

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1999: PART 1 BEST VALUE AND PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT

1 SUMMARY

This report outlines guidance received from Central Government which summarises the principles of Comprehensive Performance Assessment and the means for achieving performance improvement through best value. The new guidance will need to be reflected in this year's Corporate Plan/Best Value Performance Plan, which is to be considered by Council later this month.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's (ODPM) guidance covers the following:

- a summary of the Government's commitment to improving authorities' performance through 4 principles:
 - the use of national standards
 - giving successful councils more freedom
 - removing bureaucratic barriers
 - expanding choice for users
- an iteration of existing information relating to review programmes, contract requirements involving workforce transfers, procurement practices, and the protocol for central government involvement with poorly performing local authorities
- The continuing requirement to produce an Annual Best Value Performance Plan and changes to its content for 2003
- A statement of shared priorities and the National Public Service Agreement (PSA) for local government.

3 SPECIFIC NEW CONTENT

Best Value Performance Plan (BVPP) Content

3.1 Much of the defined content of BVPPs has disappeared. The main focus is to report the measures being taken to deliver improvement in outcomes for local people and recording progress in delivering these outcomes. The following must now be included in the BVPP:

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- A brief summary of the authority's strategic objectives and priorities for improvement. This should be drawn from the authority's overall vision, community strategy, its corporate planning processes, and the opportunities and weaknesses identified in CPA, where applicable
 - CPA scores, where applicable
 - Progress in, and future plans for, delivering local and national priorities including:
 - progress over the past 3 years in implementing improvement measures, including those identified in best value reviews and audit and inspection recommendations
 - outcomes from, or impact of, improvement measures implemented over the past 3 years
 - plans for improvement over the current and subsequent 2 years, including best value review and inspection programmes for the current year, and, if available, future years.
 - Details of past, current and planned performance against local and national performance indicators, including
 - actual performance over the past year on all Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs), indicators used to measure progress against Local PSA targets, and local indicators set by the authority to measure performance in priority areas.
 - details of performance targets for the past year, as set out in the previous BVPP
 - targets for the current year and the subsequent 2 years for all BVPIs, and local indicators set by the authority to measure performance in priority areas. These must have regard to nationally set standards and floor targets applying to the relevant year.
 - A brief summary of financial information, with budgeted and actual (or estimated) income and expenditure for the past financial year, and provide a brief explanation of any significant variation. It should also include planned income and expenditure for the current year.
 - A brief statement on contracts, stating that all individual contracts awarded during the year which involve a transfer of staff comply, where applicable, with the requirements of the Code of Practice.

- 3.2 On reporting on their improvement planning arrangements, authorities that have town and parish councils in their locality should record the action taken to consider any proposals from such councils for partnership working on the delivery of local services.

National Priorities

- 3.3 Those key national priorities to which district councils could contribute are:
- Improving the quality of life
 - of children, young people and families at risk by tackling child poverty, maximising the life chances of children in care or in need and strengthening protection for children at risk of abuse.
 - of older people, by enabling them to live as independent lives as possible and avoid unnecessary periods in hospital
 - Promoting healthier communities and narrowing health inequalities by targeting key local services - such as health, education, housing, crime and accident prevention - to match need; and the encouragement of healthy lifestyles
 - Creating safer and stronger communities by working with the police and other local agencies and reduce crime and anti-social behaviour, strengthen community cohesion and tackle drug abuse.
 - Transforming the local environment by improving the quality, cleanliness and safety of public space
 - Promoting the economic vitality of localities by supporting business improvement, providing positive conditions for growth and employment, improving adult skills, helping the hardest-to-reach into work, and extending quality and choice in the housing market.

Targets for delivery

- 3.4 To enable achievement of the national priorities, the following targets have been set:
- Increase by March 2006 the number of those supported intensively to live at home to 30% of the total being supported by social services at home or in residential care.
 - Reduce under-18 conception rate by 50% by 2010
- 3.5 Both the above have been included as statutory performance indicators this year (2003/2004) to be reported by County Councils.

3.6 Other targets set include:

- Increase the participation of problem drug users in drug treatment programmes by 55% by 2004 and by 100% by 2008, and increase year-on-year the proportion of users successfully sustaining or completing treatment programmes
- Improve delivery and value for money of local services by:
 - introducing comprehensive performance assessments and actions plans, and securing a progressive improvement in authorities' scores
 - overall annual improvements in cost effectiveness of 2% or more, and
 - assisting local government to achieve 100% capability in electronic delivery of priority services by 2005, in ways that customers will use
- All local planning authorities to complete local development frameworks by 2006 and to perform at or above best value targets for development control by 2006, with interim milestones to be agreed. ODPM will deal with "called in" cases and recovered appeals in accordance with statutory targets.
- By 2010 bring all social housing into decent condition with most of this improvement taking place in deprived areas, and increase the proportion of private housing in decent condition occupied by vulnerable groups
- Reduce crime and the fear of crime; improve performance overall, including by reducing the gap between the highest Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership areas and the best comparable areas; and reduce:
 - vehicle crime by 30% from 1998/99 to 2004
 - domestic burglary by 25% from 1998/99 to 2005
- Over the 3 years to Spring 2006, increase the employment rates of disadvantaged areas and groups, taking account of the economic cycle, lone parents, ethnic minorities, people aged 50 or over, those with the lowest qualifications, and the 30 local authority districts with the poorest initial labour market position, and significantly reduce the difference between their employment rates and the overall rate.
- In the 3 years to 2006, increase the employment rate of people with disabilities taking account of the economic cycle, and significantly reduce the difference between their employment rate and the overall rate. Work to improve the rights of disabled people and to remove barriers to their participation in society.

4 OFFICER COMMENTS

- 4.1 Whilst the Council's Corporate Plan/Best Value Performance Plan for 2003/2004 will be presented in a similar format to last year, it is important that the Plan's content now takes on board the guidance issued by ODPM. The Plan will be inspected by PKF, the Council's external auditors, who will also assess aspects of the Council in terms of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA), which will impact on the Council later this year/early next year.
- 4.2 The guidance will also be referred to by the CPA Inspectors as part of the CPA Inspection itself. No doubt ODPM feel the guidance helps to expand upon local authorities' roles in delivering the national agenda and the targets set.
- 4.3 It is important that within both the Corporate Plan/Best Value Performance Plan and the overall CPA framework the Council demonstrates its contribution to the national priorities as set out, where these are relevant, and also how it is delivering on its more local priorities, although in many instances these can be seen to fit into the national agenda e.g. elderly person provision, town centre upgrades, crime and disorder initiatives etc. The guidance does now require that targets are rolled out for a three year period. Hence the Corporate Plan/Best Value Performance Plan now being finalised prior to consideration by Council will contain references to plans and targets for 2003/2004, 2004/2005 and 2005/2006.

5 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The guidance contains reference to national priorities and targets on crime and disorder issues.

6 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Certain of the national priorities relate to environmental issues.

7 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The collation of performance indicators will continue to be a resource-intensive exercise.

8 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Changes to the gathering and submission of this information are statutory.

9 PARISH IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The guidance now makes reference to including a reference to Parish and Town Councils where these have made proposals in relation to partnership working and service delivery.

10 RECOMMENDATION

It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**

to note guidance now issued by ODPM and its implications for the Council's Corporate Plan/Best Value Performance Plan

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Background Papers:

None

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