

PROGRESSING SERVICE REVIEWS 2009/10

1. Copeland Borough Council in common with other public sector agencies faces a significant reduction in resources following the Comprehensive Spending Review 2011. Although the full extent of the reduction in Government grant in 2011/12 is not yet known, 10% is not an unreasonable estimate, and it could be more. The Council's own reserves have been used annually to maintain activities and minimise increases in Council Tax, and are not going to be sufficient to continue meet the gap in funding services operating at current levels. Reducing the ongoing revenue budget from 2011 is therefore a requirement to achieve a balanced budget in future. Deciding what Council must continue to do, and giving up some of the things that are not essential, is therefore necessary in order to reduce spend to supporting those things that are agreed priorities.
2. Pilot service reviews have been taking place during the first half of 2009, including several functions in the Parks and Open Spaces team. The manager has tried out versions of the proposed methodology for undertaking service reviews and, due to his efforts and having access to good information, he has been able to produce examples of the kind of report that the Searching For Best Value Group might use in their deliberations on future Council priorities. The latest example is elsewhere on the agenda. If the Searching for Best Value Group is happy with this result, it would be necessary to agree the model for use by other services.
3. Although there is some urgency for making progress with service reviews, and decisions must be made in time for the budget-making process starting in summer 2010, it is possible to schedule the service reviews to start in September 2009 and run into the next financial year. The Searching for Best Value Group can if it wishes, therefore tackle the reviews over a period of months, rather than weeks, as is the case at other authorities.
4. The Council is currently working up a major improvement programme which will start shortly. It is proposed that the Searching for Best Value programme will be a workstream in that programme. Should the Council be able to attract any external support for the improvement programme, it is possible that the service reviews might benefit from further development guided by expertise from elsewhere in the region. However the outcome of that is not yet known, and in the meantime the Council can continue to prepare for service reviews starting to take place later in 2009.
5. Therefore the actions to progress the Searching for Best Value service review process with indicative dates are:

- Searching for Best Value group to agree the recommended methodology 17 July 2009;
- Corporate Team to agree a priority order of services for service review 27 July 2009;
- Priority service managers advised and supported to do the preparatory work as soon as possible 1 August 2009;
- Process Improvement Team to be allocated to particular reviews to assist with information analysis and identification of efficiencies through more modern ways of working 1 August 2009;
- Communication planned to explain and support the Searching for Best Value process, including the decisions that have been reached as the process progresses 1 August 2009;
- Searching for Best Value Group to have programme of meetings throughout 2009 and first half of 2010 with timetable for service reviews expected 31 August 2009;
- First service reviews considered by Searching for Best Value Group starting 30 September 2009
- Recommendations of Searching for Best Value Group to be made to Resource Planning Working Group including proposals for continued investment, or reduced or discontinued investment Throughout 2009/10
- Updates on development of Shared Services strategy in Copeland and Cumbria to be provided to Searching for Best Value Group Throughout 2009/10;
- Regular reports of Searching for Best Value progress to Resource Planning Working Group Throughout 2009/10;