

APPROVAL OF THE COUNCIL'S PERFORMANCE PLAN 2003/04

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 This report seeks approval of this year's Performance Plan, sets out details of its cost and how it is intended that the document will be used.
- 1.2 The report builds on the involvement of Cabinet, portfolio holders and review panels in this year's process.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Each year the Council has a duty of publish its Performance Plan together with a summary by 30 June.
- 2.2 Previous years Performance Plans have been commended by the District Audit and Audit Commission for their clear and attractive reflection of our performance.
- 2.3 The Council's approach includes integrating performance information with the Council Tax leaflet and the spring edition of Forest News.

3. THIS YEAR'S PERFORMANCE PLAN

- 3.1 This year sees a change of emphasis in the contents of the Plan focusing on performance against the Corporate Plan rather than majoring on Best Value.
- 3.2 This is a significant step in the process to strengthen the Council's approach to performance management and service planning and makes the Corporate Plan, The Heart of the Forest, the document that shapes delivery.
- # 3.3 Attached at Appendix 1 is a copy of the draft text for the contents page, the first three chapters of this year's plan plus the introductory text for Chapter 4, which relates to the performance of each portfolio.
- 3.4 The more detailed performance information is currently being compiled. Of particular significance are the targets and medium term objectives being set which this year are a key focus for portfolio holders and review panels. **This information will be distributed to all members of the Council as soon as possible next week in advance of the Council meeting.**
- 3.5 Compared to last year the document will be enhanced by the greater use of graphics to supplement the performance information. It is hoped that much of this work will be completed in time for the Council meeting.
- 3.6 With the greater use of graphics, a full colour version is proposed as opposed to two-colour as in the previous two years.
- 3.7 The Plan has been drafted to be a reference document for members, employees and stakeholder organisations. This should help portfolio holders, scrutiny members, services and our partners undertake their respective roles.

- 3.8 Good public access will be given to the document both in hard copy form (via libraries and information offices etc) and electronically via the Council's web site.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The cost of the Plan in full colour, including graphics, printing, distribution and summary information in Forest News and the Council Tax leaflet is estimated at £5,700. A two colour option would be approximately £500 - £700 less.
- 4.2 This gives a projected saving on last year's costs of around £2,200.

5. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The environmental implications relating to the publication of any document needs to be viewed from three perspectives.
- The use of natural resources – the paper used will be produced from sustainable forests and the number printed will be as near to the requirements as reasonably possible.
 - The use of materials that damage the environment – The paper is recyclable and is chlorine free. The binding is minimal (2 staples).
 - The contribution the document makes to increase the awareness of the reader of good environmental practice. The structure of the plan helps both the organisation and its parties to understand what the Council is trying to achieve for the environment.

6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no direct implications although the structure of the plan helps both the organisation and its partners to understand what the Council is seeking to achieve to help combat Crime and Disorder.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The Performance Plan is the vehicle for bringing together key information relating to the Council's performance. Members and services are encouraged to make use of it in their work.
- 7.2 The portfolio sections in particular should be an essential element of the work of the relevant portfolio holder and review panels in terms of monitoring performance and setting targets.
- 7.3 This will manifest itself in the Council's improved approach to service planning.
- 7.4 Although the emphasis this year is on the Council's performance against it's Corporate Plan, the principles of best value are now integrated into how the Council works. Those principles have also been applied to the production of the document

and each year the Council seeks to produce a document that meets the needs of those who use it whilst providing better value for money.

8. CONSULTATION

- 8.1 During the production of this draft document portfolio holders, review panels (or in some cases, their Chairmen) and services have been fully involved in the relevant information contained in the Plan.

9. RECOMMENDATION

- 9.1 That the Council's draft Performance Plan for 2003/04 be approved.

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INTRODUCTION

This is the fourth year we have published Performance Matters and in many ways this year's edition is the most significant. Previous editions have concentrated to a large extent on the Council's best value review programme and the various reviews of services that were planned or were taking place.

This year's Performance Plan is more about what the Council is trying to achieve and how it has performed and less about the Best Value process. Best Value still has a place within our culture as its principles are embedded into the way we will now be approaching our service plans. The Performance Plan includes a Best Value review programme of two reviews each year – one in a service area that has significant impact on the community and the second that cuts across directorate and/or organisational boundaries.

The Council has recently reviewed three key facets of its work: its Corporate Plan The Heart of the Forest, its approach to sustainability and its performance management system, all of which are crucial to achieving continuous improvement. These are dealt with in more detail in Chapters 2 and 3 of this Plan.

We will use the information contained in this Plan to help inform our decision-making. This will enable us to target resources better to respond to the needs of our stakeholders. We are proud of our record over recent years in achieving a very high proportion of our Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs) showing above average performance. In particular we have a consistent record of around half of our BVPIs in the top quartile. That is not to say that we can be complacent. The better use of performance information and stakeholder input to help set targets is a particular area where we feel we can improve. Details of this information are contained in Chapter 4.

