

Agenda Item No. 208 supplemental

EAST SUSSEX FIRE AUTHORITY

Panel: **Audit and Performance Review**

Date: **26 July 2004**

Title: **Draft response to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) concerning the Government's proposals for the changes to the Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs) for the financial year 2005/06.**

By: **Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive**

Purpose of Report: **To seek the Panel's approval of the draft response to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister concerning the Government's proposals for the changes to the Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs) for the financial year 2005/06, issued for consultation by the ODPM.**

RECOMMENDATION: The Panel is asked to approve the draft response.

MAIN ISSUES

1. Best Value Performance Indicators were first introduced in 2000/01. Since then, the framework within which local government performance is assessed and measured has developed. Therefore the ODPM decided last year that the BVPIs should be fundamentally reviewed in order to ensure that the suite:
 - took account of this framework;
 - reflected the key national and local priorities;
 - provided relevant performance management information; and
 - accurately informed CPA ratings, particularly under the revised methodology
 2. The consultation document sets out the Government's proposals for changes to the Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs) for the financial year 2005/06. They are proposing to introduce 35 new BVPIs, delete 12 existing indicators amend a further 30 and retain 57.
 3. A separate consultation exercise for fire specific BVPIs will take place shortly as part of consultation on changes to the National Framework which will be undertaken by ODPM's Fire and Rescue Service Improvement Team, therefore Fire Authorities have been asked to comment on the relevant Corporate Health Indicators only.
 4. A covering letter and draft response from East Sussex Fire Authority to the consultation document is attached as Appendix 1.
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Des Prichard
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER & CHIEF EXECUTIVE
26 July 2004

Background Papers

Best Value Performance Indicators 2005/2006: Consultation – issued by the ODPM

NEW BVPI's

CORPORATE HEALTH

1. BV (X1) – The percentage of the top 5% of earners that are disabled

INTRODUCTION/PURPOSE:

It is proposed to introduce this BVPI in order to track the distribution and progression of disabled staff. This will enable comparisons to be made year on year and help prioritise action to address under-representation and remove unnecessary barriers. Whilst data is often collected on the overall representation of disabled staff within the workforce this alone will not help an organisation understand if and how disabled staff are progressing. This BVPI also anticipates the introduction of a duty on public bodies to promote equality of opportunity for disabled people, as outlined in the draft Disability Discrimination Bill.

Comment

Whilst we agree with the principle behind this indicator and with what the Government is trying to achieve until the ALAMA regulations are reviewed this indicator is not appropriate for the Fire Service unless it applied to Support Staff only.

2. BV (X2) – The percentage of female firefighters

INTRODUCTION/PURPOSE:

The proposal to introduce this BVPI will record progress against the ODPM national target and enable comparison to be made year on year and between fire and rescue authorities

Comment

We already collect this indicator as a local performance indicator so there is no problem with collection. However, we feel that whilst the 15% by 2009 target set by the ODPM is a desirable target, it is also an extremely challenging one, and one that is likely to fail on the basis of future recruitment patterns and ratios to current employees. In light of the Government's modernisation agenda and reform of the fire service, Fire Authorities across the country are reviewing fundamentally the way they operate and manage day to day business through Integrated Risk Management Plans. East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service is not recruiting this year which means we will almost certainly miss the 15% target.

3. BV (X7) – Percentage difference between original budget and final outturn

INTRODUCTION/PURPOSE:

The indicator reflects the accuracy of an authority's budget forecasts and its success in controlling its spending during the year.

Comment

We have no objections to this indicator, however the particular difficulties faced by Fire Authorities in relation to pensions volatilities requires authorities such as Combined Fire Authorities to ensure their budget forecasts can meet at least the most likely financial risks in the forthcoming year, and hence there will be a tendency for budget forecasts to take account of risks that may not necessarily materialize in the year in question, but undoubtedly will occur at some future date.

4. BV (X10) – Percentage of legal claims by members of the public successfully defended as a proportion of all legal claims

INTRODUCTION/PURPOSE:

This BVPI is being introduced in order to measure the number of legal claims by members of the public against the authority which have been successfully defended.

Comment

We have no objection to this indicator in principle, other than to comment that the Fire Service gets very few legal claims in comparison to local councils and, therefore, the proportionate representation would always be against us. If we had two legal claims in any given year and lost one and defended one the result would be 50% as opposed to a council who may receive hundreds of claims. We don't really feel what value this indicator would add.

5. **BV16 – The percentage of local authority employees declaring that they meet the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 disability definition compared with the percentage of economically active disabled people in the authority area**

INTRODUCTION/PURPOSE:

This indicator currently compares the percentage of local authority employees who declare that they meet the DDA, with the economically active disabled people in the authority area.

The figures for the economically active disabled people in the area are derived from the census. However, the relevant question on the census form simply asks respondents whether they have any long-term illness, health problem or disability which limits their daily activities or work they can do. The question does not however make any reference to the DDA. It is possible that some respondents who may for example experience some health problem, will answer in the affirmative, even though the effects of their condition are not substantial enough to be defined as a disability.

The Government would welcome your views on how this BVPI could be amended in order to ensure that it only compares the % of local authority employees who declare they meet the DDA with economically active disabled people in the area who are also disabled for the purposes of the DDA.

Comment

Whilst we agree with the principle behind this indicator and with what the Government are trying to achieve, until the ALAMA regulations are reviewed, this indicator is not appropriate for the Fire Service unless it applied to Support Staff only.

AMENDED INDICATORS

1. **BV11b – The percentage of top 5% earners from black and minority ethnic communities**

INTRODUCTION/PURPOSE:

There is clear evidence that some White ethnic groups such as White Irish people suffer discrimination and disadvantage. The definition of ‘Black and Minority Ethnic’ hitherto applied in the BVPIs which excludes such groups is therefore too restrictive.

Amended definition - The definition will no longer include the word ‘Black’. The term ‘minority ethnic’ will be used to encompass also the ‘White Irish’ and ‘White Other’ categories, i.e. it will cover all ethnic groups in the classification except White British.

Comment

We welcome this amendment.

2. **BV17 – The percentage of local authority employees from minority ethnic communities compared with the percentage of the economically active minority community population in the authority area**

INTRODUCTION/PURPOSE:

There is clear evidence that some White ethnic groups such as White Irish people suffer discrimination and disadvantage. The definition of ‘Black and Minority Ethnic’ hitherto applied in the BVPI’s which excludes such groups is therefore too restrictive.

Amended definition - The definition will no longer include the word ‘Black’. The term ‘minority ethnic’ will be used to encompass also the ‘White Irish’ and ‘White Other’ categories, i.e. it will cover all ethnic groups in the classification except White British.

Comment

We welcome this amendment.