



CABINET – 5 DECEMBER 2001

PORTFOLIO : FINANCE AND SUPPORT

INFORMATION SERVICES BEST VALUE FINAL REPORT AND FIVE YEAR SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This Best Value Review covered the six directly managed Information Offices and the two managed on the Council's behalf by Totton and Eling Town Council and Fawley Parish Council. It also included the switchboard, courier service, post room duties at Lyndhurst and sundry administrative tasks such as the sale of refuse sacks.
2. The Self Assessment Team (SAT) worked on new income sources eg working in partnership with Hampshire County Council and efficiency benefits of merging Information Services with the Cashier Service. They realised there is very little scope to make savings unless an office was closed which would have a major impact on service delivery.
3. Immediate challenges included:
 - Linkages with the Cashiering Service
 - A seamless service between parish/town councils, the district and the county council
 - Working arrangements with Totton and Eling Town Council and Fawley Parish Council
 - The presence of three separate public receptions within Appletree Court, Lyndhurst
 - A lack of a formalised performance measurement system
 - The perception the service was not regarded as a service in its own right
 - The layouts, livery and lack of identity
 - The need to identify better links with service providers.
4. The Best Value Review Board and Corporate and Finance Review Panel are satisfied the review met the standards set by the Council.
5. The main outcomes are:
 - Change of name to 'Customer Services' or similar to give emphasis to the customer and to recognise the importance of giving them information , help and advice, and promotion of the service in its own right with a new livery
 - Amalgamation of Information Service with Cashiering Service
 - Proactive working with all New Forest District Council services and creation of a Service User Group

- A closer working relationship with existing partners and the introduction of other councils/partners all with detailed and defined agreements
 - Improved provision of information and ICT
 - Improved accommodation and equipment to provide facilities which are fit-for-purpose including joint working to provide customer service at Appletree Court
 - Introduction of comprehensive performance measurement system benchmarked with other local authorities
 - Specification and harmonisation of service to ensure the same high standard is provided to the public from all offices.
- 6 The combination of more efficient working and closer partnership arrangements means the SAT anticipate the overall outcome of the review will be in excess of the 2% efficiency gain. The anticipated benefits will be invested in improvements to service quality.
7. These outcomes have been transformed into prioritised actions over a five year period. These are shown in the Service Improvement Plan. (See Appendix 2).
8. The SAT were particularly impressed with the commitment to Customer Care demonstrated by the employees of the Information Service.

INFORMATION SERVICES BEST VALUE FINAL REPORT AND FIVE YEAR SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to describe the activities undertaken in the Information Services Best Value Review and to recommend improvements in the form of a Five Year Service Improvement Plan.

2. DESCRIPTION OF INFORMATION SERVICES

- 2.1 The Service comprises six directly managed Information Offices (26 Information Officers and 2 Couriers) and the Totton and Fawley Information Offices which are managed by the Parish/Town Council.
- 2.2 The main function of this non mandatory service is to provide help, advice and information on all Council services. Assistance is also provided on the services of parish and town councils, the county council and a range of other government and public utilities.
- 2.3 To achieve this function the service also undertakes other duties and administrative tasks including the switchboard, courier services, cashiering at Lyndhurst and Ringwood, post room duties at Lyndhurst and sale of refuse sacks.
- 2.4 Full details of the Information Service and its functions are contained in the various appendices.

3. SCOPE OF BEST VALUE REVIEW

- 3.1 As a service which has received little investment for many years and has very limited resources there was sufficient scope and challenge for a best value review within the boundaries of the service itself. These included:
 - 3.1.1 The linkages with Cashiering Service;
 - 3.1.2 The provision of a seamless service between parish/town councils, the district and the county council;
 - 3.1.3 The working arrangements with Totton and Eling Town Council and Fawley Parish Council;

- 3.1.4 The anomaly of having three public receptions within Appletree Court, Lyndhurst ie there are separate receptions for housing and planning;
 - 3.1.5 The lack of a formalised performance measurement system benchmarked against other local authorities;
 - 3.1.6 The perception the service was not regarded or treated as a service in its own right.
- 3.2 This review has focused on a fundamental review of the service itself acknowledging that other challenges exist. These will be addressed in the latter part of the Five Year Improvement Plan. These include:
- 3.2.1 The relationship/overlap of duties with Visitor Information Centres;
 - 3.2.2 The relationship with the Customer Services team working within the Environment Services Directorate;
 - 3.2.3 Call centre working;
 - 3.2.4 Corporate management of post room duties;
 - 3.2.5 Expansion of courier service outside the organisation
 - 3.2.6 Provision of the service for external organisations such as neighbouring local authorities.

4. THE REVIEW TEAM

- 4.1 The Self Assessment Team comprised of:
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|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Councillor Colin Wise | – Portfolio |
| Ken Connolly | – Head of Service |
| Helena Renwick | – Lead Officer |
| Jacqui Griffiths | – Manager |
| Jenny Rowsell | – Information Officer |
| Marilyn Grant | – Information Officer |
| Glynne Miles | – Mentor |
| Sue Worth | – Audit |
| Eddie Coote | - Unison |
- 4.2 The Best Value Review Board comprised of:
- Councillor Michael Kidman
 Councillor Lin Snashall
 Sharon Plumridge
 Dottie Dabrowska
 Shirley Thorne (Hampshire County Council)

5. OBJECTIVES OF THE REVIEW

- 5.1 The primary objective of the Best Value review is to seek to achieve continuous improvement and therefore, the objectives of this review were:
- 5.1.1 To seek comprehensive improvements in the quality and provision of the Information Office Service;
 - 5.1.2 To develop excellent working practices and relationships with our partners and customers;
 - 5.1.3 To develop a consistent service for all customers from all locations;
 - 5.1.4 To develop a harmonised service identity;
 - 5.1.5 To review the location, accommodation facilities, and layout of each Information Office (including interview facilities);
 - 5.1.6 To consider the linkages with Cashiering Services;
 - 5.1.7 To review the quality of information used by the Information Office Service (access, timeliness, consistency, accurate and up to date);
 - 5.1.8 To identify clear performance indicators to ensure continuous improvement.
- 5.2 The Self Assessment Team (SAT) were aware of the Government's overall aim to achieve 2% overall return of savings and service improvements nationally. An initial review of the Service's resources from the budgets, facilities, staffing, management and offices indicated the lack of overall investment in the past had resulted in a service which could not easily bear a reduction in the resources unless offices were closed (see paragraph 8.1.1). The objectives of the review therefore focused on improvements in service quality.

6. REVIEW PROCESS

- 6.1 This review commenced in April 2001 before the present Best Value Review Process was introduced (June 2001). The SAT have changed the process (under guidance) since that date to undertake as much of the new process as possible.
- 6.2 The SAT's first task was to understand the service itself, its functions and responsibilities, its relationships with others and its pivotal role in the communities it serves. This was achieved by visits to each of the eight Information Offices at Hythe, Lyminster, New Milton, Totton, Fawley, Lyndhurst, Fordingbridge and Ringwood.