This year sees many fresh challenges including the outcomes from the public inquiries relating to the proposed National Park and the potential port development at Dibden Bay. The production of the first Community Strategy for the District will be a key event for this Council, its partners and more importantly, the people of the district. Through working as part of the New Forest Local Strategic Partnership, the issues requiring priority action are currently being identified. The Community Strategy will encourage the better use of resources across agencies, directing them towards areas of greatest need.

Another significant event for us is the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) where each district council will be independently inspected to assess how good they are on a scale of poor to excellent. We will be assessed against four key questions:

- What is the Council trying to achieve?
- How has the Council set about delivering its priorities?
- What has the Council achieved/not achieved to date?
- In the light of what the Council has learnt to date, what does it plan to do next?

The CPA process will give us a valuable external view as to how close we are to achieving our ambition to be excellent. More importantly, however, it gives an opportunity to learn and improve so we can better serve the people of the New Forest. A copy of our draft improvement plan is contained in the appendices at the end of the Plan and will be available to view on our www.nfdc.gov.uk as it develops in the coming year.

We look forward to the year ahead with enthusiasm. This Performance Plan will add real value to what we are trying to achieve.

Cllr Mel Kendal
Leader of the Council

Dave Yates
Chief Executive

DELIVERING THE CORPORATE PLAN

The Council's Corporate Plan, The Heart of the Forest, is crucial to our success. Following extensive consultation involving all our members, employees and partners on the Local Strategic Partnership we have a plan for what we want to achieve and how we intend to achieve it.

The Plan sets out:

- The Council's roles as a service provider/enabler and as a community leader.
- A vision for an enhanced quality of life for present and future generations.
- How we intend to deliver the vision through:
 - Ensuring the best use of resources and assets
 - Being innovative in our approach to deliver excellence
 - Developing effective partnerships with local organisations.
- The values we believe in – caring, communication, openness and trust, positive thinking, quality, simplicity, value for money and working together.
- Five corporate objectives
 - Organisation of excellence
 - Working with public and partners
 - Economic well being
 - Social well being
 - Environmental well being.
- 26 corporate aims spread across the five corporate objectives, of which there are 4 priorities
 - Clean streets and public spaces
 - Crime and disorder and community safety
 - Housing
 - Managing our finances.

The Heart of the Forest is at the centre of what we do. It provides the focus for our activities; creates priorities for action and is a basis for measuring our performance.

Reporting on that performance is where the Performance Plan comes in. This year's Performance Matters strengthens the link between performance and The Heart of the Forest.

We strive for excellence in all that we do. With limited resources there is an even greater need to achieve gains in each of the corporate objectives wherever possible. It is therefore important not to take decisions that benefit some areas to the detriment of others without seeking all reasonable ways of minimising any negative impact. This is a real challenge and will test the Council's members and officers to get it right.

Our measure of success is for us to deliver the Corporate Plan. It is that plan that ultimately gears the Council to achieving a better quality of life for all.

A copy of The Heart of the Forest can be viewed on www.nfdc.gov.uk.

MANAGING OUR PERFORMANCE

Delivering the services that matter to the community has always been a key priority at New Forest District Council. By managing our performance better we can assess how well we are achieving this and continuously improve what we do.

The last few years have been a challenging time. We have continued to search for improvements and innovative service delivery through listening to our customers, residents and partners. The best value review programme and inspections by the Audit Commission have yielded many improvements to services. Information on our performance will continue to be updated on our website nfdc.gov.uk/performance.

Streamlining our best value review process has helped to reduce an element of bureaucracy, however, it was felt that a more appropriate and robust system was needed to take a vital step towards understanding the overall impact of services and how they were performing. The results of this review are currently in their first year of implementation, with the expected outcomes aiming to transform our approach to performance management by:

- Using the Corporate Plan as the document for delivering sustainability for the District and reporting our performance against this through the Performance Plan. This will continue to include best value but will focus on the overall performance of the Council.
- Reducing the best value review programme to only cover key services and ensuring all services are covered by a service plan, based on the principles of best value, and developed with the involvement of senior management and members.
- Taking an opportunity for a longer term view of budget provision by linking resources to corporate aims and priorities.

We will continue to review and improve how we manage our performance and look forward to the challenges in the coming year. We will implement our strengthened performance management framework which should be a significant step towards achieving a positive result in our Comprehensive Performance Assessment.

In order to monitor our progress in managing our performance we are set an action plan each year by the Audit Commission recommending further ways we can improve. Full details of this are available on our website, however, a summary of the key issues outlined and the actions we have taken to address these are shown below.

