

**SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL****CABINET****DATE: 27 NOVEMBER 2012****REPORT OF: MRS HELYN CLACK, CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY SERVICES AND THE 2012 GAMES****LEAD OFFICER: YVONNE REES STRATEGIC DIRECTOR FOR CUSTOMERS AND COMMUNITIES****SUBJECT: THE PUBLIC VALUE REVIEW OF COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP****SUMMARY OF ISSUE:**

The Cabinet is asked to consider the Public Value Review (PVR) of Community Partnership which reviewed the role of Surrey County Council's Local Committees and the Community Partnership Team to deliver improved outcomes and value for money for the residents of Surrey.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

It is recommended that:

1. The Community Partnership Public Value Review and its recommendations (as summarised in paragraph 6 and detailed in this report) be noted and endorsed.
2. The Cabinet Member for Community Services and the 2012 Games discuss the conclusions of the PVR report with the Local Committee Chairmen and agree how the recommendations will be taken forward.
3. Cabinet is asked to note some of the recommendations will need full Council agreement.

**REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:**

4. The aim of the Community Partnership PVR was to review the role of SCC's Local Committees and the Community Partnership Team "to improve outcomes for residents by strengthening local democracy and placing much greater emphasis on partnership working." (David Hodge, Leader of SCC).
5. The recommendations in this report are designed to:
  - support Members in their role as community leaders and champions
  - improve decision making and speed-up processes
  - promote greater accountability and local scrutiny
  - increase the involvement of residents, local communities, businesses and partners.
6. The recommendations recognise that each local area is different and attempt to create flexibility within a framework, allowing each Local Committee to

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operate in a way which best suits the local need.

## **DETAILS:**

### **Summary of Public Value Review Recommendations**

7. The Community Partnership Public Value Review has made ten recommendations. These are summarised below and set out in detail on the following pages.

Recommendation 1: Review SCC's Scheme of Delegation to assess where decisions should be taken, or influenced, more locally (i.e. at the Cabinet, the Local Committee or the Divisional level).

Recommendation 2: Strengthen local priority setting and the advisory role of SCC's Local Committees by introducing annual priority setting meetings with key stakeholders.

Recommendation 3: Simplify and speed-up local decision making processes and introduce a more proportionate level of scrutiny.

Recommendation 4: Implement an e-communications strategy which supports councillors to communicate with local residents, businesses and partners.

Recommendation 5: Maintain Local Committees as 'meetings in public' but take steps to make the meetings more welcoming and useful for those residents, businesses and partners who attend.

Recommendation 6: Simplify local funds and financial processes to increase efficiency.

Recommendation 7: Make processes clearer for residents and more efficient to administer by adopting a consistent approach.

Recommendation 8: Review the governance model of the Local Committees and the practice of substitutes to make voting on Local Committees equal.

Recommendation 9: Strengthen the role of the Community Partnerships Team to facilitate partnership, engagement and democratic support.

Recommendation 10: Implement a "Think Councillor, Think Resident" culture change programme to deliver the Leader's vision of a member led, customer focused Council.

### **Background to Public Value Reviews**

8. On 14 July 2009 as part of its consideration of the paper *Leading the Way: changing the way we do business* the Cabinet agreed to undertake a three-

year programme of Public Value Reviews (PVRs) to look at all services/functions provided by the Council.

9. All PVRs share a primary objective, which reflects the Council's ambition to *deliver improved outcomes and value for money for the residents of Surrey*. The outcomes are expected to be services that offer improved performance and lower costs.
10. Two specific outputs from each review are a zero based budget and ensuring robust quality assurance systems are in place. A Steering Board oversees delivery of the overall programme.
11. Each review follows a standard PVR methodology:
  - *challenging* why, how and by whom a function/service is provided;
  - *comparing* performance with others;
  - *consulting* widely including with residents and specifically vulnerable groups and communities and with staff;
  - *collaborating* with partners and/or contractors; and
  - *testing the market* to see if the function/service could be delivered more efficiently, effectively or economically.

