

NEW FOREST DISTRICT – A STRONG IDENTITY, A COMPLEX ENVIRONMENT.

A strong identity

Ask anyone in the UK if they have heard of the New Forest and they are likely to answer yes. The majority will be able to point to it on a map, and many will have holidayed here or visited on a day out. The New Forest is a well-known location to many outside Britain.

The reasons for this are founded in the history and cultural heritage of the Forest, and in its high quality landscape and ecological importance. The role of the New Forest has changed over time from a hunting ground and a centre for agriculture, to a recreation resource and an ecological habitat worthy of the highest level of protection.



The New Forest is at the heart of this District's identity, and three-quarters of the District lies within the New Forest Heritage Area. The proposed National Park covers 80% of the District. The Forest provides a strong identity for the District as a whole, and is at the centre of much of the District Council's policy and programmes, and it creates a sense of belonging for residents.

It is important to recognise however, that New Forest District is also more than the New Forest, and that the strong identity of the New Forest masks a District of complex environments and issues. It is this strong identity coupled with administrative boundaries coterminous with other public agencies that have underpinned a long tradition of effective partnership working. This can be illustrated not just by the alignment of projects and plans but by the sharing of our principal community publication New Forest News. [1]

Achievement 1 – Forest News

Two years ago the Council saw the need for a newspaper that served the whole community and was published as a partnership paper rather than just using Council news.

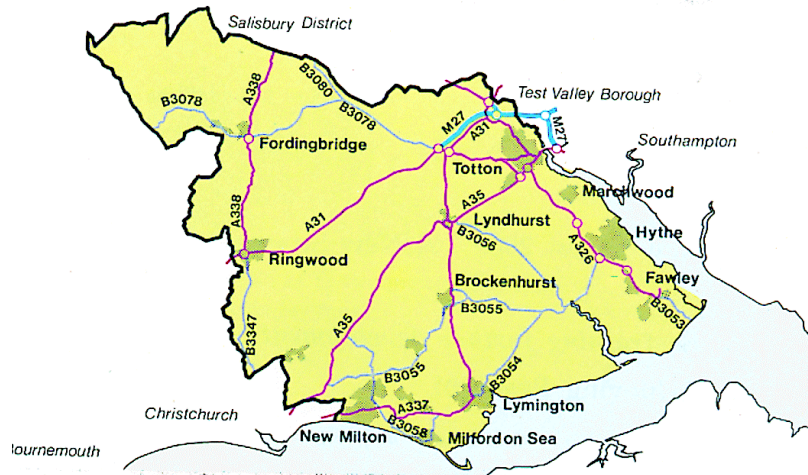
At the same time we realised that most of our partners (social services, PCT, Forestry Commission, police and fire service) shared our geographical boundaries. So Forest News, hitherto the council newspaper, became a community journal. We produced the first three issues in 2001 at no cost to the partners. Now they willingly share the cost and contribute actively to each of the editions (three issues a year). Forest News covers health and community safety issues, youth interest, news from the Forestry Commission, environmental topics and much more. It is a visible demonstration of the networks that make up the New Forest Local Strategic Partnership.

The New Forest and more

The District is large – a simple point perhaps, but important both physically and in population terms. Physically, the land area is 75,100 hectares (290 sq. miles). From Calshot in the South East to Martin in the north-west is a distance of 30 miles that would take more than 45 minutes.

We are bordered by six districts in four counties and by the boundary between the South East and South West regions:

New Forest District



The District has 37 parish councils, from significant town councils such as Totton and Eling (population 28,000), to very small rural parishes within the New Forest such as Exbury and Lepe (population 150) [2].

The large and varied coastline of 65 km runs from Barton-on-Sea, along the north Solent to Calshot, and along the west side of Southampton Water to Redbridge. Many of its main towns and villages are historically important, notably the market towns of Ringwood, Lymington and Fordingbridge. This historic importance is reflected in the designation of 37 conservation areas and more than 1500 listed buildings. [3]

This physical size is mirrored by its population of 169,331, making New Forest the second largest 'shire' District in England. There has been significant growth in population since the War, and growth of more than 30 per cent over the past three decades. [4]

The District Council employs 1475 people [5], has a planned gross revenue expenditure (2003/4) of £76m, a capital programme of £8.4m and planned income over the same period of £34m [6]. Administration is from two principal centres at Lyndhurst and Lymington with the help of six local offices. Five recreation centres, two golf courses, three Visitor Information Centres, 800 beach huts and 500 moorings form the mainstay of NFDC's leisure provision [7].

A complex environment

The overall picture of New Forest District as a large, affluent, rural District primarily comprising the New Forest, which is a centre of recreation and tourism might be fair in general terms.

However, this broad picture hides many complex and unexpected environmental, economic and social characteristics.

There are several distinct character areas apart from the New Forest itself. To the east are significant settlements along Southampton Water (the Waterside parishes). These contain more than 40 per cent of the population, and have important maritime links, both industrial and recreational. The nation's only military port is located at Marchwood, there are still significant boat building activities and a US army facility base at Hythe, while to the north of Fawley village lies the largest oil refinery and petro-chemicals complex in western Europe, supplying 25 per cent of UK petroleum. The area is flanked by international airports at Southampton and Bournemouth.

The south-western coastline contains the towns and villages of Lymington, Milford-on-Sea, New Milton and Barton-on-Sea. As well as their tourism and coastal recreation importance (Lymington is an internationally important centre for yachting), they have also become increasingly popular retirement locations.

The west and north west of the District beyond the New Forest contain important rural landscapes within the valley of the River Avon, and north to the western Downslands which form part of the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB.

The popularity of the area as a location to live, work and play, balanced against its increasing

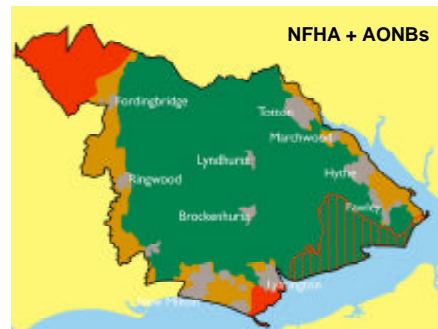


recognition as an internationally important landscape and habitat, has created very significant demands on NFDC in trying to manage development pressures.

The District lies between the conurbations of Southampton/Eastleigh to the east, and Christchurch/Bournemouth/Poole to the west. More than 1.5 million people live within a half-hour drive of the New Forest, nearly 20 million within a sensible day-trip distance.

The District is one of the most highly constrained in the country in terms of environmental designations: **[3]**

- The New Forest Heritage Area embraces 75% of the land area (54,500 ha).
- 44% of the land area (33,150 ha) is internationally or nationally important nature conservation habitat (SPA/SAC/Ramsar/SSSI).
- 19% of the land area (14,500 ha) is designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)
- Much of the land between existing main settlements is designated as Green Belt, or strategic or local gaps.



Strict planning controls within the New Forest Heritage Area have limited development and growth within it, but increased the pressure for development around it. Only 30,000 of the District's residents live within the New Forest, meaning that 83% of the population live on the remaining 25% land area of the District.