Audit recommendations from 2002/03 Performance Plan	NFDC Action Taken
Evaluate the effectiveness and impact of Review Panels in monitoring Improvement Plans, following the Council's current review of democratic arrangements. (R1)	Level of Review Panel monitoring of improvement plans has increased. This will be enhanced by the inclusion of Improvement Plans in the new service planning framework in 2003
Investigate options for bringing forward the implementation of the new performance management framework, for example:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Developing portfolio strategies based on the current Corporate Plan ■ Developing balanced scorecards for all services ■ Applying the two part service plan model to the 2003/04 service plans ■ Linking 2003/04 individual Personal Development Plans to service plans. (R2) 	All potential early work on new performance management framework has been progressed. Portfolio performance is being reported against the Corporate Plan in this year's Performance Plan. Other issues will develop as new system is implemented. A balanced scorecard approach has not yet been considered in detail. Although the principles are sound this will be looked at after the first year of service planning so that the effectiveness of the current arrangements can be assessed.
Set a timetable for and monitor the achievement of the outstanding actions from the 2000/01 Action Plan which will be delivered by the new performance management framework. (R3)	All services are reporting on progress of Improvement Plans through the service planning process. Any outstanding issues are generally based on the need for more resources.
Ensure that Improvement Plans achieve impact and comply with the Best Value Guide paying particular attention to:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusion of consultation outcomes • Effective use of national and local performance indicators as measures of outcomes • Use of SMART targets • Clarity of outcomes and inclusion of outcomes for service users • Structure of plan and inclusion of action responsibility and costing of additional resources • Inclusion of cross-cutting issues. (R4) 	A less onerous review programme has enabled a better focus on the role of best value alongside the new service planning framework. Greater experience within services of reviews and clearer input of BV Mentors to reviews has ensured that the Best Value Guide is being followed more closely.
Evaluate the results of reviews to ensure that the Best Value Guide and boards are achieving the intended outcomes, with particular regard to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The robustness of challenge and compete • Reference to the implications of other BVRs being included in the Review Plan • Quality of BVR reports • Early action when appropriate • Reporting to DMT and Members meets requirements. (R5) 	An evaluation of 2002/03 reviews has shown greater achievement of intended outcomes from reviews. Reviews have been more challenging, and reporting to and involvement of senior management and members has been comprehensive yet appropriate.
Ensure that the progress reporting by BVR lead officers on Improvement Plan outcomes is clear and easily understandable to senior officers and Members. Particular attention should be paid to:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revised target dates • Reasons for slippage • Measurement of outcomes • Achievement of outcomes. (R6) 	Improvement Plans have continued to be reported on an annual basis. There is scope to report on improvement plans by exception more regularly. This could be achieved through the service planning process, which will be set out in any guidance in the coming year.
Ensure that priorities for the cross-cutting, themed review programme link to the Council's corporate objectives. (R7)	It has been agreed that the Local Strategic Partnership will inform the choice of cross-cutting reviews for the district. These reviews will be based on the priority issues for the district stemming from the developing Community Strategy. New Forest District Council will take a lead on these reviews where they link most appropriately with its Corporate Plan

PORTFOLIO PERFORMANCE MATTERS

The key aim of our Performance Plan is to report on the Council's performance against the Corporate Plan, The Heart of the Forest. This will demonstrate where we are doing well, where we plan to improve and where there is still room for improvement against our corporate aims and priorities. The following sections will highlight these issues through the framework of Portfolios, responsible for managing the Council's services, in the following areas:

- Crime and Disorder
- Economy and Planning
- Environment
- Finance and Support
- Health and Social Inclusion
- Housing
- Leisure
- Policy and Strategy

Members of the Cabinet for the Council make key decisions on these areas, which influence how well we perform against our corporate aims. These aims have been allocated to lead portfolios in this Plan; however, all portfolios have some impact on all aims.

The Cabinet is supported by a framework of review panels and committees that play a vital role in challenging decisions in policy and scrutinising performance in these areas. This is the first year that all members have been involved in developing the actions and targets to deliver the corporate aims, although it is the portfolio holder's responsibility to ensure these can be achieved.

To fit in with our new performance management framework a key change of focus for this year's plan is a shift from best value to overall performance. This is important in the first year of implementing a comprehensive service planning system; however, as a result there may be gaps in our actions and targets. These will be identified and prioritised over the coming year so that the Council's corporate aims become the real focus for driving improvement in service delivery.

In order to highlight the work of the portfolio more clearly each portfolio area is separated into three sections:

- A summary of the overall performance, budgets and improvement activity within the portfolio
- More detailed sections showing services' performance and medium-term plans against each corporate aim, relating to the lead portfolio.
- A basket of key performance indicators showing 3-year trends, and targets alongside Hampshire and England District benchmarks for each portfolio

It is hoped that this variety of detail for each portfolio will enable both a wider view of the Council's work within each portfolio alongside a more detailed portrayal of achievement and plans to improve performance to deliver our corporate aims and priorities.