- 6.3 The SAT then considered how the review should be approached. It was decided to direct most effort to the areas where most impact and improvement could be made on the service. The following issues were identified as the basis of the review.
- 6.3.1 Service Identity;
 - 6.3.2 Location, accommodation and layouts;
 - 6.3.3 Interview facilities;
 - 6.3.4 Consistent service from all locations;
 - 6.3.5 Quality of information provided;
 - 6.3.6 Working with partners;
 - 6.3.7 Linkages with Cashiering Service;
 - 6.3.8 Comprehensive improvements to quality and provision.
- 6.4 The next stage was to consider the results of consultation previously undertaken by the Service and to carry out additional consultation where necessary. It was important to ensure all stakeholders were consulted both users and non users of the service. The combined consultation considered by the SAT includes:
- 6.4.1 Citizens' Panel Survey June 2000 – a survey of 1000+ residents on satisfaction levels, reasons for visits, knowledge of offices, hours of opening, facilities provided etc. Many of these would be non users of the Service;
 - 6.4.2 Information Officers survey/group sessions November 2000;
 - 6.4.3 Elected Members Survey June 2000 – questions similar to Citizens' Panel;
 - 6.4.4 New Forest District Council internal services survey June 2000 – questions to service given to supplier services;
 - 6.4.5 Meeting with representatives of Fawley Parish Council
1 May 2001;
 - 6.4.6 Meeting with representative of Hythe and Dibden Parish Council
1 May 2001;
 - 6.4.7 Meeting with representative of Planning 18 June 2001
 - 6.4.8 Meeting with representatives of Totton and Eling Town Council
25 June 2001;

- 6.4.9 Meeting with representatives of Hampshire County Council 25 June 2001;
 - 6.4.10 Meeting with representative of Housing 28 June 2001;
 - 6.4.11 Meeting with representatives of Cashiering Service 17 July 2001;
 - 6.4.12 Elected Members survey August 2001;
 - 6.4.13 Information Officer survey August 2001;
 - 6.4.14 New Forest District Council Internal Services survey August 2001;
 - 6.4.15 Citizens' Panel survey August 2001
- 6.5 The SAT also compared office to office and to other local authorities as follows:
- 6.5.1 Visits Ringwood New Milton, Fordingbridge, Lyndhurst, Lymington and Hythe Information Offices June/July 2001;
 - 6.5.2 Consideration of Mystery Shopper Exercise with Test Valley District Council 1998;
 - 6.5.3 Visit to Hampshire County Council 25 June 2001;
 - 6.5.4 Visit to Fawley Parish Council 1 May 2001;
 - 6.5.5 Visit to Totton and Eling Town Council 25 June 2001;
 - 6.5.6 Visits to Fareham Borough Council, East Hampshire District Council and Hart District Council 18 July 2001;
 - 6.5.7 Visit to Isle of Wight Unitary Council 20 July 2001;
 - 6.5.8 Visit to Southampton City (Unitary) 20 August 2001;
 - 6.5.9 Working as part of Hampshire and Isle of Wight Customer Services Development Group.
- 6.6 Using the information gained from the consultation and comparison exercises the SAT reviewed each of the eight main issues (as listed in paragraph 6.3) and considered the fundamental questions of Consult, Compare, Challenge and Compete against each of the best value criteria:
- 6.6.1 Strategic objectives;
 - 6.6.2 Ease of access
 - 6.6.3 Quality
 - 6.6.4 Effectiveness

6.6.5 Efficiency

- # 6.7 Finally a Sustainability Assessment was completed. A copy is attached as Appendix 1.
- # 6.8 All the resultant data from all these activities was collated and documented which allowed the SAT to identify the overall outcomes of the review together with the detailed actions for inclusion in the Service Improvement Plan. The actions were then prioritised and allocated over the five year duration of the plan. A copy of the collated data is available on request. The Service Improvement Plan is attached as Appendix 2.

7. SCRUTINISE

- 7.1 Throughout the review the robustness of the process adopted by the SAT has been scrutinised. Within the team this has been undertaken by Glynne Miles as Best Value Mentor and Sue Worth from Internal Audit.
- 7.2 The Scoping Document was considered by Departmental Management Teams on 2 July 2001 and by the Best Value Review Board at the beginning of August 2001. The Review Board comments are included in paragraph 9 of this report.
- 7.3 This report is programmed for the following scrutiny:
 - 7.3.1 Corporate and Finance Member Review Board – 20 September 2001;
 - 7.3.2 Best Value Review Board – 7 September 2001;
 - 7.3.3 Departmental Management Teams – 8 October 2001;
 - 7.3.4 Corporate Management Team – 30 October 2001;
 - 7.3.5 Cabinet – 5 December 2001.

8. OUTCOMES OF THE REVIEW

- 8.1 Service identity:
 - 8.1.1 The first task was to consider whether there was a need for the Council to provide such a service at all. It is known all organisations over a certain size provide such a service particularly those offering a service to the public. On considering the Council's Corporate Plan, The Heart of the Forest it was evident the objectives of the Service mirrored the Council's wish to serve the needs of local people within their local communities. The strong contribution the Service makes to the aims of the Council were also evident in the sustainability audit.

It is felt the Council needs and is expected to have facilities where residents, visitors and customers can obtain helpful and friendly advice and information on the Council, its services and its activities. At present this service is provided by the Information Service. Given the geographic and population spread of the Council it is considered important that local offices are maintained to provide a range of Council Services. The SAT have therefore concluded the Information Service, although a discretionary service, is not one which could or should be discontinued.

- 8.1.2 The Service however could be managed or provided in another way. This could be in house or external. There are, no existing private or commercial organisations offering such a service. There are however potential competitors. They could include other parish and town councils, other district councils, Hampshire County Council, services within New Forest District Council, consultants or previous employees. In comparing the Information Service to other local authorities or other organisations no examples of external management have been identified. The comparison has highlighted that other local authorities market their equivalent service as a corporate service in its own right and not as part of another service. Many Council services have received Charter Marks for doing so. Internal management arrangement changes are possible, as are changes to duties and responsibilities of the Information Services. Issues relating to this have been considered throughout the Best Value Review and will no doubt be undertaken in future cross cutting best value reviews. The link with the cashiering service is an important example.
- 8.1.3 The SAT have concluded the Information Service is a valuable and necessary service of the Council, which should be continued and developed. The SAT believes the Information Service represents the whole of the Council and its services to the community, its residents and partners. This is an important role, which is felt not to be understood by the majority of the Council or its services. As such it should have a corporate name that is recognisable and understood by all customers.
- 8.1.4 The Citizens' Panel (June 2000) has confirmed residents have a high awareness of the location of the offices (74 – 98%) and favoured (91%) multi-functional Council offices managed by the Council itself (77%). 60% of the panel had a preference for a service where all their queries were dealt with by the same person.

8.1.5 With this knowledge the SAT has concluded the Information Service should create and promote its own Service Identity which would sign post residents, visitors and customers accurately and easily to where they can receive appropriate help, advice and information on the Council, its services and partners. To achieve this the following is required:

- A A change of name to 'Customer Services', or similar reflecting the merger with the Cashier Service, which it is felt would be instantly recognisable to the public, visitors and customers alike, and one which they would ask for with confidence.
- B The promotion of the Service as a service in its own right eg advertising opening hours, facilities, advice and assistance available, common décor, leaflets on the service at other outlets eg parish councils and livery.
- C Improved liaison working with internal service suppliers and external partner organisations.
- D Adequate management to co-ordinate and promote the Service.
- E Communication of the role of the service within the Council and how the service can enhance the work of the Council in meeting its strategic objectives.
- F Consider additional ways to assist existing or potential supplier services, partners or customers.
- G Aim for the Information Service to be the first contact for residents, visitors and customers.
- H Work with colleagues to encourage existing and potential customers to use the service more fully.
- I Re-launch the service to give a focus to the change of identity.

8.2 Location, accommodation and layouts:

8.2.1 There are eight Information Offices across the district:

Lyndhurst	8,335 population catchment area
Fordingbridge	10,072 population catchment area
Fawley	14,127 population catchment area
Ringwood	16,843 population catchment area
Lymington	21,496 population catchment area
Hythe	25,984 population catchment area
Totton	32,625 population catchment area
New Milton	38,365 population catchment area

This distribution is felt to be adequate for the size and nature of this rural district although no national or regional standards have been found to substantiate this. Therefore a performance indicator has been adopted based on the 5 mile radius of an office in an attempt to research this further with other local authorities. The uneven distribution of the population throughout the district does mean the offices do appear to be top heavy along the coastal areas. This is however due to the population clusters.

8.2.2 It is known from the Citizens' Panel survey (June 2000) there is an excellent knowledge of the whereabouts of residents' nearest office.