Major examples of this development/conservation balance have been evident within the past year. The Council has been involved in two major public inquiries, one for designation of the New Forest as a National Park **[8]**, the other into proposals for a new £0.75 billion deep sea container port at Dibden Bay (on a SPA/Ramsar site and SSSI and within the proposed National Park, between Hythe and Marchwood) **[9]**.



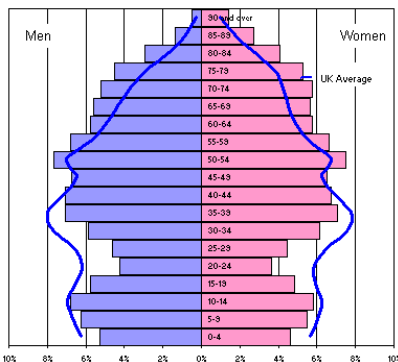
A complex society

It is dangerous to generalise the District in social and economic terms.

It is true to say that unemployment has remained lower than the national average over the past decade, with a current rate of just 1.1% **[10]**. These figures do however hide smaller pockets of higher unemployment, and the local difficulties experienced by businesses wishing to expand or relocate within a constrained District. But there are, however, over 5500 businesses providing more than 60,000 jobs and whilst there is a dependence upon the petrochemical and tourism industries, manufacturing, construction and distribution sectors are well represented. Some of the larger manufacturers have closed and have been replaced by small service businesses providing part-time employment, which has led to earnings lagging behind those of adjacent areas.

The affluence of the area creates pressures on the housing market, with house prices in the District over 40% above the national average:

In the past two years, the average house price has risen from £169,000 to £210,000, an increase of 24%. First time buyers now need an income above £30,000 in order to buy a home. Unsurprisingly the need to provide affordable housing is one of the main challenges for the Council. More than 2800 applicants are currently on our lists for housing need **[11]**.



Similarly 'hidden' issues are revealed by analysis of the population. The age profile from the 2001 Census shows an above-average retired and elderly population. Almost 20,000 people (12%) are over 75. Some wards such as Milford-on-Sea and Barton-on-Sea have as many as 25% of residents over 75, rates that are among the highest in the country. The provision of adequate social care for the elderly is another major issue.

The needs of the young cannot be overlooked. The District contains a population of almost 46,000 infants, children and teenagers, again with certain wards containing populations above the national average.

The general picture of rural affluence also ignores some further interesting social statistics in the District **[12]**:

- Although 42% of the District's 72,000 households have two or more cars, it is notable that, in a primarily rural District, more than 10,000 households have none.
- There are still 200 households without their own bathroom and toilet facilities.
- There are more than 5,000 single-parent households.
- Over 17,000 residents are carers for family members or friends.
- The District is 98.8% white and 80% Christian, yet the needs of almost 2,000 people from ethnic minorities, 1,400 of whom practise other religions must be addressed.

The following self-assessment has been produced as a result of employee, member and partner input. A corporate officer group has co-ordinated its production with members inputting individually or through workshops. All employees have had the opportunity to input as have all partners who participated in the Peer Challenge. The Peer Challenge itself has proved valuable in shaping the final product.

Cllr Mel Kendal

Dave Yates

WHAT THE COUNCIL IS TRYING TO ACHIEVE

AMBITIONS

The Heart of the Forest

The New Forest District Council is a large authority with large but achievable ambitions. Those ambitions are detailed in our Corporate Plan, *The Heart of the Forest* (April 2003) **[13]**:

- to improve the quality of people's lives
- to balance and integrate economic, social and environmental well-being in an area of unique environmental character
- to become an organisation of excellence
- to be at the heart of strategic planning for the New Forest with the trust of the public and partners
- to achieve our 26 key aims – four of which are current priorities: clean streets and public spaces, crime and disorder, housing and financial management

We believe that our plans are realistic and robust:

- all Members, employees and partners were involved in the two-year long development of the corporate plan **[14]**
- a track record of efficient delivery of basic services and of innovation underlies our plans (this assessment will include some achievements that give a flavour of the way we work)
- we have a sound culture of working together based on a system of values developed over many years **[15]**
- constructive networks exist with organisations whose boundaries are the same as our own
- a sound financial strategy underpins all our plans **[6]**
- we have developed a comprehensive performance management system (agreed April 2003) to gear all services to deliver the shared vision **[16]**

There is continuing tension between the extent of our ambitions and availability of finance. While our finances are sound, both revenue and capital programmes are tightly constrained and we have few major disposable assets **[17]**.

New Forest Local Strategic Partnership **[18]**

The Council has led the development and operation of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), within a County-wide framework which recognises the need for partnership working at county, town and parish levels, as well as across the New Forest District.

The approach has been inclusive. It has sought to build gradually on the firm foundations of existing networks so that the partnership is owned by all participants and not seen as a District Council body. It is now chaired by the Chief Executive of New Forest Voluntary Service Council (Community First). First meetings of a steering group were held in 2000 with the first meeting of the Partnership itself in November 2001.

While the development of a Community Strategy is important (see Achievement 2), the LSP is about more than this. It has clear aims, terms of reference, membership and action plan, all geared to the long term improvement of quality of life of the people of the Forest.

The LSP has created and is continuing to create multi-agency topic based networks known as CANs (Community Action Networks). A multi-agency operational group, the Community Action Team (CAT) links these to the LSP itself. The District Council newspaper has become a genuine partnership newspaper [1]. An LSP intranet and web site are being developed.

Many of the CANs were already flourishing. Others required rationalisation. District-wide links over economic issues were weak and the Council has worked hard with the business community to rectify this, leading to the creation of the New Forest Business Partnership (see Achievement 10) [19].

It is important to develop means of monitoring the LSP's progress. The LSP and the Council have signed up to the use of Quality of Life Measures to help understand which way the district is moving in economic, social and environmental terms.

Achievement 2 – Changing Lives [20]

The Issue: We had to understand the issues the District faces in order to develop a Community Strategy.

Action: The Changing Lives Conference (July 2002) attracted over 130 people in a bid to improve that understanding. The Draft Issues report that resulted gave rise to 50 responses across all topic areas. It identified priority issues, which the LSP has investigated, to see who is doing what and what more needs to be done.

Next steps: Changing Lives feedback is being assessed by the LSP to shape a draft Community Strategy for wider public consultation. A multi-faith conference will also feed into this process.

Wider Network

Links with the County Council are generally very good. There are strong member level links. Work on developing our LSPs and Project Integra [21] (the Hampshire-wide waste management initiative) is positive as are partnerships that work on health and social issues [22] and on Supporting People [23]. Even in areas where there have been difficulties (for example, recent changes in highway arrangements [24]), operational links continue to be close. Relationships within town and parish councils and our neighbours are also good, especially with Test Valley (see Achievement 5). Links with Southampton City Council are improving after a period of disengagement.

The political administration has strong concerns about the development of regional government but remains engaged in regional bodies. Officer links with GOSE through HIOWLA [25], the LSP and in such areas as Housing [11], Planning [26] and Tourism [27] are strong. NFDC is also active in several areas at a national level.

Overall Ambitions

The Peer Challenge found we were “not an inward looking authority” and recognised our progress on Heart of the Forest and on the LSP. We would agree with them that we need to do more to clarify and promote our vision of the District Council as a champion for the

people of the New Forest District as a whole, bringing together the diverse communities and interests.

