

## **PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT**

The County Council is committed to managing its performance and continuously improving the services it provides. To do this we have set in place a number of systems to ensure that we can monitor our performance effectively and set appropriate targets for the future.

### **Performance Indicator Targets**

We have set targets against each of the national performance indicators, which are set out in Appendix A. This table shows for each national performance indicator: -

- Our previous target
- Our previous year's projected performance.
- Our previous year's achievement.
- The national average achievement level for county councils.
- Our league position in relation to other county councils.
- The best performance level for county councils by which we mean the level of performance that is equalled or bettered by 25% of county councils included in the comparison.
- Our targets set for the current year.
- Either our projected performance for the current year or, where it is available, the actual performance
- Our targets set for future years. Generally we aim to match the best performance level within the next five years. Where this rule of thumb is not appropriate we have set local targets and in the case of expenditure-based targets we have chosen not to include them in advance of budgeting decisions by the Council.

In the case of a number of the national performance indicators there is a significant variation between the target and/or the projected performance we set for 2000/01 and our actual achievement. These variations are listed in the tables in Appendix B1 (significant deviations from projected performance) and B2 (significant deviations from target) together with an explanation of the cause of the inaccuracy in our performance predictions and an indication of how we will be ensuring greater accuracy in the future.

A detailed commentary of our achievements is set out above in the section "Monitoring Our Performance".

### **Areas for improvement**

As well as analysing our achievements by comparing ourselves against the best county councils we also analyse year on year trends in our performance indicators. We have observed a decline in performance between 1999/00 and 2000/01 in the following areas: -

- Educational attainment, particularly in respect of our key stage 2 results.
- The allocation of primary school placements - with increases in the percentage of overcrowded classes whilst at the same time there has also been an increase schools with unfilled places.
- The processing of Special Educational Needs Statements.
- Adult education enrolments.
- Expenditure on education for those aged 16 and over (the drop in expenditure can be explained by a change in method of calculation in 2000/01 from that used in 1999/00).
- Provision of respite care.
- Children in care being excluded from school.
- The visiting of children on the Child Protection Register.
- The number of foster carers.

We are now working to ensure that we get back on track in these areas. We can report that we have re-shaped our fostering services to improve support for foster carers and have already seen an increase in the number of foster carers. We will be making similar improvements to ensure that we see similar reversals in the trend of those indicators listed as well as making sure we do not see any decline in any other area.

### **Best Value Reviews**

As part of the Council's commitment to continuous improvement we plan to review all services over a five - year period between 2000 and 2005 (the programme of reviews to take place between 2002-05 is shown in Appendix C). These reviews:

- **Challenge** why and how a service is provided.
- **Compare** performance against others who provide similar services as a means of identifying ways of improving.
- **Consult** with you the public of Worcestershire, the people who use the services we provide, and the wider business community on the standards of service we provide and the targets we should set to improve those standards.
- Test market **competition** as a means of securing efficient and effective services.

We refer below to the recent Government White Paper as a result of which we will be reconsidering our programme of best value reviews once our Comprehensive Performance Assessment action plan has been approved.

Teams of officers appointed from within existing staff resources carry out all our reviews. A "**mentor chief officer**" from another service area and a member of staff who has received specialist training in Best Value support each team.

In appropriate cases it may be necessary to buy in specialist skills, knowledge or information but where it is necessary to buy in specialist skills, the cost of these skills is met from the appropriate departmental budget.

We implement the recommendations from all reviews and set ourselves targets to improve the services we provide for you.

Independent government inspectors monitor all reviews to ensure that they are carried out rigorously. These reviews determine the level at which and the way in which services are provided.

Last year we reported that we had moved towards larger service reviews than had been undertaken during the first year and that as a result a smaller number would be carried out during the year.

The priority order of the review programme is determined using the same range of factors quoted in last year's plan namely: -

- Performance data indicating the relative strengths and weaknesses of different areas of service.
- Feedback from service users.
- Departmental or corporate priorities.
- Management reviews started before Best Value became a legislative requirement.
- Scope for innovative methods of service delivery.
- Political priority.
- The capacity to undertake a review.