### **The Review**

12. The Community Partnership PVR ran from January 2012 to November 2012. The PVR was led by Mark Irons, Head of Customer Services, and sponsored by Yvonne Rees, Strategic Director for Customers and Communities. The Portfolio Holder for Community Services and the 2012 Games is Councillor Helyn Clack.
13. The recommendations in the PVR support Surrey County Council's Corporate Strategy and builds on the Communities Select Committee's 'Localism Task Group Report' presented to Cabinet on 24 April 2012.
14. The PVR process involved talking to councillors, officers, partners, businesses and residents. The PVR looked at a number of other councils including Bristol, Hertfordshire, Gloucestershire, Kingston and Buckinghamshire. The review has been guided by the Member Reference Group (County Councillors Nick Skellett CBE (Chairman), Fiona White, Pat Frost, Peter Hickman and Steve Cosser), the Local Committee Chairmen, the Communities Select Committee and a member workshop.

### **Background to the Local Committees and the Community Partnership Team**

15. The current Local Committee system was established in April 2002 with the introduction of 11 Local Committees each aligned to one of Surrey's Districts and Boroughs. The original aims of the Local Committees were to devolve decisions closer to the customer, to improve local performance monitoring, and to improve local representation<sup>1</sup>.
16. The Community Partnership Team, originally known as the 'Community Support Team', was also established in 2002. The team has significantly

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<sup>1</sup> SCC Executive Paper Area Committees 23 July 2001.

changed since its introduction. The team was originally comprised of 31.5 positions but was reviewed in 2005, and again in 2011, and now comprises 19.5 positions. The main change has been the removal of 11 Area Directors and 4 Media Officer positions.

17. The current team is made up of a Team Manager, 2 Team Leaders, 11 Community Partnership and Committee Officers and 4.5 Local Support Assistants (figures represent positions).

### **Community Partnership Team Budget (Medium Term Financial Plan)**

#### **Community Partnership Team**

<b>(£'000)</b>	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Staffing (Pay)	1,014	790	782	793
Supplies and Services	41	42	43	44
Travel	14	14	14	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,069</b>	<b>846</b>	<b>839</b>	<b>852</b>

#### **Member's Allocations & Grants Funds**

<b>(£'000)</b>	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Member Revenue Allocations	660	673	1,009	1,043
Grants to Community Safety & Self Reliance	217	223	228	233
Member Capital Allocations	385	385	385	385
Leader's Community Improvement Fund	n/a	n/a	750	750
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,262</b>	<b>1,281</b>	<b>2,372</b>	<b>2,411</b>

### **The Recommendations**

#### **Recommendation 1: Review SCC's Scheme of Delegation to assess where decisions should be taken, or influenced, more locally (i.e. at the Cabinet, the Local Committee or the Divisional level).**

18. SCC's Corporate Strategy aims to improve services by recognising different local needs and aspirations and by allowing more local control over how services are designed and provided. SCC is committed to engaging with and listening to residents, and to moving some decision-making powers and funding to local levels.
19. Currently there are no principles defining at what level decision making should sit. Some decisions were moved to the Local Committees in 2002, however the current 'Scheme of Delegation' is a product of ad hoc evolution over ten years, rather than of deliberate design. It is recommended that councillors and officers work together to review and assess the current 'Scheme of Delegation' to assess where decisions should be taken, or be more highly influenced, at a local level (i.e. at the Local Committee or Division).
20. This review should be guided by the principle of 'subsidiarity', which expresses that control should be devolved to the lowest sensible level. This

principle balances the need for efficiency with the requirement to design services based on local need. The Leader expresses this concept simply:

*“The Cabinet should be responsible for countywide decisions and local decisions should be taken locally.”*

21. The Communities Select Committee’s Localism Task Group report developed a helpful set of principles against which to test where decisions, influence and accountability should best sit.
22. The Task Group did conclude there “will be some services that cannot be subjected to local variation as statutory responsibilities suggest consistency of approach, for example safeguarding of children. This is non-negotiable although the way services are delivered may be open to challenge and to change.”
23. The Leader has expressed that this review should be done with careful thought and may need to move at different speeds in different areas. During this financial year the Leader demonstrated his commitment to local decision making by devolving additional highway funding to the Local Committees to spend on local priorities.