How we can improve

1. Lead work of LSP to:
 - (a) finalise the Community Strategy and
 - (b) ensure it is implemented and reviewed

2. Respond to diverse needs of District by determining and delivering action required to build cohesive sustainable communities.

PRIORITISATION

We are very clear about our priorities (clean streets and open spaces **[28]**, crime and disorder **[29]**, housing **[11]** and financial management) **[6]**. We have determined that it is not helpful to say what are not priorities at this level. Our other aims in the Heart of the Forest are all important. These aims are almost all underpinned by strategies (see Future Plans). In developing the strategies we have made explicit choices as to what are not priorities. *For example, work with the business community in developing the economic strategy***[10]** confirmed that marketing to attract major firms from outside the area is not a priority.

We recognise the need to sharpen further our priorities and to communicate them more widely internally and externally.

Consultation/Involvement

The role of elected members in understanding and reflecting the needs of their areas remains central to policy development. They are extensively involved in all strategy development, not least the Heart of the Forest. Increasingly Review Panels **[30]** are taking a proactive role in developing strategy, often inviting expert witnesses from the public. The Cabinet **[31]** has recently conducted a series of Question Time sessions through the district, while extensive public consultation is held on major issues (*For example: on recent traffic management proposals*) **[32]**.

Dialogue with our customers over many years has included the formation of a Citizens' Panel **[33]**, which conducts six to eight surveys and up to three newsletters annually. Services also work with the help of focus groups, regular surveys and partnerships such as that with our tenants **[34]**. A recent major youth survey **[35]** with schools and LSP partners related to national curriculum Citizenship courses. Specific activity is undertaken with minority groups: *for example we asked young people to become involved with the community safety strategy, we have a forum for older people* **[36]** and we ask disability groups for their input into access issues. **[37]**

We recognise that we have not always made the most of the results of consultation or followed it through to see whether feedback has resulted in action.

New Forest consists of a number of distinct communities and we have been working in three geographical areas with our partners on Participatory Needs Assessments (PNAs) **[38]** since 2000. We have used the Indices of Social Deprivation **[12]** and will use the detailed 2001 census information **[4]**. The formation of the LSP has provided better sharing of information and use of resources, for example data sharing over crime.

Achievement 3 – sustainable tourism management [27]

- The issue: The fact that millions of people each year visit an area of such environmental and historic distinction is one of the greatest tests of the need for balance and partnership, not least when faced with issues such as foot and mouth disease.
- Action: For 14 years we have worked with a range of partners to reduce conflict, minimise the adverse impact of tourism and maximise benefits. Working with the New Forest Tourism Association we produced a strategy to create a destination where visitors, the tourist industry, local community and environment are in harmony (V.I.C.E.).
- Next steps: This approach, put in place locally, has been recognised nationally as a model. The Countryside Agency published it as a case study in 2001. We intend to ensure that our model continues to engage all elements of the tourist industry. This will be a Beacon Council application in Round 5.

National priorities

The Council has a good track record of responding to national priorities and has engaged constructively in delivering all aspects of the Government's modernising agenda (quality services [16], open constitution [39], highest ethical standards [40], community leadership [20], sound, fair finance [6] and e-governance [41]). The chosen CPA diagnostics show that our key priorities link closely with national priorities. Overall, our aims fit in well with the government/LGA agreement on shared delivery priorities. We are concerned that we should have sufficient freedom to address these priorities in ways that matter to the people of the New Forest.

Communication [42]

There is a robust corporate approach to both external and internal communications led by a strong PR team, using professional journalists and a creative graphics section. Alongside Forest News, we produce an extensive range of other publications, many on behalf of partners. We have recently revised our web site.

The same team are active in internal communications, producing an employee newspaper (Paperwork) and a web magazine (Network) as part of our internet site (Forestnet). Main channel of communication is through a two-way cascade process from individual sections through Departmental Management Teams to the Corporate Management Team. Special arrangements are made to cover major issues: *For example the launch of the Heart of the Forest.*

We will review our communication/consultation approach and will look for opportunities to increase face to face engagement with the public, including hard to reach groups and lateral communication within the organisation.

Resources targeted to priorities

At a general level we can demonstrate that resources have been targeted at key priorities. During the last administration additional resources went into clean streets and public spaces **[28]** (through investment in street cleaning, rationalisation of public conveniences, and investment in town centres and playing fields), into crime and disorder **[29]** (see Achievement 4) and into housing **[11]** (the housing strategy gained extra investment through its “well above-average” status). There was also substantial investment in e-governance **[41]**. We have recognised that we could do more to tie in financial and strategic planning, (see Performance Management).

How we can improve

3. Identify smarter targets against Council’s priorities and aims as part of service planning process (see also 10).
4. Develop communication/consultation framework by
 - (a) launching and promoting Heart of Forest
 - (b) reviewing effectiveness of communication/consultation mechanisms

FOCUS

We maintain a strong focus on delivering what matters to local people.

The IDeA found “widespread agreement that the new Cabinet is operating effectively and continually improving” (follow up report April 2000) [43]. This progress has been maintained with the Leader and Cabinet providing clear leadership. Cabinet agendas demonstrate its concentration on strategic decisions [31].

The Corporate Management Team [44] was also seen by the IDeA to be developing “strong, trusting and open relationships with each other” and “performing effectively”. It has a clear work programme. Corporate issues such as performance management and the CPA itself are increasingly developed through the Heads of Service Group [45], which is building collective ownership of priorities.

The SOLACE Peer Challenge Team were similarly positive about progress in all these areas.

The Cabinet and CMT work well together and have regular meetings, including updates on progress on major issues.

Achievement 4 – CCTV [46]

Issue:	Despite comparatively low levels of crime, fear of crime is high on lists of residents concerns.
Action:	A £1.2m scheme providing cameras in three town centres and one village, attracted £850,000 government grant and significant contributions from town councils and chambers of trade. We worked hard to develop the proposals up front and have made a commitment of at least £250,000 per annum towards it.
Next steps:	There will be formal evaluation during 2003 but initial reports are good and there is strong interest from other centres. Monitoring is being extended to cover cameras in Romsey on behalf of Test Valley Borough Council.

Views on the progress of other aspects of the new constitution are more mixed, particularly on scrutiny. Many members are still uncertain whether the change from a committee system is an improvement and regret the loss of direct decision making powers. However, there are good examples of innovative scrutiny work (see Capacity) [30] and Review Panels are increasingly taking charge of their work programmes. A review of the democratic arrangements will reflect the input of the new Councillors (20 out of 60 in May 2003) [47]. It will also consider the operation of the Forward Plan [31] which is clear and well-publicised but we need to improve the accuracy of the expected timing of decisions. We have also recognised the need to involve members more in performance monitoring (see Performance Management) [16]. The Development of Performance Management is itself an example on sustained effort to rectify a weakness. Further mechanisms to maintain focus are covered in other sections (including improvement plans (Future Plans) and roles and responsibilities (Capacity)).

How we can improve

5. Review effectiveness of democratic arrangements including timetabling and compliance with Forward Plan (see also 7).
6. Develop senior managers roles and structures.

