasons for triggering the service review in the first instance.

3.2.9 A worked example of a Stage One Committee report is detailed in Appendix 1, which also includes the Stage One draft report. The lead officer should ensure that Democratic Services are informed well in advance of the proposed timetable for inclusion in forward agenda plans and must supply the final report within agreed deadlines.

3.3 STAGE TWO - CONDUCTING THE REVIEW

3.3.1 The first step for the review team is to reconsider the Stage One draft report in light of the outcome of the relevant Committee meeting.

3.3.2 **Compare.**

3.3.3 In establishing a methodology for the compare element of the Service Review, the review team should consider the following issues:-

- Does the service have any historical Best Value Performance Indicator information that may provide context for this evidence gathering?
- Are there any relevant Indicators appropriate to the service and/or are these key indicators in the Corporate Plan?
- Review Best Value satisfaction survey results/Quality of Life studies and Place Survey questions.
- Analysis of neighbouring authorities in terms of Performance Indicators, scope of service and process.
- Relevant Best Value/Audit Commission reviews/Beacon Councils to identify best practice.
- National studies into best practice in the relevant service area particularly from Audit Commission, Local Government Association and Improvement & Development Agency.

3.3.4 **Consult**

3.3.5 In establishing a methodology for the consult element of the Service Review, the review team should consider the following questions/issues:-

- Who are the customers/stakeholders/users? (Including internal Council staff).
- Review existing consultative data, ie. budget survey, outcome of Listening Week, outcome of staff focus group.
- Requirements for Member consultation (both the Press/Public Relations and Economic Development Review achieved this through a written questionnaire). The Member champion is important in promoting the consultation and maximising the response rate.
- Further staff consultation wider than immediate team.
- Utilise Management Team as a focus group.
- Procurement of additional consultation using Register of Consultees, Neighbourhood Panels, Parish Councils and partnership bodies, where appropriate.

3.3.6 **Challenge**

3.3.7 Challenge is the most important part of the Service Review process yet invariably proves to be the most difficult.

3.3.8 In establishing a methodology for conducting this element of the review, the team should consider the following issues/questions:-

- Is the service statutory - if so, at what level of service does this apply? Are we providing the service above the current statutory minimum?
- Review the impact of ceasing the service in part or whole, identifying the risks inherent in this approach and possible alternative service delivery methods.
- Are there opportunities for involving a 'critical friend'? (The Press/Public Relations review interviewed editors of local media to challenge the service).

3.3.9 **Compete**

3.3.10 This element of the review should consider alternative methods of service delivery including opportunities for joint working. Where appropriate, informal market testing will be utilised to provide corporate financial data. At the very least, this element of the review should consider options for private/public/voluntary sector partnership working. It may, of course, be appropriate to consider and formulate an in house option for the provision of the service.

3.3.11 There is a need to conclude the report identifying key findings and themes for the improvement plan. The Stage 2 report will be reported to the Scrutiny Committee (see Appendix 2 Worked Example).

3.4 **STAGE 3 ACTION PLAN**

3.4.1 The review team should initially consider the recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee and ensure these are brought to the attention of the relevant Service Committee in their formal report. There may be a requirement to assemble further evidence at this stage to substantiate the conclusions and improvement plan.

3.4.2 A worked example of an action plan is detailed in Appendix 3 together with a Stage 3 report. The report should also outline a timetable for reviewing the progress against the improvement plan.

3.5.2 The review should also consider any Public Relations/Press issues, which may arise at the publication of the improvement plan stage and report to the Council's Press and Public Relations Services.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Stage One report (Worked Example)
Community Services Committee - 30th January 2008

Appendix 2 - Stage Two Report (Worked Example)
Internal Overview and Scrutiny Committee - 4th September 2008

Appendix 3 - Final Report (Worked Example)
Community Services Committee - 2nd October 2008

Appendix 4 - Statement of Consultation (Worked Example) Internal Overview and
Scrutiny Committee - 29th March 2010

Further worked examples are available on request from the Head of Policy and Performance.