**Recommendation 2: Strengthen local priority setting and the advisory role of SCC’s Local Committees by introducing annual priority setting meetings with key stakeholders.**

24. During the PVR many councillors said that more time should be dedicated to considering priorities for the local area. Whilst councillors believed the Local Committee was the right forum to consider SCC’s local priorities, they felt that insufficient time was dedicated to the task. The main reason for this is that the meetings have a very operational focus as they are required to make numerous very detailed decisions. Whilst this operational focus works well for dealing with business as usual, it comes at the expense of time dedicated to considering and setting local priorities. Additionally, this focus on detail discourages the attendance of the relevant strategic partners.
25. It is recommended that a dedicated annual meeting is introduced to consider local priorities. This would be best placed in the third quarter of the financial year to align with the new business planning and budgeting setting cycle.
26. An annual priority setting meeting would present a good opportunity to invite strategic partners, businesses, and residents (as each Local Committee deemed necessary). It would be particularly important to include strategic representation from the local Districts or Boroughs as they are the lead planning authorities.
27. Local priorities could then flow and influence SCC’s decision making processes through the Policy and Performance Service, the Local Committee Chairmen and the Select Committees. Agreeing priorities would also help Local Committees to scrutinise services to ensure residents are receiving both quality and value for money.

**Recommendation 3: Simplify and speed-up local decision making processes and introduce a more proportionate level of scrutiny.**

28. As Local Committees develop an increasingly important local role, a greater number of issues could potentially be discussed and therefore effective management of the agenda will be vital. Each Local Committee meeting requires considerable resources and it is important to be clear about which issues need to be brought to the committee and which can be managed in other ways.
29. It is recommended that each Local Committee reviews which items require discussion at a formal meeting in public. Simpler forms of communication and other mechanisms, such as email or the website, can be employed to inform and update Members and the public. Additionally, delegated authority can be more widely used to allow business that is of little interest to the whole committee or the public to progress outside of the meeting.
30. Whilst some decisions are currently agreed outside of the meeting, the process of gaining approval from all members of the committee can be excessively time consuming. It is recommended that as few people as possible are involved in the approval of low level decisions.
31. With regard to 'Members Allocations'<sup>2</sup> it is recommended that councillors should be able to spend their allocation without having to await the next local committee meeting. To achieve this it is proposed councillors should have delegated authority to spend their allocation. Pooled budgets would need to be agreed by all Members who have contributed funds. Funding would continue to be published and reported to the next Local Committee meeting to maintain transparency.
32. This would increase local accountability, avoid unnecessary delays and encourage a move away from the current position of multiple, low value bids which result in higher administrative costs. Officers would still advise Members to ensure spend conformed to guidance and refer any concerns to the Local Committee.

**Recommendation 4: Implement an e-communications strategy which supports councillors to communicate with local residents, businesses and partners.**

33. The Communities Localism Task Group concluded that there was "scope to improve both the visibility and knowledge of Members through better use of e-communication to connect them with an even wider cross section of their communities".
34. Research conducted during the PVR showed there was a demand for more electronic communication. A feedback survey was sent to those residents who had recently attended a Local Committee meeting and questions were also added to the Joint Neighbourhood Survey (JNS).
35. These surveys both showed that people would generally prefer to use the most convenient mechanism to resolve an issue in their local area (such as email, phone or the internet) and that there is an appetite for much more local information and more opportunities to participate electronically. In fact only 1.6% of the 1,650 residents surveyed by the JNS said their first preference

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<sup>2</sup> Member's Allocations are small grants, decided on by local Members, to promote social, economic and environmental wellbeing in their areas.

would be to attend a formal meeting if they wished to raise an issue about their local area.

36. Improving access to local information and, increasing the use of electronic communication and social media, to enable a two-way conversation, is a key part of encouraging the involvement of residents, local communities, businesses and partners in issues and decisions. Currently online local information is difficult to find and the Local Committee pages only attract an average of 8.4 visits per month.
37. It is recommended that:
  - Members are offered e-communication training
  - The local web pages and other electronic media is developed to improve online engagement
  - The Community Partnership Team supports in the provision of local information and engagement.