DELIVERING OUR PRIORITIES

CAPACITY

People

We employ 1475 people at a number of different sites [5]. We work hard to ensure that each employee feels involved in all that the Council does. Managers are trained [48] to translate corporate priorities into service targets and individual aims and to ensure that these are achieved [16].

Attracting high calibre staff and helping them to develop is a key part of our human resources strategy. We have refined the performance and development interview (PDI) to link individual and corporate needs. The PDI process also identifies development needs, which are fulfilled by a training programme. We feel that the development of individuals helps the whole Council to move forward.

Our relations with the three trade unions at NFDC are very good [49]. We communicate informally through liaison and project meetings. The formal channel of communication is the Industrial Relations Committee. Recent subjects of joint work include local pay strategy, directorate restructuring and the introduction of a customer services contact centre.

Work on stress audits [51] and external views (IIP [52] and IDeA [43]) suggest that we cannot be complacent about staff morale. We have begun the process of developing ways of achieving more flexible working patterns to meet changing customer expectations and to improve work life balance to complement a very capable and committed workforce.

The Peer Challenge Team commented on “very energetic and enthusiastic managers”, the “pride and empowerment of employees generally” and the “amicable and effective industrial relations”.

Finance and Asset Management [17]

Our strong financial controls and prudent management are recognised and we have put in place a four-year strategy to manage all known additional costs. The Regional Office has given good ratings to our capital strategy and asset management plans.

There continues to be uncertainty from external factors which puts great pressure on the annual budget setting process. The authority is not asset rich.

ICT and E-government [41]

We could not function effectively without a capable information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure; we are responding to the opportunities afforded by ICT to enhance our service provision.

Our vision is to use ICT to modernise service provision. This will enable joined-up working with partners and the provision of seamless services to a consistently high standard. For many years we have maintained a significant investment in ICT, providing a good platform for electronic service delivery. The systems we use are modern and well supported.

Examples of our use of ICT to ensure efficient services include:

- document image processing in tax and benefits
- a developing comprehensive customer service contact centre
- web-based access to the homelessness service

- on-line planning information including the facility to view and comment on the submitted plans

Culture

There is a strong underlying culture of good member-officer relationships. We have worked hard to preserve this, while effectively introducing the new constitution.

Lines of responsibility are clear, particularly in developing the new political structures [39] as part of the modernising agenda. Protocols, ensuring the highest standards of conduct from members and officers are in place [40]. Our constitution contains specific job descriptions for executive members, scrutiny and committee chairmen and backbenchers. Executive members may make individual decisions. This speeds up the process, as does a scheme of officer delegation, which is kept under review to ensure decisions are taken at the appropriate level [53].

Scrutiny panels, mirroring the portfolios, have been operating for two years [30]. After a period of 'settling in', especially in relation to policy development, scrutiny members have become more focussed and real benefits are being realised. These include ambitious, yet deliverable, work programmes for each of the panels. All panels have now experimented with bringing in expert witnesses and members of the community to give evidence. This has been a regular feature of the Housing Health and Social Inclusion and Leisure Panels. While views on scrutiny are mixed, many feel that the potential of the panels has only just begun to be realised and there is scope to clarify roles.

Our Standards Committee regularly reviews the codes of conduct governing behaviour of members and officers [40]. The standards committee also looks after the probity of 37 parish councils and has arranged training for their members. Protocols on the roles of the statutory officers have been agreed. Newly elected members have taken part in a tailored induction programme [54], including briefing on major issues.

Achievement 5: Test Valley Partnership [55]

- Issue:** An opportunity to develop a ground breaking strategic partnership with Test Valley Borough Council for the joint provision of a wide range of direct operational services.
- Action:** A comprehensive process of option appraisal, review and consultation was jointly undertaken, leading to the formation of a new joint venture organisation. Focused through a single management structure and reporting to an executive joint committee, the new organisation provides significant potential for both Authorities to realise a range of operational and financial benefits, set against longer term opportunities for strategic service alignment and innovation.
- Next Steps:** The primary objective of the first year's project plan is to successfully integrate the two organisations into a single effective business unit. Service efficiencies and development opportunities are already being realised and the partnership shows clear signs of realising its full potential. This has attracted national attention and is a case study in the ODPM document "Re-thinking Service Delivery".

Partners

As discussed earlier the Local Strategic Partnership forms a framework for all the partnerships in the area. A few examples follow of links both within the District and beyond:

Close working with the Primary Care Trust (PCT) [23], the Health Policy Development Manager and the Director of Public Health are jointly funded and appointed; a joint strategy and common work programme [56] has most projects funded from a pooled budget. We work closely with the PCT, Hampshire Social Services and Community First to explore even greater integration of health issues; we have been national pathfinders for exploring Trust status.

Community safety is co-ordinated by an officer appointed jointly by the police and the NFDC. Other partnership posts include a domestic violence officer and an acceptable behaviour contract officer. A wide variety of projects are delivered through a strategy group and the crime and disorder community action network [29].

The District Council has long been a key member of the New Forest Committee which has developed a strategy for the New Forest Heritage Area [73].

Project Integra [21], now three years old, co-ordinates waste management for all authorities in Hampshire. We have been a driving force in this partnership, which has become a national model for waste management.

Our partnership extends to E-government [41]. We were the first District Council to connect to the Hampshire Public Services Network, the largest such network in Europe. We are working with the New Forest Business Partnership to bring broadband to our whole area and we partner town and parish councils to increase the use of the internet.

How we can improve

7. Develop role of Review Panels by reviewing structure, and responsibilities and providing training/support.
8. Develop ways of achieving more flexible working patterns.
9. Build on establishment of Test Valley Partnership.

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT [16]

A new system

Before we introduced our new democratic arrangements in 2001, we had a well-structured approach to performance management. A Policy and Resources Sub-Committee received regular performance reports on individual services. Since the introduction of the Cabinet and review panel process, performance review has been less clear and coverage inconsistent.

We can show successful member scrutiny of performance management in areas such as housing. Housing, Health and Social Inclusion Review Panel members have received regular monitoring reports and, with tenant representatives, have scrutinised the business plan and performance against it (HRA Business Plan [11] and Panel Agendas). This level of challenge was not consistent across the Council.

We have recently completed a major review of service planning and the performance management framework. A summary of the full document (it's not rocket science) was approved by Cabinet in April (Cabinet minutes/agenda) which outlined our overall approach to the setting of corporate priorities and how these are cascaded internally. Members are now more involved in setting objectives and ensuring their translation into individual employee tasks, so that members of staff see how their work relates to what we are trying to achieve.

The Performance Plan [57]

The Performance Plan (Performance Matters) is now a key tool for translating long-term objectives into more immediate targets. The Plan has been highly commended by the District Auditor and users for its clarity and content. A summary of feedback on the 2002/03 Plan is available (DA report; stakeholder feedback summary). A magazine approach makes the new Plan even more user-friendly. A major plank of our performance management over the last few years has been the reporting of the Plan to the Review Panels and the Cabinet. The Plan assumes an even greater importance within the new framework.

Customer Feedback

Feedback is an important part of the process and the Performance Plan has evolved influenced by three years of that feedback. This is received in a number of ways: through customer user groups (golf, leisure centre, beach hut owners) [7], and via best value reviews [57], citizens' panel [33] and our corporate complaints procedure [58]. Complaints are reported annually to members and are summarised in a report that compares our performance with that of others in Hampshire.