The original programme of reviews for year 2 anticipated that, in addition to a small number carried over from the first year, nine best value reviews would be carried out during the year.

By March 2002 six reviews had been completed although a number of those that are in progress expect to report within the next few months.

Where reviews have been completed this year key issues include:

**Scientific Services** – this service provides the analysis and microbiological examination of foods, drinking water, toys and consumer goods, as well as occupational hygiene services related to health and safety, asbestos and legionella.

The service is run on a public/private partnership basis and is managed by a private consultancy partnership. The service has an annual turnover of about £1million pa.

Worthwhile comparison with other services was difficult because of commercial sensitivities. Consultation revealed reasonably high satisfaction levels amongst external customers.

The review examined future management arrangements and concluded that competitive tenders should be sought for the supply of scientific services to maximise the benefit of competition to the council.

External inspectors felt that the review had missed the opportunity to explore key issues facing the service and recommended the Council to clearly identify its service objectives and explore options to find the best way to achieve them. Nevertheless, the inspectors said that staff commitment and effective management, in a businesslike environment, impressed them.

**Trading Standards** – this service performs the Council's statutory duty to enforce laws controlling the accuracy, description, price, quality, quantity and safety of goods and services, animal health and welfare and also licensing arrangements in relation to petroleum, explosives and safety at sports grounds. A consumer advice service is also provided.

The cost of the service is relatively high compared to other County Councils. The reason was ascertained and a review is underway. Satisfaction levels are also high but productivity of officers in terms of number of inspections carried out compares poorly to similar councils.

External inspectors judged the service to be **fair and probably likely to improve**.

**Library Service** – the Service provides library and information services to the Council through 22 libraries, five mobile libraries and the service to housebound readers.

The review revealed that:

- Worcestershire Library services are effective and valued.
- It is the lowest resourced service within the (audit) family of similar authorities.
- There is a plan in place to ensure Government library standards are to be met by April 2004.
- Increased opening hours and service points are needed.
- Increased investment is needed in books and other materials.
- Shabby and worn out buildings and equipment are not attractive to the public, the authority is not providing modern service delivery or good working conditions.
- Marketing, promotion and the performance management of stock and services must be improved.
- Information services based on ICT should be developed.
- Service income must be increased through diversifying income streams and improved management.
- Effectiveness is limited by inadequate staffing structures.

The Council has put in place an improvement plan to address the problems revealed in the review and the Council has allocated an additional £1/4 million to help deliver those improvements.

External Inspectors judged the service to be **good** with **excellent prospects for improvement**.

**Record Office Services** – this service provides a corporate memory for the Council.

Areas of excellence include being a national leader in terms of use, reputation and the provision of a customer focussed service for both the public and the Council's officers. It has a generally open minded staff who demonstrate a will to succeed. The Council's own administrative records are managed cost effectively with visionary approaches towards new formats.

Average areas include outreach, public relations are good but vary dramatically from year to year according to demand. There is also little proactive collecting of records in danger of loss, extremely limited space for accruals and precarious tenure of a storage facility.

Areas where there is a need to improve include cataloguing - existing catalogues are unstructured and not readily adaptable for Internet/e government access and the lack of a strategy to replace conservation facilities lost to Herefordshire at Local Government Review in 1998.

The Council has put in place a plan to redress these issues.

The review has not been subject to external inspection.

**Pollution control** – this service meets the Council's statutory responsibilities in respect of the control of pollution from closed landfill sites in the County.

The review of this part of the Waste Service began before the decision was taken to carry out whole service reviews and will be combined with the remaining service functions in 2003/04.

The service employs 3 full time staff with a budget of £490k (of which £362k is operational costs).

The service is responsible for nine sites. In comparison with other similar councils it has the fifth highest number of staff and the third highest revenue budget. As there are no suitable national performance indicators against which to make direct comparisons, three are now being developed.

Consultation reveals a good awareness of the Council's responsibilities and a thirst for regular information from service users. All contractors are satisfied with the response to tenders level of professionalism and the settling of invoices.

The service will now improve because the improvement plan will ensure that a benchmarking process is established; that a risk assessment and a management plan is established for each site; and that additional monitoring procedures are introduced.

The review has not been subject to external inspection.