**Recommendation 5: Maintain Local Committees as ‘meetings in public’ but take steps to make the meetings more welcoming and useful for those residents, businesses and partners who attend.**

38. The Local Committee meetings are highly structured because they are governed by legislation surrounding formal decision making in public<sup>3</sup>. Whilst this formality is legally necessary, it can mean that the meetings are off-putting for those who attend. Feedback from those residents who attended the meetings was generally quite negative. People wanted the meetings to be more welcoming, easier to understand, and for there to be more opportunities to ask questions.
39. It is recommended that steps are taken to make Local Committee meetings more engaging for residents by giving Chairmen more flexibility to take questions or invite comments from expert witnesses as they see appropriate during the formal meeting. Chairmen must however clearly separate formal decision making from discussion.
40. Leaflets, as used in other council meetings, have also proved to be a simple and effective way to inform people about the format of the meeting and set the expectation of attendees.
41. The introduction of the annual priority setting meeting (as described in recommendation 2) would also help make the agenda more relevant.
42. Additional training for Local Committee Chairmen will also be essential to help guide them through the complex legislation whilst ensuring effective public engagement.

**Recommendation 6: Simplify local funds and financial processes to increase efficiency.**

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<sup>3</sup> Local Government Act 2000

43. A very high proportion of officer time is currently spent on the administration of local funds and grants. Simplifying processes, streamlining approval arrangements, and moving from multiple to a single budget would increase efficiency. A consolidation of grants would also be less confusing for councillors and residents.
44. It is recommended that Member revenue and capital allocations are combined to improve efficiency. Financial rules only allow capital budgets to be spent on capital expenditure, whereas a revenue budget can be used to fund both revenue and capital expenditure. Changing the capital allocation per committee to a revenue allocation would therefore provide committees with greater flexibility in how they use their funding. This change would also simplify the administration of Members' allocations by enabling one process to administer all allocations, rather than the current separate revenue and capital processes.
45. It is also recommended that a 'Rapid Improvement Event' is conducted to further streamline the Community Partnership Team's financial processes.

**Recommendation 7: Make processes clearer for residents and more efficient to administer by adopting a consistent approach.**

46. The protocols around Local Committees are very complex as each committee has evolved its procedures in isolation over the last ten years. For example, the deadline for submitting a petition prior to a meeting ranges from three days to fourteen days, and the number of required signatories for a petition ranges from ten to 100 people.
47. To make the processes clearer for residents, and to improve efficiency, it is recommended that Local Committees adopt a more consistent approach unless there is a specific local need that must be accommodated. For example, in a rural area a lower number of signatories may be acceptable.
48. Once a common set of protocols is agreed it is recommended these are clearly publicised on the website.

**Recommendation 8: Review the governance model of the Local Committees and the practice of substitutes to make voting on Local Committees equal.**

49. One of the original intentions of SCC's Local Committees was to increase the involvement of the Districts and Boroughs (D&B) in SCC's local decision making. This was a significant step toward improving partnership working as it afforded D&B councillors voting rights on certain functions and the ability to ask formal questions at these formal meetings. Whilst there are clear benefits to working more closely, certain aspects of the Local Committee do not always serve to improve partnership working:

**Local Committee Model**

50. The current Local Committee model does not afford D&B councillors equal voting rights. This is because D&B councillors are 'co-opted' and therefore

unable to vote on Education and Youth matters<sup>4</sup>. Whilst a point of law, this can undermine the sense of partnership.

51. The Council may instead wish to consider the Joint Committee model which would permit equal voting rights on all issues for all Councillors on the committee. Adoption of the Joint Committee model would also allow D&B councils to delegate decisions to the Local Committee if they wished to. This would allow the Local Committee to oversee jointly funded projects.
52. It must be noted that, if the Local Committee choose to operate as a Joint Committee, at least one member of the Joint Committee would have to be a member of the County Council's Cabinet. Likewise if a D&B Council desired to devolve executive powers to the Local Committee a member of their Cabinet would need to attend.