Achievement 6 – Performance Monitoring in Revenues and Benefits [59]

Issue: Using performance information as a management tool.

Action: Although the Revenues and Benefits Section were awarded Beacon Council Status in 2000, they continue to be a leader in the use of performance data to manage the services they deliver. Not only are national BVPI's used but also local PI's are shared with other authorities in Hampshire to evaluate performance. This performance is presented graphically and is shared regularly with employees via a staff bulletin and is posted within the offices for all to see (Revenues Performance Monitoring)

The data has successfully been used to assess staff performance and the allocation of resources. Overall the service performs in the upper quartile but in one area performance is only at the national median.

Next steps: The service will continue to strive to achieve upper quartile performance in all areas and will utilise the performance data to redirect resources to ensure that this is achieved.

Best Value [57]

Although we, like most other authorities, believed best value legislation to be unnecessarily bureaucratic, we developed a robust framework to review services. This has been refined to ensure better thinking and engagement of members (see bv guide). The involvement of stakeholders and external experts ensures a robust challenge. Reports on those services that have been inspected have been generally positive. The improvement plans are absorbed into the work programmes of the review panels and will be integrated into the service planning process. The good principles of best value are now part of the service-planning framework so that we can show that we strive for continuous improvement. This is a key element of our corporate aim in being an organisation of excellence.

Finance and Risk

We are proud of our robust financial management (see District Audit report) and ensure that financial reporting is a key element in performance management. A new financial information system should enable greater flexibility in reporting when it is used to its full potential. We believe that risk management [60] should be the norm and make extensive use of risk assessment procedures. The District Auditor has recommended that we formalise this approach and ensure its consistency across the Council. A risk management strategy is currently being drafted.

How we can improve

10. Implement the new performance management framework.
11. Finalise the risk management strategy.

OUR ACHIEVEMENTS

ACHIEVEMENT IN QUALITY OF SERVICE

General

This is an area of strength. We have a good track record of providing the quality services required by the community we serve.

Customer satisfaction must be the best measure of any Council's success in delivering the quality of service. With the highest satisfaction rating in the country (92% - BVPI 2000) we have reason to believe our record in service delivery is excellent **[57]**.

This record, endorsed by the Peer Challenge, covers all areas of our activities and corporate priorities:

- We were the only shire district council in the country to achieve Beacon Status in more than one service area at the first attempt (Housing and Council Tax Benefits **[59]** Dealing with Waste) **[21]**.
- The IDeA review (2000) identified 'plentiful evidence of high quality services'. The Peer Challenge felt "service quality is very good indeed", "customer satisfaction rating across the board outstanding". **[43]**.
- We currently achieve a high level of quality in our service delivery. Nearly half of the latest BVPIs are in the top quartile with well over three quarters being greater than average (BVPP) **[57]**.
- The majority of services subject to Best Value Inspections have been judged well, as follows:
 - Tourism (01) - Good 2 star service; promising prospects for improvement **[27]**
 - Recreation (01) - Good 2 star service; promising prospects for improvement **[7]**
 - Planning (02) - Good 2 star service; uncertain prospects for improvement **[61]**
- The District Auditor has promoted the Council's Best Value Performance Plan as an example of good practice for the last two years **[57]**.
- 70% of planning applications are determined within the statutory 8-week period **[61]** and 99% of local land charge searches are completed within 10 working days **[62]**. Both these indicators lie in the national top quartile.

Key Priorities

We can show the delivery of quality services in our key priorities:

Housing: The most recent Housing Strategy and Business Plans have been rated well above average by GOSE. The key service performance indicators are generally in the top quartile nationally with a high percentage rent collection, a quick turnaround for re-letting vacant dwellings and above-average performance in completing property repairs on time **[11]**.

Clean Streets and Public Spaces: The cleanliness of our streets and recycling of domestic waste is in the top quartile when compared nationally. We have played a pivotal role in 'Project Integra', a joint waste initiative with all Hampshire Districts and the County Council **[21]**.

Crime And Disorder: Our district compares well across a range of Community Safety indicators against 60 other benchmarking LA partners. This reflects the relatively low level of crime compared to other areas of the country [29]. In spite of this, we attracted a Home Office grant for the installation of a £1.2m CCTV system in three of our major town centres in 2001. Contributions were also received from the town councils and the business community [46].

Managing our Finances: Steady improvements have been achieved in the speed of payment of suppliers invoices. The 2002/3 figures reached 95% within the 30-day target. Council Tax and business rate collection rates are both within the national top quartile and have shown year on year improvements. Council Tax collection rates now exceed the Government target of 98.2%. The 35-day average time to process Benefit claims also compares at the top end of national performance [59].

Customer Satisfaction

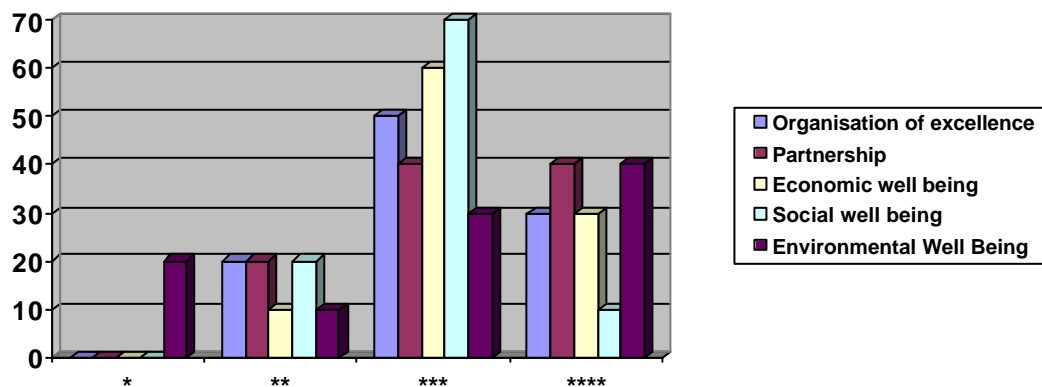
As well as the Citizens' Panel satisfaction survey of overall service provision [33], a range of service user surveys have been undertaken. These cover cultural and recreational facilities, household waste collection, recycling facilities, cleanliness standards, the planning process, tenants views of the housing service, housing benefit administration and the way we deal with complaints. In all cases high levels of satisfaction were achieved with many results in the national top quartiles

Other mechanisms for assessing customer satisfaction, for example, consultative groups, are covered in the previous section.

Although we undertake substantial consultation with users and stakeholders over service levels and charging levels, we do not currently undertake any council tax consultation with tax payers, except for the statutory consultation with business rate payers.

BVPI's

Best Value Indicators do not provide conclusive evidence of our performance but they do provide a useful tool in measuring it: We intend to have a rigorous review of these to identify and shape future performance targets. The following table summarises BVPIs for 2002/03 with the themes of our corporate plan [13]



NB: *'s = quartile performance (**** = top)

Achievement 7 – Choice based lettings [63]

Issue: Housing managers recognised the need to put customers in charge of processes and give them choice and control.

