
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER - CONSULTATION ON CONTENT OF BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE PLANS

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report details the proposals put forward by Government for changes to the content of performance plans to be produced by local authorities in 2004 and subsequent years, and seeks feedback on these proposals.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's proposals outlined in the consultation include reinforcement of, or changes to, statutory guidance to:

- develop the plan as a strategic planning document, linked to the authority's business planning
- minimise the duplication of information available to the public
- create a driver for improvement planning
- ensure the continued provision of data for Government monitoring
- apply a differentiated approach to authorities with an excellent or good CPA rating to those in other categories

- 2.2 A copy of the consultation document has been placed in the Members' Library, Rayleigh and Members' Room, Rochford for information. Comments are requested by 2 February 2004.

3 SPECIFIC CONTENT

The Government is requesting views on:

- 3.1 Aspects of Performance Plans that are most useful, as well as those that are not.
- 3.2 Its proposal to remove the requirement to provide any information that can be obtained from other sources. It would no longer be necessary to provide the following information in the Performance Plan provided it is available elsewhere:
- CPA scores
 - Summary financial information

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- Progress in implementing improvement measures over the past 3 years
 - Outcomes or impacts arising from those measures
 - Progress against Local Public Service Agreements
- 3.3 Its proposal to differentiate between the requirements for authorities with an excellent or good CPA rating compared with those rated fair, weak or poor.
- 3.4 For those rated as excellent or good the following would have to be published
- Out-turn performance over the past year
 - Targets for the coming and subsequent 2 years
 - A brief statement on contracts awarded during the past year that have involved a transfer of staff

Where this information is contained within a Corporate Plan, the statutory requirement to prepare a Performance Plan will be met providing it is identified as such in the Corporate Plan.

- 3.5 In addition to the above information, those authorities rated as fair, weak or poor would be required to include:
- A summary of the authority's strategic objectives and priorities for improvement
 - Arrangements for addressing the authority's improvement priorities, particularly the opportunities and weaknesses identified in CPA, and the outcomes that are expected to be achieved as a result.
- 3.6 The preparation of the Performance Plan at a time to suit the authority, but no later than the end of June each year.
- 3.7 The continuance of the production of summary performance information by the end of March each year.
- 3.8 The continuance of an audit of the Performance Plan, pending discussions with the Audit Commission concerning repeal.

4 OFFICER RESPONSE

- 4.1 The requirements to produce a Performance Plan will depend on the CPA rating obtained. As Rochford's Corporate Plan and Best Value Performance Plan have been amalgamated, this issue is of no significance, other than that the plan could be retitled the Corporate Plan if Rochford's rating is excellent or good.
- 4.2 Whether contained within the Corporate Plan and/or the Performance Plan, the emphasis will remain that of identifying the strategic objectives and priorities for improvement. For authorities with a fair, weak or poor rating the

Plan will need to identify the arrangements in place to secure continuous improvement, reflecting a self-assessment of risks, opportunities and weaknesses.

- 4.3 The authority will need to review the content of its Performance Plan for 2004 and the best means for informing those working in the authority, and the public, on relevant issues.
- 4.4 Officers have considered the details as proposed within the consultation paper and the suggested response is as outlined in Appendix A.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Identification of Rochford's strategic priorities and their delivery via a performance management system will have resource implications, although these should already be contained within the agreed budget strategy.

6 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Changes proposed in this report on the required content of Best Value Performance Plans would be statutory.

7 RECOMMENDATION

- 7.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**

Subject to Member consideration and comments, to agree the responses detailed in appendix A, with a copy to the Local Government Association.

Paul Warren
Chief Executive

Background Papers:

Guidance on Best Value Performance Plans – Consultation Paper
(available in Members Room and at
www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm_localgov/documents/page/odpm_locgov_026489.hcsp)

For further information please contact Chris Paget on

Tel:- 01702 318031
E-Mail:- chris.paget@rochford.gov.uk

APPENDIX A

**RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION ON CONTENT OF BEST VALUE
PERFORMANCE PLANS**

- 1 The minimisation of duplication is welcomed.
- 2 The provision of the summary on performance by the end of March each year is inappropriate. Data is collected after this date and consequently information available at that date is at best limited, and could be misleading in relation to achievements in the year. The date for producing the summary should come in line with the production of the Best Value Performance Plan, ie. by the end of June each year.
- 3 The audit of the Performance Plan should be restricted to the accuracy of performance data contained therein. For as long as the auditing of the Performance Plan continues, clear guidance should be given to external audit to ensure that an assessment is made against statutory requirements rather than their own interpretation, perhaps based on earlier statutory requirements. This would save resources both within external audit and the authority concerned.