Lyndhurst	97% awareness
Fordingbridge	85% awareness
Fawley	74% awareness
Ringwood	98% awareness
Lymington	97% awareness
Hythe	86% awareness
Totton	93% awareness
New Milton	80% awareness

The SAT has concluded from this research the siting of the office in each area of the district is satisfactory apart from Fawley where it is known residents regularly visit the Hythe office. Consideration could be given to the relocation of the Fawley Office from Jubilee Hall, Fawley to Gang Warily, Blackfield.

8.2.3 The SAT also believes the Information Service should consolidate service provision at the present sites rather than seek high street sites, unless as is the case at Fordingbridge the end of the lease required alternative premises. The Citizens' Panel research indicates residents are aware of the location of offices should they need it. They are not so aware of the range of facilities or information available at each and every office. Therefore our records indicate customers travel to other offices unnecessarily. A change of venue to a high street location will not alter this perception although we believe marketing and promotion of the services will and the numbers of customers will increase and travelling across the district will decrease.

8.2.4 To meet the Council's Strategic Objectives, as outlined in 'The Heart of the Forest', it is important customers receive the same access to services whichever office they choose to visit. Therefore it is necessary that there is a common minimum standard of layout, facilities and equipment at each office. This schedule of minimum requirements for all Information Offices should ensure they are all capable of providing a quality service and are fit-for-purpose. This schedule should also ensure each office has a similar feel and welcome to ensure customers instantly recognise them as representative of the Council as a whole. 91% of the Citizens' Panel expressed the importance of the eight Information Offices being multi functional.

8.2.5 The SAT has identified a list of facilities, based on what the Citizens' Panel told us, which if provided would be the minimum to ensure fitness for purpose. They are:

- Public toilets adapted for use by disabled
- Sufficient dedicated parking for customers
- Adequate signage on approach roads
- Adequate signage within grounds
- Adequate signage within premises
- Compliance with DDA provisions from January 2004
- Privacy for customers
- Waiting area
- Place to open and read planning applications and plans
- Facility to pay bill/rent etc
- Interview facilities
- ICT equipment for use of Information Officers including access to information on Council Web pages, the internet, outlook and email
- Display/exhibition area
- Cash till
- Storage for sacks etc
- Leaflet racks
- Adequate kitchen and toilet facilities for employees
- Photocopier
- Public Notices display area
- Storage for items on deposit
- Storage for forms
- Seating for customers
- Fax machine
- Post box to other services
- Amusements for children
- Information on all NFDC services

Information on Parish/Town Councils
Information on Hampshire County Council
Telephone for use of customer to other services
Merchandising of local and Hampshire books and gifts

In the future there may be scope for working with other agencies such as parish/town councils or the police to provide additional offices within the district. The SAT has concluded this should not be an early priority for the Service

8.2.6 In conclusion the SAT believes the following actions are required to ensure the offices are fit-for-purpose.

- A The siting of the Fawley Information Office should be reconsidered.
- B Reviews of all the Information Office locations should be undertaken regularly to anticipate any unplanned changes.
- C The principle of a minimum common standard should be adopted and implemented.

8.3 Interview facilities:

8.3.1 The eight Information Services offices between them serve around 1000 visitors a day. The queries can range from the provision of a leaflet to the completion of an application for homelessness.

8.3.2 Privacy is a personal concept, however in the Citizens' Panel survey 1 in 4 were concerned with the level of privacy afforded to them when visiting information offices. The same survey established the main reason for visiting an Information Office is to discuss a problem/get advice.

8.3.3 The provision of suitable interview facilities needs to reflect the range of interview situations and to be sufficiently flexible to take account of customers' need for privacy.

8.3.4 The Citizens' Panel results together with employee feedback indicate the provision of interview facilities at each office should allow for the following levels of customer contact:

- a) Welcome, receive and pass on
- b) Personal space at counter/desk
- c) Visually private, single use acoustically screened areas
- d) Private interview room.

8.3.5 Each of the eight offices can offer 'a' and 'd' with some provision in some offices of 'b' and 'c'. As this provision is not planned or effectively managed the Service's ability to meet customers needs for privacy is compromised. The service for instance does not directly manage or control all the interview rooms.

8.3.6 It is felt Council wide recognition of the importance of privacy to the customer is not prominent, resulting in the use of interview rooms for purposes other than customer needs eg use by visiting officers as offices, storage and staff meetings.

8.3.7 In view of the high importance of adequate interview facilities appropriate to the type of customer query the SAT has concluded the following is required.

- A Each office should offer the 4 types of interview facilities:
 - Receive
 - Personal space
 - Visually private
 - Private.

- B A minimum standard for all these facilities should be adopted to include:
 - Welcome and restful décor
 - Suitable and adequate furniture
 - ICT equipment
 - Telephone to internal services/external partners
 - Child friendly
 - Compliance with Disability Discrimination Act 1995
 - Privacy
 - No open storage
 - Suitable information displays
 - To be used only for purpose
 - Safety of employees.

- C The use of these interview facilities be maximised by:
 - Active management booking system
 - Use of rotas for regular users
 - Surgeries
 - Reservation for use with customers
 - Further use of ICT.

8.4 Consistent service from all locations:

8.4.1 The Citizens' Panel survey results show the public favours a single point of service capable of resolving the majority of their queries and problems (91%). This accords with the Council's Strategic Objectives to promote equal opportunity and social inclusion. The sustainability audit confirms the benefits of the Information Service meeting residents needs without them needing to leave their own communities. There is no justifiable reason to require a customer to travel when the service could be provided nearer home.

8.4.2 The Information Service is capable of providing this service but inconsistencies in information provision particularly, undermine the provision of a consistent quality service.

- 8.4.3 One such inconsistency occurs at Lyndhurst where 3 public receptions exist. Discussions have been started with colleagues in other services providing information to the public with a view to minimising the potential confusion and inconvenience to customers. This forms part of the actions in the Improvement Plan.
- 8.4.4 Discussions on common opening hours will no doubt lead to a consideration of out of hours service. This aspect will be considered fully with other colleagues as part of possible call centre management and other e-governance measures.
- 8.4.5 The SAT has concluded the following actions are necessary to ensure a consistent and uniform service from each of the eight offices.
- A Improve supply of information and support from internal supplier services and external partners including use of agreements
 - B To enable access to key computer applications eg council tax or housing
 - C Create Information Service own Intranet system
 - D Train Information Officers in all relevant aspects of ICT
 - E Train Information Officers at all locations to common standard
 - F Develop and promote new ICT facilities eg Teletalk
 - G Work with partners to provide a seamless service to the public
 - H Adopt common hours of opening
 - I Provide a common service to the public at Appletree Court, Lyndhurst
 - J Ensure all equipment, facilities and furniture are provided similarly in each office by investing in the service and devolving maintenance budgets to the service
 - K Develop greater flexibility in resourcing the offices as a result of the merger with the Cashier Service
 - L Develop methods to proactively capture new knowledge and distribution between offices, particularly with Fawley and Totton and also Hampshire County Council
 - M Amalgamate Cashiers Service with Information Service and resolve any audit concerns on cash handling.

8.5 Quality of information from all locations:

8.5.1 The quality of information provided by Information Offices relies on it being timely, accurate, consistent, and available and being up to date. The service relies on supplier services, partners and external organisations to ensure this.

8.5.2 The service can not rely solely on others to do this and must be proactive to ensure the quality of its services to the public/customers.

8.5.3 The SAT believe the key to this crucial relationship is defining the relationship initially and maintaining a dialogue throughout. This can be achieved by:

- A Defining the relationship with all supplier services partners and external partners and reviewing regularly
- B Establish a service user group of internal stakeholders
- C Regular reviews of information held and sample checks to identify any problems
- D Feedback to supplier services/partners comments/suggestions/problems mentioned by customers/public
- E Work closer with New Milton, Totton and Fawley offices and with Hampshire County Council
- F Make better use of ICT and direct access to systems
- G Improve format of information to make it more accessible to customers either in style, form or layout helping services where appropriate.
- H Produce information on the Information Service itself
- I Manage information to ensure all eight offices have the same information at the same time
- J Be aware of up coming events, changes in the community, new organisations and proactively seek/prepare information for the public
- K Ensure information displays are full, up to date and consistent in all offices.