Action: As a national pilot for Choice Based Lettings and the first to go live, we have introduced Homesearch which gives tenants real choice in where they live and the home they live in. All vacancies of affordable homes, including those from all partner RSLs, are advertised on-line, backed up with voicemail and local notice boards.

Customers are able to choose which properties they would like to be considered for, allowing them to make their own decision about their future. The transparency of the system creates greater accountability.

Growth has been astonishing since its launch in Oct 2001. The website has logged 90,000 hits per month with 40% of customers looking for properties on-line and emailing their application directly to us.

Next steps: We see this as an important step in creating more sustainable communities through genuine choice. We are at the forefront of this development with most housing authorities yet to take up the challenge.

Although the Council can demonstrate many examples of excellence it is also aware that there are some services that need to improve. The Food Safety, H&S and Licensing service was subject to a Best Value Inspection in 2002 and rated a fair 1 star service with uncertain prospects for improvement. An improvement plan has been produced for this poorer performing service, which is being monitored closely by Members **[64]**

How we can improve

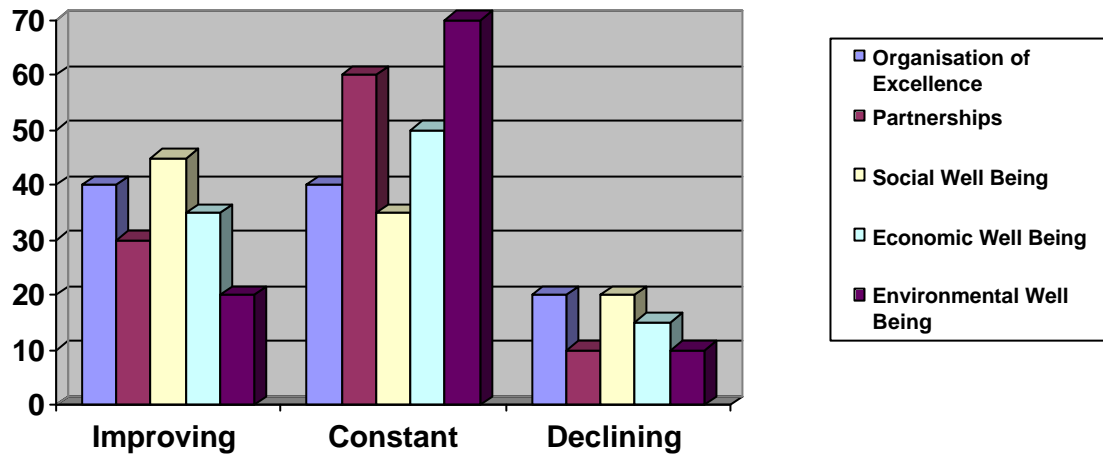
12. Ensure focused and rigorous review of performance against BVPI's and other measures (see also 10)

ACHIEVEMENT OF IMPROVEMENT

We strongly believe that there is more we can do to improve and have included throughout this assessment a number of achievements/innovations in which we take pride. We recognise the need to take further action on all of these.

Building on very good results presents a significant challenge to the Council. Our response to this is set out in the 2003/04 Performance Plan described by the Peer Challenge as “a first class document”. We will build on a good start in e-government and customer contact centres to deliver the full potential for service improvements.

The following graph illustrates how the BVPIs have moved between 2003 and 2002 [57].



Achievement 8 – Some real outcomes [29] [7]

We could put forward numerous examples of services where the quality of the product or service is improving. The following is a linked example:

Issue: Children and Young People

Action Taken: We have led the field in work on child protection, anti-social behaviour and youth provisions. Our published policy has been cited as good practice with staff receiving not only the usual CRB check but also awareness training. We have established standards, agreed with partner parish councils, which are applied to all staff and volunteers.

As the first District to employ an Anti-Social Behaviour Officer, we have developed our partnerships to implement an agreed protocol effectively, under the banner Divided We Fall. Our employment of a civilian Domestic Violence Co-ordinator placed in the Divisional Police HQ was hailed as “innovative”. Successful work has centred on raising awareness, training for magistrates as well as offering greater protection and advice to victims.

Our latest youth projects at Leisure Centres are successfully targeting disaffected youth and are able to demonstrate a drop in local vandalism and petty crime at times when the schemes are active.

Next steps: This year’s cross cutting Best Value Review of children and young people aligned with the development of the children and young people CAN will guide the Council and its partners in future work on this issue.

13. Agree and implement an enhanced and integrated e-government strategy.
14. Deliver the Council's Contact Centre vision.

INVESTMENT

Investment in terms of partnership working, community engagement, performance management and organisational development is dealt with elsewhere in this assessment.

Through prudent financial management we have redirected resources into priority areas (see Prioritisation). We have a robust medium-term financial planning process which covers a four-year period for both revenue and capital **[6]**.

In responding to the requirements of the Prudential Code, we will aim for even greater clarity over expected council tax and service levels.

We also are clear that there is scope to improve the alignment of our strategic plan and financial timetables (linking both to workforce planning).

Within our funded capital programme we have made provision for all known additional costs that will arise during that period. Our capital strategy achieved a 'good' grading from GOSE and, although our asset base is somewhat restricted, the Asset Management Group have a review programme that will ensure we retains only assets that are fully and efficiently utilised and are in accordance with the corporate plan **[17]**.

We use the PRINCE methodology for most new projects that require the establishing of a sound business case for the investment and, where appropriate, we engage the local community **[65]**.

We make every effort to attract funding from external sources. We also try not to retain ownership of assets unnecessarily and will seek other opportunities to increase the resources at our disposal. A good example of recent investment in the community attracting external finance is a joint information office in New Milton **[66]** with Hampshire County Council, the town council, and the CAB. The premises will also provide 16 affordable flats through a housing association. Other examples of attracting external finance include IEG funding **[41]**, CCTV **[46]**, Lymington Recreation Centre **[7]**, DEFRA grant for waste collection and developers' contributions **[61]**. Another is Leader + **[67]** which attracted substantial funding for forest friendly farming and other activities involving partners and balancing the needs of the economy and the environment.

Provision of affordable housing is a difficult challenge. For some time we have set ourselves a target of building 200 new social housing units each year. Lack of Government support meant this target had to be reduced. In 2002/03 we exceeded the lower target of 100. Housing is a key priority of ours and therefore we shall need to work imaginatively at solutions to ensure we do not have a major problem in housing the homeless **[11]**.

External challenge

As the Peer Challenge Team found, we welcome external challenge (see 'Learning'). An example concerns our five recreation centres which are all jointly managed with schools or colleges. A best value review found this service good, with promising prospects for improvement. The service was previously seen as a financial drain on our resources, therefore the focus had been purely on the bottom line. The review helped us refocus so that now the service recognises the social and environmental benefits that it brings to the community. The service has also managed to attract substantial investment from other organisations and has improved our financial position thereby enabling resources to be redirected to other activities **[7]**.

Achievement 9 – Electronic Governance

Issue: Investing in information and communications technology in order to provide high quality and cost effective services that can be accessed where and when it is convenient for our citizens and visitors, and creating the culture to take full benefit from the technology.