### **Changes to SCC's Constitution**

53. The wording of the SCC's Constitution is currently quite restrictive surrounding D&Bs voting rights and could be reworded to be more permissive. There is also some confusion over who can vote on what.
54. SCC's constitution needs to be more permissive and clear. Instead of stating that D&B Councillors can only vote on certain issues it should state that D&B Councillors can vote on all matters, with the exception of Education, Youth and Member's Allocations.

### **Make representation to the Secretary of State to equalise voting rights of co-opted members on all matters.**

55. It is recognised that neither changing the committee model nor changing the wording of the Constitution presents a perfect solution to achieve equal voting rights at the committee.
56. The PVR has identified no reason as to why co-opted members cannot vote on certain functions such as Education and Youth. The Leader will therefore make representation to the Secretary of State to challenge this point of law in an attempt to facilitate better partnership working and support the localism agenda.

### **The practice of substitutes**

57. The current practice of substituting, when a member of the Local Committee is unable to attend, also creates an imbalance. It is less fair for County Councillors, who are unable to nominate a local substitute councillor in their place as all the local SCC Members are already on the committee. Many County Councillors feel that this sometimes creates an imbalance in the voting between County and D&B Councillors.
58. It is recommended that Local Committees have the option to end the practice of substitutes in order to make the Local Committee more equal.

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<sup>4</sup> Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990

**Recommendation 9: Strengthen the role of the Community Partnerships Team to facilitate partnership, engagement and democratic support.**

59. The Community Partnership Team plays a key role in supporting local democracy, community engagement, and partnership working. The exact nature of this work does look different in each area as it is dependent on the local need.
60. The Members' survey<sup>5</sup> indicated the Community Partnership Team (CPT) was highly valued, however they would like increased local support. An activity analysis conducted during this PVR demonstrated that the CPT currently spends a high proportion of time involved in administration due to overly complex protocols, approval processes and processes. Adoption of the efficiency recommendations in this report will free up time to allow more local support.
61. Once the efficiency recommendations are implemented and embedded it is recommended that a second activity analysis is conducted to ensure the team is structured correctly and has the capacity to support the recommendations from this review.

**Recommendation 10: Implement a "Think Councillor, Think Resident" culture change programme to deliver the Leader's vision of a member led, customer focused Council.**

62. The Leader's "Think Councillor, Think Resident" initiative is aimed at improving the support given to Members in their roles as community leaders and champions.
63. The Community Partnership Team plays an important role in achieving this however the responsibility for supporting councillors rests more widely. It is recommended a culture change programme is developed to:
  - improve officers' general awareness of Councillors
  - help officers understand the role of Councillors in the organisation
  - improve the dialogue between officers and Members.

**Quality Assurance Measures**

64. The PVR recommends that the following changes and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are implemented to assure quality:

Agreeing Local Priorities

- a. Development of local area profiles detailing key local priorities and issues. To be reported in third quarter of each financial year to help inform planning and budget setting processes. These should highlight achievements (e.g. "you said, we did").

Improving local community engagement

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<sup>5</sup> All Local Committee Members were surveyed during the course of the PVR. 64 councillors responded to the survey.

- b. Percentage of residents satisfied with the opportunities for influencing local decision making (Joint Neighbourhood Survey).
- c. Percentage of overall satisfaction with council (Joint Neighbourhood Survey).
- d. Residents satisfied with Local Committee experience (Survey at Local Committees).
- e. Level of engagement. Number of visits to the new local web pages to be monitored (Web Ops).

#### Team efficiency

- f. Number of hours spent administering the average Member's Allocation. Time to be reduced from current 10 hours to 5 hours per allocation.

#### Training

- g. Local Committee Chairman training.
- h. Officer training to include section on engaging with Members and Local Committees.

#### Councillor Satisfaction

- i. Introduce annual councillor's satisfaction survey to review support provided by Community Partnership Team.
- j. Provide a feedback mechanism for partners.