8.6 Working with partners:

8.6.1 The Best Value Review has recognised the Information Service has a good record of working with partners and of encouraging and enhancing communities in their localities. It also believes it could where appropriate extend this partnership working to provide a service for more organisations.

8.6.2 To maximise these partnerships certain enhancements are required. These include:

- A Ensuring whatever the scope of the partnership it is defined in a written document stating:
 - The role and responsibilities of the Information Service
 - The role and responsibilities of the Partners
 - Costs
 - Timescales
 - Compliments/complaints/feedback handling
 - Performance measurement/monitoring
 - Review of partnership
 - Contact details.
- B Establishment of Service User Group to promote two-way communication with representatives from Housing, Revenues and Planning for example.
- C Discussions with Parish/Town Councils and with Hampshire County Council for seamless service to the public on 'Council' issues.
- D Develop working with Totton Town Council and Fawley Parish Council further to ensure effective working arrangements.
- E Discuss with other Parish/Town Councils who either run their own Information Offices or intend to do so if further partnership arrangements can be agreed eg Lymington Town Council, Ringwood Town Council, Fordingbridge Parish Council and New Milton Town Council. This could include the provision of locked noticeboards where there is no parish office.

8.7 Linkages with Cashiering Service:

8.7.1 An outcome of the Cashiering Best Value Review was a recommendation to undertake a joint review of the cashiering function as provided by the Cashiering Service and Information Services.

8.7.2 A workshop has been held to explore this recommendation. The participants came to an early conclusion that a combined information and cashiers service would offer a number of benefits including:

- Improved customer experience from a seamless service at all locations
- Removal of some confusion with present management arrangements
- Increased employee resource would help alleviate problems with cover for leave, training and sickness experienced by both services
- Scope for enhanced employee development in wider range of duties
- Opportunity to improve customer experience in revised layouts
- Ability to deal with peaks and troughs of workloads would be improved
- A new management framework can be developed.

8.7.3 The challenges in achieving amalgamation included:

- Recognising employee strengths and preferences in new arrangements
- Resolution of a possible conflict of security for cash handling in open and welcoming information office
- Need for amendments and postponement of certain items in the Cashiering Best Value Improvement Plan which has already been approved
- Some reluctance to the merger.

8.7.4 The workshop agreed three key service development opportunities.

- A Combine the cashiering and information services.
- B The opportunity to market a combined service, raising its profile as an important shop window for the activities of the Council as a whole.
- C The opportunity to extend the proposed combined service to all eight Information Offices.

8.8 Comprehensive improvements to quality and provision:

8.8.1 The SAT believes a range of improvements can be made. These include:

- A Style of service
 - Management/reporting patterns
 - Deployment of Information Officers
 - Training
 - Monitoring of workloads
 - More use of telephone/email
 - Regular reviews

- B Facilities and layouts
 - Use of minimum specification
 - Project appropriate image
 - Consistency of approach
 - Improve cash handling
 - Management of public areas
 - Queue management
 - Opening hours
 - Develop Information Office Intranet

- C Relationships with supplier services
 - Contracts/agreements
 - Service user group
 - Feedback/reviews

- D Working with partners
 - Maximise use of facilities
 - Parish/Town, District and County working

- E Promotion of service
 - Visitor handling/security
 - Maximise use of service
 - Encourage use of local office
 - Marketing
 - Quality control
 - Exhibitions eg New Forest Show
 - Use of noticeboards in Post Offices, banks, supermarkets or similar

- F Evaluation of Service
 - Development of performance indicators and regular monitoring/reviews
 - Customer surveys and forums
 - Compare/benchmark to other Local Authorities
 - Incorporation of National, Corporate and local priorities

8.9 Sustainability:

- # 8.10 These outcomes have been transformed into prioritised actions over a five year period in the form of a Service Improvement Plan. A summary version is attached as Appendix 2.

9. BEST VALUE REVIEW BOARD COMMENTS

9.1 The Review Board Members are:

Sharon Plumridge	BV Board Leader
Dottie Dabrowska	BV Board Officer
Cllr Michael Kidman	Review Panel Rep.
Cllr Lin Snashall	Review Panel Rep.
Shirley Thorne	External Specialist

9.2 The Review Board have met twice. The first time was to consider the scoping document. The second was to consider this final report and the improvement plan.

9.3 The Review Board were impressed with the work which the self-assessment team had carried out and felt that the review had been very comprehensive. Nether the less they did have a number of comments and suggestions which have been incorporated either into this report or the improvement plan.

10. CORPORATE AND FINANCE REVIEW PANEL COMMENTS

10.1 This report was considered by the Panel on 20 September 2001. They also considered the comments of the Best Value Review Board and agreed their comments should be incorporated into the report. The recommendations were approved.

11. DEPARTMENTAL MANAGEMENT TEAMS COMMENTS

11.1 Departmental Management Teams felt that this was a very through review and agreed, in the main, with the outcomes of it. Environment Services in particular suggested full consultation with other services if there were any changes in the reception services. The Customer Services section felt there would be confusion if the Service was to adopt their name and they change their name to something else.

12. CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM COMMENTS

12.1 The Corporate Management Team considered this report on 13 November 2001. They recommend the review be accepted and the actions outlined in the 5 Year Improvement Plan be approved.

13. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

13.1 The Service developments will be estimated and included in the expenditure plan process over the 5 year period of the improvement plan.

- 13.2 Officers and Members have recorded the hours they have spent on this Best Value Review. The cost of Officer time is £5,033.34. Although Members time is not costed Cllr Wise contributed in excess 40 hours during the process.

14. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1 The activities identified in the improvement plan will further support the environmental aims of the Council for sustainable communities and taking services to customers.

15. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1 None.

16. CONCLUSIONS

- 16.1 The Information Service resources are very tightly drawn.
- 16.2 There were a number of issues identified as requiring immediate consideration. These included:
- 16.2.1 Linkages with the Cashiering Service
 - 16.2.2 A seamless service between parish/town councils, the district and the county council
 - 16.2.3 Working arrangements with Totton and Eling Town Council and Fawley Parish Council
 - 16.2.4 The presence of three separate public receptions within Appletree Court, Lyndhurst
 - 16.2.5 A lack of a formalised performance measurement system
 - 16.2.6 The perception the service was not regarded as a service in its own right.
- 16.3 The Service could not bear a reduction in resources unless offices were closed so the overall objectives and aims were designed to achieve improvements in service quality.
- 16.4 A visit of outcomes for inclusion in the five year improvement plan were agreed. These have been summarised as:
- 16.4.1 Change of name to 'Customer Services' or similar to give emphasis to the customer and to recognise the importance of

giving them information, help and advice, and promotion of service in its own right with a new livery

16.4.2 Amalgamation of Information Service with Cashiering Service

16.4.3 Proactive working with all New Forest District Council services and creation of a Service User Group

16.4.4 A closer working relationship with existing partners and the introduction of other councils/partners all working with detailed and defined agreements

16.4.5 Improved provision of information and ICT

16.4.6 Improved accommodation and equipment to provide facilities which are fit-for-purpose including joint working to provide customer service at Appletree Court

16.4.7 Introduction of comprehensive performance measurement system benchmarked with other local authorities

16.4.8 Specification and harmonisation of service to ensure a common service is provided to the public from all offices.

16.5 The Information Service contributes well to the Council's commitment to sustainable communities and to the Local Agenda 21 by offering a service in communities throughout the district minimising the need for customers to travel and by providing a focus for other councils and partners within these communities.

16.6 The Review Board were satisfied with the work of the Self Assessment team and felt the review had been very comprehensive throughout.

16.7 The SAT were particularly impressed with the commitment to Customer Care demonstrated by the employees of the Information Service.