Action: Significant investment in numerous methods of engaging our community through technology:-

- Home search
- On-line planning applications
- Video conferencing facility between District Council offices and offices of the Citizens Advice Bureaux
- Website development with parish and town councils

Next Steps: NFDC will continue to invest in ICT as a major tool for delivering service improvements, introduce a council-wide contact centre to enhance the service to those seeking information, and promote the e-government agenda.

How we can improve

15. Improve the medium term financial strategy through better alignment of strategic, financial and workforce planning (see also 10).
16. Explore methods of attracting additional external funding.
17. (a) agree homelessness strategy and
(b) develop innovative ways of delivering affordable housing

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

LEARNING

We continue to be very open to internal and external reviews of our performance. "Learning is a strength area for the Council" (Peer Challenge 2003).

Peer Review IDeA [43]

In June 2000, the Improvement and Development Agency's (IDeA) peer review identified great strengths but also a number of areas for improvement. After two follow-up sessions, the final report (April 2002) concluded that we had responded positively to the feedback we had received. '(NFDC)... continued to demonstrate its potential to be a high performing authority,' said the report. It did find one or two areas where improvement had been slower. The key one was performance management and this has been a focus of corporate attention leading to the papers agreed by Cabinet in April 2003 [13, 16, 68].

The peer review also felt that departmentalisation was an issue. Recent changes have included a more open and transparent corporate management team and the establishment of the Heads of Service Group as a key feature of strategic planning. An example of breaking down departmentalisation is the clear vision for contact centres, developed by a specially commissioned corporate team, to deliver approved corporate standards of customer access [69].

Peer Challenge (SOLACE)

We found the recent Peer Challenge to be exceptionally stimulating and very useful. While we were pleased that they recognised many of our strengths, we intend to concentrate more on the areas for discussion and improvement (see Improvement Plan).

Investors in People [52]

We were an early pioneer in Investors in People and had maintained our accreditation through subsequent assessments. In October 2002 we were assessed using the new standard, when some serious shortcomings meant we were put in 'retained' status subject to an action plan. We have made significant progress with the action plan, including strengthening development aspects of our performance and development interview (PDI), and clarifying the corporate planning process and how individuals' contributions fit into this. We have underpinned this process training with skills training for managers on handling appraisal interviews, and assessing and meeting employees' learning needs [48].

The assessors' report in May 2003 has praised the way the authority has responded, and removed the question over IIP status.

We have an active training and development programme, including well-received management training. We also invest significant sums into continuing professional development and service-specific knowledge and skills. We have worked with partners to provide basic skills training, including IT skills for employees in Commercial Services – recognising this as a means of enabling employees to help themselves out of low pay [48].

Achievement 10: New Forest Business Partnership [19]

Issue:	Nobody represented the business community on a district-wide basis and the Council was not perceived to be business-friendly.
Action:	We worked with the business community to understand their concerns and reflect their views in our economic strategy. The New Forest Business Partnership was formed and has rapidly established itself as a positive presence. The Partnership recently organised a very successful seminar on IT and is leading the campaign to introduce Broadband access throughout the district.
Next steps:	To build on the good start in determining what is important to the businesses of the Forest and to ensure their views are acted upon.

Best Value [57]

We have worked hard to use Best Value constructively. We have developed a guide to help managers undertake their best value reviews. This provides for a best value mentor and board available for each review. We have tried to involve external experts in each review.

Our Best Value Performance Plans have been widely praised and received national recognition for the honesty with which we report failure as well as success in meeting key targets. We adopt a similar positive approach to the handling of complaints.

Other learning

We have an empowered culture that encourages innovation and managed risk taking. This extends to sharing our experiences with others. We have a high profile on county-wide, regional and national groups - chairing county groups, having representation on national bodies and helping develop policy on issues from land drainage [70] and coastal protection [71] to leisure management [7] and integrated health care [23].

We have facilitated a number of customer feedback groups, including a disability group, which has helped us design our office facilities. We ensure that our communications with the public are accessible to all [37].

We have embraced the new democratic processes and have taken the Cabinet out to various locations in the district so members of the public could see how it works and question Executive members [31].

We welcomed other authorities wishing to visit us as part of formal programmes (Beacon Status, Choice Based Lettings pilot) or informally [21, 60, 63].

We have well-developed sources of public consultation but feel we can do more to maximise their learning potential (see Prioritisation) [33].

How can we improve

18. Expand on the variety of methods for individuals to access training and development, including use of new technology and partnership working.
19. Develop a learning culture at all levels which evaluates what we do and shares learning from successes and failures.

FUTURE PLANS

We have a range of robust plans and strategies, which contain clear milestones to measure progress. These are linked to key targets set for each portfolio in future years [16]. External assessors have been very positive about a range of our plans, for example the Housing Strategy [11], the Asset Management Plan [17], the IEG statement [41] and the Community Safety Strategy [27].

The new Performance Management System gives a coherent framework linking all the strategies and plans under the overall direction of the Heart of the Forest [13]. The developing Community Strategy (Changing Lives) will be the final piece of this planning structure [20].

The strategies underpinning the Heart of the Forest are not fully in place. An example of a gap is equalities. We have responded formally to the requirement for a Race Equalities scheme and plan, but wish to broaden this to a comprehensive Equalities Strategy. This will include an action plan addressing disability issues which is already well developed [37].

We had intended to produce a Social Inclusion Strategy, building on a well-received issues paper 'Open Doors' [72]. Following discussion by the LSP, this will form a key crosscutting theme in the Community Strategy as a whole. The Council itself is committed to building cohesive communities throughout its District and has recently published its ambitious plans for the regeneration of Calshot.

Children and young people have recently emerged as an important cross cutting theme. This has arisen from LSP; discussions following its Citizens Panel work and from the national agenda for better integration in this area. This will form our cross cutting Best Value Review in the coming year and will run alongside the development of the children and Young People CAN.

We have made an explicit decision that sustainability issues are fundamental to everything we do and that it would be counter-productive to have a sustainability strategy separate from the Heart of the Forest itself [68]. Our approach to sustainability is based on the need to integrate the three areas of well being in our work. This is evidenced in the structure of the Corporate Plan. We will deliver sustainability through our Performance Management framework and service planning.

Another key plan currently under review is the New Forest District Local Plan. This was originally adopted in 1999 but it has been reviewed with a new draft version finalised in early 2003. New or changed policies have been introduced in a number of areas to reflect changing priorities and needs, eg: care for the elderly and the regeneration of Calshot. The Plan also reflects our continuing search for innovative solutions to providing affordable housing. All are sensitive issues, which we are attempting to tackle positively and constructively [26].

As shown elsewhere, our plans are developed after extensive consultation. Many are joint documents with partners, including the Project Integra Plan (Waste) [21], the Health Strategy [56], the Strategy for the New Forest [73], the New Forest/Test Valley Partnership business plan [55] and the Supporting People Strategy [22].

In the case of waste we need to develop our own strategy for our area to be complementary with the broader Project Integra Plan.

We face two major issues that await national determination, the proposal to build a container port at Dibden Bay [9], and the plans for a New Forest National Park [8]. We have been heavily involved in both these public inquiries and are preparing to deal with

whatever decisions are made. In particular, we will explore the options arising from any decision to create a National Park so that arrangements can be put in place that best meet local need and maximise accountability.