### **CONSULTATION:**

65. The review included a range of stakeholders including:
- Local Committee Chairmen (monthly meetings)
  - The 11 x Local Committees (individual meetings)
  - The Communities Select Committee
  - The Community Partnership Member Reference Group (monthly meetings)
  - Corporate Leadership Team
  - SCC officers and the Community Partnership Team
  - District and Boroughs officers
  - Residents (Local Committee Survey and Joint Neighbourhood Survey)
  - Other partners (Representatives from Parish Councils, Police & NHS)
  - Businesses (Surrey Connections)

### **RISK MANAGEMENT AND IMPLICATIONS:**

66. There are no direct risk management implications arising from this report.

67. Any risks associated with delivering identified improvements and savings will continue to be monitored through the Council's risk management arrangements.

#### **Financial and Value for Money Implications**

68. The recommendation to combine Member revenue and capital allocations to improve efficiency, within Recommendation 6, will increase the annual revenue budget by £385,000 with a corresponding reduction in the annual capital budget. This will result in no net change to the total member funding available.
69. The proposed increase in revenue funding is subject to agreement within the 2013 to 2018 Medium Term Financial Plan.

#### **Section 151 Officer Commentary**

70. The section 151 officer (Head of Finance) confirms that all material financial and business issues and risks have been considered / addressed.

#### **Legal Implications – Monitoring Officer**

71. Some of the recommendations of this PVR would require changes to the Council's Constitution. When these enter an implementation phase Full Council approval will need to be sought. In relation to specific matters in the report:
72. Recommendation 1: Any changes to the Scheme of Delegation would, before being implemented require approval of either the Leader or Full Council depending on whether the matter delegated was an executive or non executive function.
73. Recommendation 3: Recent changes to the law would enable decisions on Members Allocations to be delegated to individual Members, a mechanism for recording and publicising decisions taken would be required to comply with access to information requirements.
74. Recommendation 5: It should always be apparent both to the committee members and to third parties, that committee decisions are taken by the committee, informed by the papers before it. The Monitoring Officer strongly supports the statement that additional training would be needed to guide Local Committee Chairman through the complexities which can arise, particularly in relation to controversial decisions.

#### **Equalities and Diversity**

75. An Equality Impact Assessment was completed for this report and is included at Annex B.
76. Summary of key impacts and actions:

Information and engagement underpinning	The PVR has conducted extensive consultation (as described in paragraph 65 of this report) and the proposed recommendations are intended to create positive outcomes for residents, local communities, businesses and partners
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equalities analysis	by promoting greater accountability and increasing involvement.  No negative equalities implications were identified resulting from the recommendations made in this report.
Key impacts (positive and/or negative) on people with protected characteristics	The recommendations in this report will have a positive impact as they will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• support Members in their role as leaders and champions within their communities</li> <li>• improve decision making and speed-up processes</li> <li>• promote greater accountability and local scrutiny</li> <li>• increase the involvement of residents, local communities, businesses and partners</li> </ul>
Changes you have made to the proposal as a result of the EIA	N/A
Key mitigating actions planned to address any outstanding negative impacts	N/A
Potential negative impacts that cannot be mitigated	N/A

#### **WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:**

77. Cabinet is asked to note and endorse the report and recommendations of the Community Partnership Public Value Review.
78. Cabinet is asked to delegate to the Cabinet Member for Community Services and the 2012 Games the responsibility for discussing the report and action plan with the Local Committee Chairmen and agreeing how to take the recommendations forward.
79. Cabinet is asked to note some of the recommendations will need full Council agreement.
80. Cabinet to receive a progress report back in due course.

#### **Contact Officer:**

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#### **Annexes:**

- A. Community Partnership PVR Action Plan
- B. Community Partnership PVR Equality Impact Assessment

**Sources/background papers:**

- Communities Select Committee's 'Localism Task Group Report' presented to Cabinet on 24 April 2012
  - Buckinghamshire "Think Councillor, Think Resident" strategy
  - Leader's report to Cabinet, Cabinet 29 June 2009
  - Leading the Way: changing the way we do business, Cabinet 14 July 2009
  - Public Value Reviews and Rapid Improvement Events, Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee 6 July 2011
  - Public Value Reviews methodology – updated February 2012
  - Public Value Reviews – Year Two Report, Cabinet 27 September 2011
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