16.8 The Sat were disappointed the union representative was unable to participate in the process.

17. RECOMMENDATIONS

17.1 That the Best Value Review of the Information Services be accepted; and

17.2 That the actions outlined in the 5 Year Improvement Plan be approved.

For Further Information

Helena Renwick
Customer Relations Adviser
Appletree Court, Lyndhurst
Tel: 023 8028 5434
Email: helena.renwick@nfdc.gov.uk

Background Papers

Scoping Document – 09/07/01

Or contact any other member of the SAT:-

Councillor Colin Wise Portfolio Holder
Ken Connolly Head of ICT
Glynne Miles Assistant Director of Finance
Jacqui Griffiths Information Services Manager
Jenny Rowsell Information Officer
Marilyn Grant Information Officer
Sue Worth Audit Assistant
Eddie Coote Centre Manager

INFORMATION SERVICES BEST VALUE REVIEW

SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT

UNDERTAKEN BY SELF ASSESSMENT TEAM 25 JULY 2001

As part of all best value reviews services are required to undertake a sustainability audit against the following headings –

- Building Sustainable Communities
- Buildings, Planning and Land Use
- Managing the Environment and Resources
- Health
- A Sustainable Economy
- Housing
- Social Equality and Opportunity
- Transport
- Sending the Right Signals

The sustainability audit identifies those actions the Service can contribute to and assist the Council in its commitment to sustainable communities and the Local Agenda 21.

The Self Assessment Team believes the Information Office Service greatly contributes to the Council's commitment to sustainable communities.

1. Building Sustainable Communities

Does the Service increase the cohesiveness and capacity of the local community by –

- Improving the sense of community?
 1. The Service has eight offices within communities throughout the district
 2. Each office is within its community acting as a focal point where residents seek help and advice and also share local knowledge
 3. The Information Officers share local and other knowledge to the residents
 4. The offices are a link between local groups and residents by their use of the premises
 5. The Information Officers promote sustainable communities by promoting dog bags, composters etc
 6. The Service works with Parish and Town Councils
 7. The Officers listen to residents and feedback comments to the wider Council
 8. It is felt, should the offices be removed the communities would adversely feel their loss.

- Reducing the need to travel by improving or adding local facilities?
 1. The eight offices throughout the district are strategically placed to help residents within their own communities so they do not have to travel across the district
 2. The Courier transports papers, correspondence etc between offices allowing residents to deliver items to one office knowing it will safely arrive at it's destination
 3. The use of new technology such as teletalk means residents receive the same level of service in their own community rather than travel
 4. Cash receiving facilities offer a similar benefit
 5. The Information Officers provide help and advice on planning applications and housing benefit verification for instance in their own communities which they would otherwise need to travel to obtain
 6. In the future a greater use of ICT will enhance the local facilities even more.

- Increasing the capacity of local communities to influence decisions that effect their lives and their capability to manage resources and facilities?
 1. Each office holds Council documents on deposit or during consultation periods eg New Forest District Local Plan. Residents can read and make comments then and there.
 2. Partners will use Information Offices to seek residents comments and feedback eg changes to local road layouts
 3. Residents can obtain information on elections such as voting by post or proxy
 4. The offices are used by elected members to meet residents and some hold surgeries
 5. The offices host displays
 6. Residents can view planning application and submit comments during the consultation period
 7. All committee agendas, reports and minutes are available.

- Involving appropriate partner organisation in identifying and working towards meeting community needs?
 1. The Service works in partnership with Totton Town Council, Hythe and Dibden Parish Council, and Fawley Parish Council
 2. The Service works with Hampshire County Council and is discussing expanding this relationship further
 3. The Citizens Advice Bureau has offices in Information Offices at New Milton and Fordingbridge
 4. Offices are used by a range of other organisations eg Open Door, registrar, Department of Social Security and Business Enterprise.

- Other
 1. The Service recognises it could be more proactive in marketing this opportunity with communities.

2. Buildings, Planning and Land Use

Does the Service make the best use of land and buildings by-

- Using brownfield sites or vacant buildings rather than greenfield sites?
 1. The Service uses either existing Council buildings or existing buildings of other eg Hythe and Dibden Parish Council
 2. The new build at New Milton has sought to redevelop the existing site
- Improving the distinctiveness of areas and the range of facilities locally?
 1. The Service recognises it could do more.
- Other
 1. The street signs on approach roads to the offices could be improved.

3. Managing the Environment and Resources

Does the Service ensure energy and resources are used widely and that the broader environment is protected and enhanced by –

- Reducing energy and water use through efficiency measures?
 1. Information Officers are actively encouraged to take steps to reduce energy use etc.
 2. The Service takes part in all Council initiatives.
- Taking measures to reduce, raise and recycle resources wherever possible?
 1. Envelopes are reused
 2. Paper is recycled
 3. Photocopying is kept to a minimum and done double sided.

- Other
 1. The Service promotes home energy surveys
 2. It participates in schemes promoting low energy light bulbs and kettles
 3. It sells composters, recycling bags and garden refuse bags
 4. Information on all such issues are available to residents
 5. From time to time offices host displays/exhibitions
 6. Requests for special collections are taken
 7. Dog bags are given out.

4. Health

Does the Service maximise health promotion by -

- Providing healthy and safe working environments for staff?
 1. Health and Safety risk assessments
 2. DSE assessments
 3. Disability Discrimination Act audits
 4. Information Officers participate in training – Health and Safety and Fire Awareness every 3 years.
 5. Specific training is organised such as lone working
 6. Each office has either a first aider or appointed person
 7. Information Officers receive information on facilities at Council recreation centres
 8. Health and Safety is a standing item at each section meeting.

5. A sustainability economy

Does the Service add to the local economy and the employment needs of people and business by –

- Valuing and supporting unpaid work?
 1. The offices are used by various voluntary and charitable groups eg Open Door, Citizens Advice Bureau
 2. The Service works in partnership with many voluntary and charitable organisations.
- Other
 1. Information Officers tend to live in the locality of their main place of work.

6. Housing

Does the Service promote decent housing and amenities by –

- Other
 1. The Service is about to participate in the Council's Choice Based Letting Scheme by advertising vacancies in each office
 2. Information on HEES eg loft insulation is available.

7. Social Equality and Opportunity

Does the Service encourage equality and opportunities for all by –

- Increasing the skills and education of the workforce and service users?
 1. The Information Officers receive training eg disability awareness, visual impairment awareness and diversity awareness training.
- Increasing equality of information access by communicating in different and appropriate ways?
 1. Each office has been Disability Discrimination Act audited
 2. The Service has a minicom for the hearing impaired
 3. It will soon manage the disability help line and provide information in different formats on request and also promote the Disability Discrimination Act logo
 4. Teletalk
 5. Face to face surgeries.
- Assisting people on low incomes and disadvantaged groups?
 1. Information Officers provide a personal service to those customers who for whatever reason need to have forms, documents or plans explained to them in language they understand
 2. Assistance is provided on housing benefit verification or debt recovery
 3. Residents are assisted with Concessionary Travel Scheme applications etc
 4. Information Officers communicate residents needs to other services/partner organisations as necessary.
- Improving facilities, services and opportunities for the young, the elderly and for disabled people.
 1. Each office has magnifiers for the use of the visually impaired
 2. ICT is used and its use is increasing
 3. The Service has a minicom

- Improving awareness of issues, right or responsibilities?
 1. The Services ability to do this is limited.

- Other
 1. The primary function of the Service is to help residents, visitors and customers who for whatever reason be it lack of transport, disability, age, lack of information or knowledge, fear, access information, advice and services on an equal footing.

8. Transport

Does the Service improve its transport profile by –

- Using vehicles in the most environmentally friendly manner?
 1. The Courier travels by the shortest direct route
 2. The Courier uses a diesel vehicle which is regularly services
 3. The Courier on occasion also transports passengers to avoid additional vehicle trips
 4. Information Officers share cars to section meetings or training sessions when possible
 5. The Courier service avoids the need to transport paper by numerous trips.

- Improving access and facilities, locally and especially for those with disabilities or without a car?
 1. The measures taken are listed above.

9. Sending the Right Signals

Does the Service put sustainability into practice and encourage others to by –

- Encouraging individuals to do their bit?
 1. The Service supports the Council's strategy on sustainability and will continue to embrace all appropriate means in the future.

LOCAL INFORMATION SERVICES BEST VALUE REVIEW

SUMMARY OF 5 YEAR SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN

	2001	2002				2003				2004				2005				2006			
	O-D	J-M	A-J	J-S	O-D	J-M	A-J	J-S	O-D	J-M	A-J	J-S	O-D	J-M	A-J	J-S	O-D	J-M	A-J	J-S	O-D
Amalgamation of Cashier and Information Services																					
Inform employees and Council of management changes	█																				
Agree operational arrangements within Service (including employee/union)	█																				
Train employees	█	█																			
Implement changes	█	█																			
Change of name and service identity																					
Agree vision of Service	█																				
Consult, agree and change name		█	█	█																	
Consult, agree and implement change of image and livery		█	█	█																	
Promote new service within Council and with partners			█	█	█	█	█	█	█												

	2001	2002				2003				2004				2005				2006			
	O-D	J-M	A-J	J-S	O-D	J-M	A-J	J-S	O-D	J-M	A-J	J-S	O-D	J-M	A-J	J-S	O-D	J-M	A-J	J-S	O-D
Change of name and service identity cont																					
Relaunch service																					
Harmonise standards at all offices																					
Specify and agree service standards																					
Discuss and agree seamless service (parish/district/county)																					
Consider opening hours of offices																					
Information and ICT																					
Consider use of ICT overtime of plan																					
Agree links to service's systems																					
Develop own local information system																					
Produce ICT training programme																					
Develop voice and data system arrangements (HPSN)																					

	2001	2002				2003				2004				2005				2006			
	O-D	J-M	A-J	J-S	O-D	J-M	A-J	J-S	O-D	J-M	A-J	J-S	O-D	J-M	A-J	J-S	O-D	J-M	A-J	J-S	O-D
Information and ICT cont																					
Improve ICT links to Totton/Fawley			████████████████████																		
Improve non data capture			██																		
Working with Partners (internal and external)																					
Set up Service User Group		███																			
Produce agreement for all partners		████████████████████																			
Agree partnership working with Hampshire County Council	████████████████████																				
Review partnership working with Fawley Parish Council		██████████																			
Review partnership working with Totton and Eling Town Council		██████████																			
Explore further working with other parish/town councils						████████████████████															
Explore new ways to work in partnership						████████████████████															

	2001	2002				2003				2004				2005				2006			
	O-D	J-M	A-J	J-S	O-D	J-M	A-J	J-S	O-D	J-M	A-J	J-S	O-D	J-M	A-J	J-S	O-D	J-M	A-J	J-S	O-D
Accommodation and Facilities																					
Adopt minimum standards including interview facilities which are fit-for-purpose																					
Review facilities regularly																					
Discuss possible relocation of office with Fawley Parish Council																					
Identify alternative premises for Fordingbridge office																					
Relocation of new New Milton office																					
Agree joint working of public service at Lyndhurst																					
Performance Management																					
Develop and agree performance indicators																					
Undertake regular customer/stakeholder surveys																					
Benchmark with other local authorities particularly other District Councils																					

	2001	2002				2003				2004				2005				2006			
	O-D	J-M	A-J	J-S	O-D	J-M	A-J	J-S	O-D	J-M	A-J	J-S	O-D	J-M	A-J	J-S	O-D	J-M	A-J	J-S	O-D
Future Developments																					
Links with Visitor Information Centres																					
Relationship with Customer Services																					
Call centre working																					
Post room duties at Lyndhurst as part of Admin Support BV Review																					
Review Courier service																					
Provision of service to external organisations																					

LOCAL INFORMATION SERVICES BEST VALUE REVIEW

POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHIC STATISTICS

Based on 2000 figures



FORDINGBRIDGE

Godshill	496
Martin	379
Damerham	530
Sandleheath	562
Rockbourne	328
Whitsbury	207
Breamore	356
Hale	615
Woodgreen	520
Fordingbridge	5,634
Hyde	941
	<hr/>
	10,568

RINGWOOD

Ellingham, Harbridge and Ibsley	1,144
Ringwood	13,693
Burley	1,314
Sopley	692
	<hr/>
	16,843

NEW MILTON

Bransgore	4,306
New Milton	24,013
Hordle	5,410
Milford	4,636
	<hr/>
	38,365

LYMINGTON

Sway	3,408
Lymington	14,415
Boldre	1,864
East Boldre	860
Beaulieu	791
Exbury and Lepe	158
	<hr/>
	21,496

FAWLEY

Fawley	14,127
	<hr/>
	14,127

HYTHE

Marchwood	5,477
Hythe & Dibden	20,507
	<hr/>
	25,984

TOTTON

Ashurst & Colbury	2,266
Copythorne	2,690
Netley Marsh	2,199
Totton & Eling	27,736
	<hr/>
	34,891

LYNDHURST

Bramshaw	698
Minstead	805
Lyndhurst	3,062
Brockenhurst	3,413
Denny Lodge	357
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	8,335

TOTAL POPULATION 170,609
(estimate 2000)

LOCAL INFORMATION SERVICES BEST VALUE REVIEW

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AND BENCHMARKING

NOTE: This appendix illustrates the PI's which will be submitted to the Corporate and Finance Review Panel annually. The first submission will be in Spring 2002.

Best Value Criteria: Strategic Objective (SO)
 Quality (Q)
 Ease of Access (EA)
 Efficiency (EC)
 Effectiveness (EF)

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

1. Satisfaction with service

	2000/01				2001/02			
	Residents	Members	Services	Customers	Residents	Members	Services	Customers
Very satisfied	40%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Satisfied	44%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Not satisfied	2%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Don't know	14%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%

Best Value Criteria: ALL

2. Overall satisfaction level

2000/01	2001/02
84%	%

Best Value Criteria: ALL

3. Number of enquiries

Office	Range per day		2001/02		2001/02	
	To	From	Average per day	Per year	Average per day	Per year
Lymington	169	359	238			
Ringwood inc Cashiering	146	282	216			
Hythe	137	205	182			
New Milton	89	163	124			
Fordingbridge	47	75	62			
Lyndhurst	33	71	55			
Fawley	15	48	25			
Totton	9	60	33			
All offices	9	359				

Best Value Criteria: EF

4. Queries per resident per annum

Office	Population	2000/01	2001/02
		Per Annum	Per Annum
Lymington	21,496	4.27	
Ringwood inc Cashiering	16,843	3.33	
Hythe	25,984	1.82	
New Milton	38,365	0.84	
Fordingbridge	10,568	1.53	
Lyndhurst	8,335	1.73	
Fawley	14,127	0.46	
Totton	34,891	0.35	
All offices	170,609	1.8	

Best Value Criteria: EF

5. Queries per employee (FTE) per annum

Office	Employees (FTE)	2000/01	2001/02
Lymington	2.6	35,338	
Ringwood inc Cashiering	2	28,080	
Hythe	1.3	36,400	
New Milton	1	32,240	
Fordingbridge	1	16,120	
Lyndhurst	4.5	3202	
Fawley	1	6,500	
Totton	1	12,220	
All offices	14.4		

Best Value Criteria: EF

6. Quality of service

	2000/01	2001/02
Concerned with level of privacy	40%	%
Received service required	88%	%
Helpfulness/politeness	90%	%
Time waiting to be served	22%	%
Information available	77%	%
Made welcome	80%	%
Manor/behaviour of Information Officer	83%	%
Dealt with multi queries	44%	%