Achievement 11 – Coastal Management/Monitoring [71]

- Issue: The need for a co-ordinated approach to coastal management.
- Action: NFDC pioneered a best practice approach to coastal monitoring and with the support of DEFRA developed a regional monitoring partnership of 31 Coastal Authorities and the EA which obtained £8m of funding over 5 years. An office has been established at the Southampton Oceanography Centre in partnership with the University staffed by NFDC employees. A web site, www.channelcoast.org has been established and a regular newsletter is distributed. The coastal processes from North Kent to Weymouth are now being monitored in a comprehensive and consistent manner.
- Next Steps: At the behest of DEFRA's south-western Regional Engineer, NFDC are providing technical advice to assist with the expansion of the concept to cover the coastline of SW England from Weymouth to the Severn Estuary.

The Improvement Plan

We are used to developing improvement plans following reviews, and monitoring progress; eg: Planning [61], Tourism [27], Information Offices [74] and Environmental Health Best Value Improvement Plans. This is a key element in helping us maintain focus.

We fully recognise the challenge laid down in the CPA assessment process [75]. We believe that we can demonstrate a track record to be trusted with greater freedom and flexibility. We also know we can improve further and set out a draft Improvement Plan which also formed part of our Performance Plan [57]. The Peer Challenge Team rightly felt that the draft Improvement Plan needed to be strengthened. We have revised it substantially. However, we feel there is even further scope to explore the stimulating questions raised by the Team and will be organising discussions of officers and members in the Autumn to explore this, together with the findings of the CPA inspection itself. We aim to produce a final Improvement Plan which will be an ambitious declaration of our intentions.

We will own this and work together, members, officers and partners, to ensure it is delivered.

How we can improve

20. Complete strategies/reviewing required by Heart of the Forest, including:
 - (a) equalities strategy (including race scheme)
 - (b) children and young people
 - (c) waste (in addition to Project Integra Business Plan)
21. Evaluate the options arising from decision over a New Forest National Park and agree the Council's strategy.

22. Develop this Improvement Plan and ensure it is delivered.

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INITIAL CPA IMPROVEMENT PLAN

No	Improvement Activity	Start	Complete/ Next Review	Outcome	Lead
AMBITIONS					
1	Lead work of LSP to (a) finalise the Community Strategy and (b) ensure it is implemented and reviewed	Underway Jan 2004	Dec 2003 Annual review	Agreed and implemented vision for the whole of the District, recognising cross cutting themes	CE/Cabinet
2	Respond to diverse needs of District by determining and delivering action required to build cohesive sustainable communities	Underway	Agreed Strategy Spring 2004	Strong vibrant communities where all have access to improved quality of life	Cabinet/ LSP
PRIORITISATION					
3	Identify smarter targets against Council's priorities and aims as part of service planning process (see also 10)	August 2003	October 2004	Clear, smart targets against 4 priorities and other 22 aims	PH's/HofS
4	Develop communication/consultation framework by (a) launching and promoting Heart of Forest (b) reviewing effectiveness of communication/consultation mechanisms	Underway Sept 2003	Sept 2003 Dec 2003	Clear understanding amongst employees and partners. Improved awareness of and increased involvement in Council activities (incl hard to reach groups)	Leader/CE HofPR/HofPSM
FOCUS					
5	Review effectiveness of democratic arrangements including timetabling and compliance with Forward Plan (See also 7)	Sept 2003	Spring 2004	Firm focus on delivery of Council's priorities and strategies	Leader/Hof LDS
6	Develop senior manager roles and structures	Underway	Spring 2004	Firm focus on delivery of Council's priorities and strategies	CMT/HofS
CAPACITY					
7	Develop role of Review Panels by reviewing structure, and responsibilities and providing training/support	Aug 2003	Spring 2004	Real and robust scrutiny that has credibility with the public and an enhanced policy development role for non-executive members	HofLDS/ Member Working Groups
8	Develop ways of achieving more flexible working patterns	Sept 2003	Spring 2004	To meet changing customer expectations and improve work/life balance of employees	HofP
9	Build on establishment of Test Valley Partnership	Underway	Review autumn 2003	Delivery of full benefits of joint working to provide a better service for public, and share lessons learnt	NF & TV Cabinets/ Joint C Committee
PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT					
10	Implement the new performance management framework	Underway	Review Spring 2004	Effective delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan	Cabinet/Dir of Res.
11	Finalise the risk management strategy	Underway	Sept 2003	An integrated approach to the identification, evaluation and control of risks.	Dir of Res
ACHIEVEMENT OF SERVICE QUALITY					
12	Ensure focused and rigorous review of performance against BVPI's and other measures (see also 10)	Underway	Oct 2003	Identification of improvements to shape future service delivery	PH's/Rev Panels/HofS
ACHIEVEMENT OF IMPROVEMENT					
13	Agree and implement an enhanced and integrated e-governance strategy	Sept 2003	Review Summer 2004	Improved delivery of Council services through innovative use of new technology	PH/F&S)/ CE/Asst Dir Res(ICT)
14	Deliver the Council's Contact Centre vision	Underway	Review Sept 03 Spring 04	An enhanced and consistently high quality response service to customers	PH(F&S)/ Asst Dir Res (Cust.Serv)

INITIAL CPA IMPROVEMENT PLAN

	INVESTMENT				
15	Improve the medium term financial strategy through better alignment of strategic, financial and workforce planning (see also 10)	Aug 2003	Review Spring 2004	Effective use of taxpayers' resources	(PH(F&S)/ Dir of Res.
16	Explore method of attracting additional external funding	Aug 2003	Oct 2003	Improve local services without cost to local taxpayer	PH(F&S)/ Dir of Res
17	(a) Agree homelessness strategy and (b) Develop innovative ways of delivering affordable housing	Underway	Review Dec03 Review Spring 2004	Reduce levels of homelessness in the District. Help create balanced sustainable communities	H, HIS, E&P, PH, Dir of Comm Serv
	LEARNING				
18	Expand on the variety of methods for individuals to access training and development, including use of new technology and partnership working	Sept 03	Review Spring 2004	A workforce capable of meeting the changing needs of the organisation today and in the future	PH(P&S)/ HofP
19	Develop a learning culture at all levels which evaluates what we do and shares learning from successes and failures	Sept 03	Review April 2004	A confident organisation which operates in a learning and no blame culture	HofP/CMT
	FUTURE PLANS				
20	Complete strategies/review required by Heart of the Forest, including: (a) Equalities Strategy (incl Race Scheme) (b) Children and young people (c) Waste (in addition to Project Integra Business Plan)	Aug 2003 Underway Aug 2003	Review Spring 2004 Summer 04 Dec 2003	Effective delivery of Council's Corporate Plan	PH(P&S)/CE PH(Leis)/ Asst Dir Leis Serv Rec Dev PH(Env)/Dir of Comm Serv
21	Evaluate the options arising from decision over a New Forest National Park and agree the Council's strategy	Underway	1 st stage Autumn 2003	Arrangements which best meet the needs of the people of the New Forest District and maximise local accountability	Cabinet/CMT HofPDI & DC
22	Develop this Improvement Plan and ensure it is delivered	Underway	Review Nov 2003	An improved organisation which has made full use of the CPS process to achieve its aims for improving the quality of people's lives	Leader/CE

Key: