

**CONSULTATION ON THE DRAFT CIRCULAR ON BEST VALUE
PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2003/04**

AUTHORITY ROCHFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL

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The numbering follows that in the consultative document.

1.3 User Satisfaction BVPIs (and annexe A)

The following comments relate to the templates for statutory surveys due to be undertaken in 2003/04:

Planning

Questions 1 and 2 relate to the views of the community at large. If this survey is to be distributed only to those using the planning service, it is likely to present a skewed response. These questions are more appropriate to the general satisfaction survey.

Benefits

Some wording of the statements needs review. For example,

Q1 - 'The local authority benefits office is open at times when it's difficult for me to visit'

This does not address the real issue, and the statement should read

'The local authority benefits office is not open when it is convenient for me to visit'

Q3 - 'More seats are needed in my local authority benefits office'

would better read

'There were sufficient seats'

It is not clear what the statement in question 1, 'staff tried to deal with my last claim over the phone', is measuring. Is this good or bad?

There appears to be considerable duplication in this survey. Question 6 on staff is very detailed and a positive/negative response on one element is likely to be repeated on others. For example, if staff are friendly, they are also likely to be considered to treat the user with respect and the user is likely to feel that they can ask questions. Unless the relevance of the number of different questions can be validated, the number should be reduced.

Similarly, in question 7, the perceived difficulty of the form is likely to be relevant to the time taken to fill it in.

Each question needs to have a purpose and provide direction for change.

General Satisfaction

Question 4 links waste collection and recyclables. The assessment of the two services could differ considerably and a separate section should be produced for recyclables, completed only by those receiving the service.

Question 11 needs a 'have not used' box. The consultee has been asked to rate the service whether or not it has been used. This is a nonsense.

The inclusion of postcodes will aid analysis.

The benefit of quality of life and expectation questions (annexe A) is accepted. The following points are made:

Quality of Life Questions

The format of the table on page 48 is preferred to the two-part questioning in the survey template as the two elements are linked. The reference to 'effort' on three issues should be removed: assessment should be about achievement and not effort.

Expectation Questions

A ranking of the importance of expectations would be helpful and would aid the prioritisation of improvements

1.5 Plan Rationalisation

A rationalisation of the plans that each local authority has to produce is welcomed. We are unable to comment on the impact on performance indicators without further information.

1.7 Cost BVPIs

We are not convinced of the benefit of adjusting costs by a GDP deflator, particularly as certain services do not have year-on-year cost increases, and the adjustment would misrepresent a constant price as a reduction in price.

If the GDP deflator is felt to be beneficial, we would propose that the actual figure is included, as well as the adjusted figure.

Individual PIs

The number of performance measurements is still high and several provide little, if any, evaluation of successes. Continuity of measurement is accepted as a valuable tool where the indicator is a valid one but becomes a time-wasting exercise if a comparison is inappropriate.

A comparison of the following indicators is difficult and is dependent on several criteria.

BV11 Women and minority group presence in management

BV14 Early retirements

BV15 Early retirements - ill health

BV16 Disabled staff

BV17 Minority ethnic staff

BV174 Number of racial incidents recorded

General comments on other PIs

BV65 Weekly repair costs - is a higher figure good or bad?

BV109 Planning applications

The list of 2003/04 indicators refers to an 8-week timeframe. The indicators set for 2002/03 have both 8-week and 13-week timeframes. We hope that the indicator is not being changed again.

BV127 Robberies

In 2002/03 the indicator was changed from robberies to violent crime. We presume this is not being changed again.

BV157 Interactions capable of electronic delivery

This indicator is causing considerable confusion and there is no definitive guidance on what is an interaction. Local authorities, and services within those authorities, are interpreting the definition differently. Comparison will be impossible unless there is some clarity on this.

BV185 Appointments for repair service

This measures success on making and keeping an appointment rather than the time for completing a repair