Best Value Criteria: Q

Legend: S – Satisfactory
 I – Inadequate
 N – No facility

7. Access to Services

Facilities	Lymington	Ringwood	Hythe	New Milton	Fordingbrige	Lyndhurst	Fawley	Totton
Public toilets adapted for use by disabled								
Sufficient dedicated parking for customers								
Adequate signage on approach roads								
Adequate signage within grounds								
Adequate signage within premises								
Compliance with DDA provisions from January 2004								
Privacy for customers								
Waiting area								
Place to open and read planning applications and plans								
Facility to pay bills/rent etc								
Interview facilities								
ICT equipment for use of Information Officers								
Access to information on Council Web pages								
Display/exhibition area								
Cash till								
Storage for sacks, etc								
Leaflet racks								
Adequate security for employees and visitors								
Water fountain								
Adequate kitchen and toilet facilities for employees								

Facilities	Lymington	Ringwood	Hythe	New Milton	Fordingbrige	Lyndhurst	Fawley	Totton
Photocopier								
Public Notices display area								
Storage for items on deposit								
Storage for forms								
Seating for customers								
Fax machine								
Post box to other services								
Amusements for children								
Information on all NFDC services								
Information on parish/town councils								
Information on Hampshire County Council								
Telephone for use of customer to other services								

Best Value Criteria: EA

8. Time waiting to be served (Council standard 80% in 5 mins, 100% in 10 mins)

Office	2001/02	
	in 5 mins	in 10 mins
Lymington	%	%
Ringwood inc Cashiering	%	%
Hythe	%	%
New Milton	%	%
Fordingbridge	%	%
Lyndhurst	%	%
Fawley	%	%
Totton	%	%
All offices	%	%

Best Value Criteria: EC

9. Time to answer the telephone (Council standard 80% in 3 rings, 100% in 5 rings)

Office	2001/02	
	3 rings	5 rings
Lymington	%	%
Ringwood inc Cashiering	%	%
Hythe	%	%
New Milton	%	%
Fordingbridge	%	%
Lyndhurst	%	%
Fawley	%	%
Totton	%	%
All offices	%	%

Best Value Criteria: EC

10. Customer feedback

	2000/01	2001/02
Complaints		
Compliments		

Best Value Criteria: Q

11. Range of training

	2000/01	2001/02
IT Training		
DDA Awareness		
Health and Safety		
Violence in the workforce		
Visual Impairment awareness		
Fire awareness training		
Induction new employees		

Best Value Criteria: SO

12. Training hours per employee

	2000/01	2001/02
Number training hours		
Number employees (not FTE)	23	25
Average training hours per employee		

Best Value Criteria: SO

13. Average cost per enquiry

	2000/01	2001/02
Lymington	£	£
Ringwood	£	£
Hythe	£	£
New Milton	£	£
Fordingbridge	£	£
Lyndhurst	£	£
Fawley	£	£
Totton	£	£
All offices	£	£

Best Value Criteria: EC

14. Cost per resident

	2000/01	2001/02
Lymington	£	£
Ringwood	£	£
Hythe	£	£
New Milton	£	£
Fordingbridge	£	£
Lyndhurst	£	£
Fawley	£	£
Totton	£	£
All offices	£	£305,690

Best Value Criteria: EC

BENCHMARKING

1. Overall satisfaction level with Information Service

	2000/01	2001/02
New Forest District Council	%	%
Hampshire County Council	%	%
West Sussex (Beacon Service)	%	%
Other local authorities	%	%
Other local authorities	%	%
Other local authorities	%	%

Best Value Criteria: ALL

2. Number of enquiries per annum

	2000/01	2001/02
New Forest District Council		
Hampshire County Council	113,495	
West Sussex (Beacon Service)		
Other local authorities	%	%
Other local authorities	%	%
Other local authorities	%	%

Best Value Criteria: EF

3. Enquires per resident per annum

	2000/01	2001/02
New Forest District Council		
Hampshire County Council		
West Sussex (Beacon Service)		
Other local authorities	%	%
Other local authorities	%	%
Other local authorities	%	%

Best Value Criteria: EF

4. Enquiries per employee

	2000/01	2001/02
New Forest District Council		
Hampshire County Council		
West Sussex (98/99)	6,600	
Other local authorities	%	%
Other local authorities	%	%
Other local authorities	%	%

Best Value Criteria: EF

5. Quality of service

	2000/01					
	NFDC	HCC	WSCC	Other LA	Other LA	Other LA
Helpfulness	%	%	%	%	%	%
Availability of information requested	%	%	%	%	%	%
Welcome/polite	%	%	87%	%	%	%
Manner/behaviour	%	%	%	%	%	%
Ability to do more than one enquiry	%	%	%	%	%	%

Best Value Criteria: Q

6. Range of training

	2000/01					
	NFDC	HCC	WSCC	Other LA	Other LA	Other LA
DDA awareness/ethnicity		Some				
Health and safety						
Violence in the workplace		Some				
Induction of new employees		√				
Customer service		Some				
Telephone techniques		Some				
Managing stress		Some				
IT		√				
Specific service related		Some				

Best Value Criteria: SO

7. Time waiting to be served

	2001/02	
	in 5 mins	in 10 mins
New Forest District Council	%	%
Hampshire County Council	%	%
West Sussex (Beacon Service)	%	%
Other local authorities	%	%
Other local authorities	%	%
Other local authorities	%	%

Best Value Criteria: EF

8. Time to answer telephone

	2001/02	
	3 rings	5 rings
New Forest District Council	%	%
Hampshire County Council	%	%
West Sussex (Beacon Service)	64%	%
Other local authorities	%	%
Other local authorities	%	%
Other local authorities	%	%

Best Value Criteria: EF

9. Average cost per enquiry

	2000/01	2001/02
New Forest District Council	£	£
Hampshire County Council	£	£
West Sussex (Beacon Service)	£	£
Other local authorities	%	%
Other local authorities	%	%
Other local authorities	%	%

Best Value Criteria: EF

10. Average cost per resident

	2000/01	2001/02
New Forest District Council	£	£
Hampshire County Council	£	£
West Sussex (Beacon Service)	£	£
Other local authorities	%	%
Other local authorities	%	%
Other local authorities	%	%

Best Value Criteria: EF

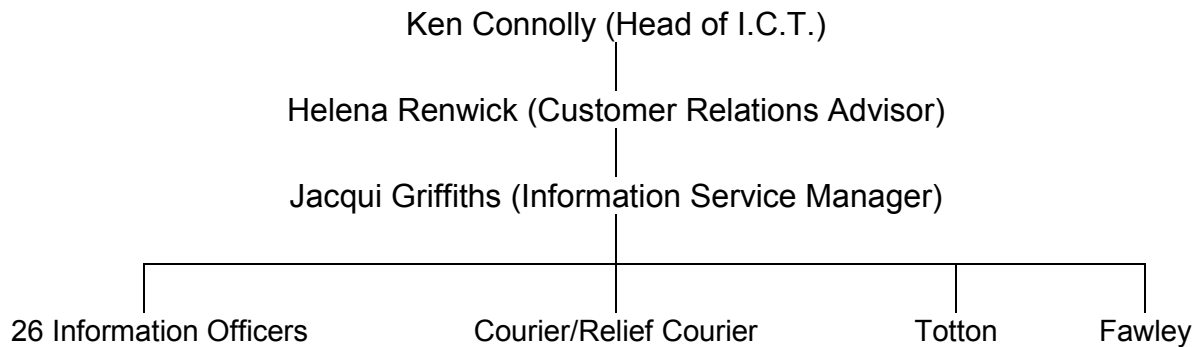
11. Accessibility of offices to population

	Population within 5miles of an office 2000/01
New Forest District Council	%
Hampshire County Council	%
West Sussex (Beacon Service)	%
Other local authorities	%
Other local authorities	%
Other local authorities	%

Best Value Criteria: EA

LOCAL INFORMATION SERVICES BEST VALUE REVIEW

EMPLOYEE STRUCTURE CHART
(pre amalgamation with Cashiering Service)

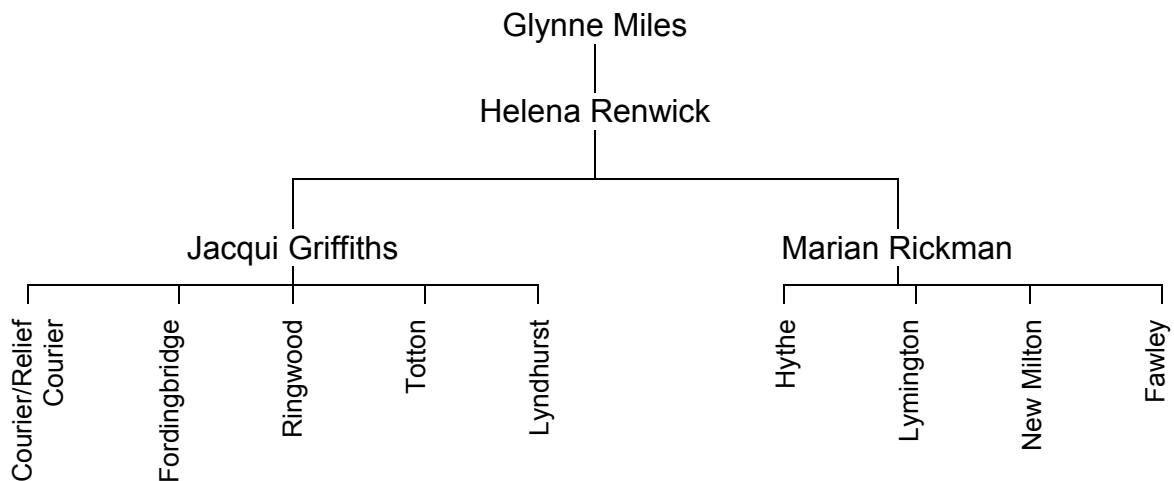


The Information Officers are located:

Hythe	3 employees	(2 job share, 1 part time)
Ringwood	4 employees	(4 part time)
New Milton	2 employees	(2 job share)
Fordingbridge	2 employees	(2 job share)
Lymington	4 employees	(1 full time, 2 job share, 1 part time)
Lyndhurst	9 employees	(9 employees, 7 part-time, 2 job share)

There is in addition a full time Information Officer who acts as relief at all information offices.

EMPLOYEE STRUCTURE CHART
(post amalgamation with Cashiering Service)



LOCAL INFORMATION SERVICES BEST VALUE REVIEW

ENQUIRIES FROM THE PUBLIC

Office	Range per day			Average per year
	To	From		
Lymington	169	359	238	91,880
Ringwood (inc Cashiering)	146	282	216	56,160
Hythe	137	205	182	47,320
New Milton	89	163	124	32,240
Fordingbridge	47	75	62	16,120
Lyndhurst	33	71	55	14,412
Fawley	15	48	25	6,500
Totton	9	60	33	12,220

LOCAL INFORMATION SERVICES BEST VALUE REVIEW

STAKEHOLDERS

All Members of New Forest District Council

All employees of New Forest District Council

Employees of Information Services

- The public**
- residents
 - visitors
 - businesses
 - users of services
 - customers of information services
 - personal callers
 - customers on the telephone

All New Forest District Council Services

All Parish and Town Councils within the district

Hampshire County Council, Fire and Police Authorities

- External Agencies**
- Water companies
 - Bus companies
 - Business Enterprise
 - Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages
 - Voluntary organisations
 - Citizen's Advice Bureau
 - New Forest Volunteer Bureau

LOCAL INFORMATION SERVICES BEST VALUE REVIEW

SERVICES PROVIDED

Services provided on behalf of Council Services – The service provides specific services as follows some in accordance with Service Level Agreements.

Services at Lymington	▪ Reception
Services at Ringwood	▪ Reception service for New Forest Volunteer Bureau
Services at Appletree Court	▪ Opening, distribution and franking of mail, main reception
Revenues	▪ Cashiering
Council Tax and Housing Benefits	▪ Verification
Housing Management	▪ Issuing of keys to new tenants, maintenance enquiries, and issue garage keys
Public Services	▪ Selling and refuse and garden sacks, ordering of special collections, sale of compost bins, doggie bags, receive and pass on complaints on highways, grass cutting etc, weekly audit of stock
Audit	▪ Opening tenders
Home Energy Efficiency Scheme	▪ Surveys, light bulbs and kettles, H.E.E.S. survey
Cashiering	▪ Concessionary travel tokens, forepasses, handitills at Hythe and Fordingbridge
Planning	▪ Current planning applications
Housing Needs	▪ Weekly surgeries

Services provided on behalf of external partners and organisations. The following are governed by formal arrangements:

Hampshire County Council	▪ LIPS, leaflets, publications, posters
Parish and Town Councils	▪ Hythe – reception area (also for Dibden Allotment Charity)
Business Enterprise	▪ Weekly rooms at Lymington and New Milton; reception service at Ringwood
Citizens' Advice Bureau	▪ Weekly use of interview rooms at Fordingbridge, Hythe, Ringwood, Lymington and New Milton
	▪ Landlords at Fordingbridge and New Milton and part reception service at Hythe

The following are carried out by informal arrangements:

Voluntary Organisations	▪ Information
Public bodies	▪ Information
Parish and Town Councils	▪ Information
Organisations serving the public ie bus companies	▪ Information, and sale of bus tickets at New Milton
Probation Service	▪ Reception at Ringwood
Department Social Security	▪ Surgery at New Milton and Fordingbridge
Electoral Registration	▪ Hold registers for inspection
New Forest Show	▪ Sale of tickets at New Milton and Hythe

LOCAL INFORMATION SERVICES BEST VALUE REVIEW

I.C.T. AND OTHER EQUIPMENT

Location	PCs	Printers	Info Point	Teletalk	Handitill	Cashier(s)
Appletree Court Reception	2	1	Yes	No	No	Yes
Town Hall, Lymington	3	1	Yes	No	No	Yes
Ringwood	3	1	No	Yes	No	Yes
Hythe	2	1	No	Yes	Yes	No
New Milton	2	1	No	No	No	Yes
Fordingbridge	1	1	No	No	Yes	No

LOCAL INFORMATION SERVICES BEST VALUE REVIEW

BUDGETS AND INCOME

RECEPTION AND INFORMATION SERVICES EXPENDITURE BUDGETS

Cost Centre SA820	Original Estimate 2001/02
EMPLOYEES	
Direct Salaries	278250
Luncheon Vouchers	580
Employee Insurances	220
Training Course Fees	3610
	282660
TRANSPORT RELATED	
Car Allowances	1640
SUPPLIES & SERVICES	
Clothing and Uniforms	3260
Printing Services	770
Tickets	1330
Convenience Copiers	1830
Postages	420
External Telephones	7480
Internal Telephones	1820
Subsistence Staff	100
Dept Allocation	4380
	21390
SUPPORT SERVICES	
Admin Buildings	67940
Personnel	910
ICT SLA	12130
ICT Projects	5810
Central Purchasing	580
Canteen Services	1570
Chief Executive	460
Asst Chief Executive	3340
Safety	330
Insurance Services	930
Sec Serv ATC	4010
Accountancy	1090
Payroll	2160
	101260
CAPITAL FINANCE	
Leasing Equipment	7570
GEN EXPENDITURE	414520
Premises Expenditure	55780
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	470300

PREMISES COSTS / AGENCY ARRANGEMENTS

	Original Estimate 2001/02
Hythe Local Presence	6820
Totton Local Presence	10950
Fawley Local Presence	7580
Fordingbridge Presence	30430
PREMISES EXP TOTAL	55780

RECEPTION AND INFORMATION SERVICES BUDGETED RE-CHARGES

Cost Centre SA820	Original Estimate 2001/02
INCOME	
Fees and Charges	-2700
Tickets	-1480
Central Services SLA	-219250
Environ & Licensing SLA	-29330
Housing SLA	-51510
Planning and Trans SLA	-29310
P&R SLA	-8760
Rev Servs SLA	-2130
Chief Executives SLA	-10420
Finance SLA	-64070
Comm Serv SLA	-560
Environ DRT SLA	
TOTAL INCOME	-419520
Gen Expenditure	414520
Income	419520
Net Expenditure	-5000