**Residential homes for Older Persons and Home Care** - this review of older people personal social services brings together recommendations from reviews of purchasing of services for older people and residential homes and the homecare service.

Key issues arising include:

- The Council spends less on older people than most of its family of like councils and within older people's services it's spending on homecare is particularly low.
- The unit costs of the Council's homecare and residential care are unexceptional compared to those of like councils. However, the unit costs of the Homecare Service are high compared to the cost of purchasing homecare from independent providers.
- Levels of sickness and downtime in the services are not excessive, although there may be room for some improvement. Staff turnover is also relatively low and although it has been rising in the Homecare Service it is still significantly lower than turnover in the independent sector.
- Limited evidence is available by which the relative quality of the services compared to the independent sector can be assessed.
- Service users showed a very high level of satisfaction with the Homecare Service and with their homecarers and a high level of satisfaction with the reliability of the service.
- Service user satisfaction levels with the Residential Care Service were also high, with evidence of improvement between the surveys carried out in 2000 and in 2001.

The main conclusions of the review are:

- Externalisation of the services to reduce costs and improve efficiency is superficially attractive, but in the medium term at least is unlikely to be the best way forward.
- Whilst the radical change and upheaval of a major externalisation is not appropriate at this time, there is a need for major change to the way in which the services are provided.
- The reconstitution of the services as an Independent Business Unit with a much clearer purchaser/provider relationship underpinned by a clear contract or Service Level Agreement.
- The exposure of the services to more competitive pressure, by requiring them to compete with the independent sector for new business and by an annual negotiation process with care purchasers over the volume and quality of services to be delivered.

A detailed joint improvement plan has now been approved and is being implemented.

**Educational Psychology** – this service fulfils the Council’s requirements to identify and meet the special educational needs of all children. It also contributes to the drive to reduce exclusions from school, facilitate the drive for inclusion of all children, and the raise the standards of children’s achievement.

The service is the least expensive of all those with which it was compared; it has significantly less staff; does not spend as much time or money on professional development activities or inter-agency working and is not as successful in meeting statutory assessment timescales.

Consultation revealed that educational psychologists are considered to be highly professional, “*good to excellent*” in the quality of their services to schools and a high number of those surveyed believe that psychologists add value to the progress of children.

The improvement plan arising from the review will ensure that the service continues to improve by using EFQM excellence model to identify areas for improvement; by further developing consultative arrangements; by increasing the number of psychologists; and by increasing the number of statutory assessments completed within six weeks.

External Inspectors judged the service to be **good** with **promising prospects** for improvement.

### **Best value improvements to services**

As these reviews have only just been completed it is too early to have implemented many of the improvements that are included in the action plans. We will be in a better position to report progress next year.

However there are some immediate improvements that have already been made. These include:

- Increased revenue support has been granted to the library service and staff restructuring has taken place. These improvements will lead to more mobile library services, increased book stock and increased opening hours.
- Increased opening hours of the Consumer Advice Service from 29.5 per week to 40 hours per week together with setting up a Trading Standards Service consumer and business advice website. We have also implemented a system to continuously assess customer satisfaction and a process to establish and discuss customer priorities.
- Increasing the budget for Older People’s Services by £3.2million in 2001/02 with a further increase of £2million in 2002/03.
- Improved efficiency in the delivery of social services equipment with 90% of people now receiving their equipment within 3 weeks compared to only 61% in 2000/01.

### **Work in progress**

There are a number of reviews where work is still in progress. The review of **Outdoor Education Centres** is substantially complete, but is awaiting a more

fundamental challenge of the basis on which the service is currently provided. It will be completed during the early summer.

The review of **Emergency response**, which is being undertaken with other public bodies including District councils, the Police and Fire Brigade, has been delayed by the central government review of emergency planning arrangements. It will now be rescheduled for completion during 2002.

The reviews of **Lifelong learning** and the **provision of equipment for people with disabilities** are due to be reported on in Summer 2002 but are not available to meet with the deadlines for publication of this plan.

The reviews of **Economic Development and Regeneration** and **Learning Disability Services** have been delayed for staffing reasons and they are now due to report later in the year.

Finally the review of **charging for services** has been rescheduled to be undertaken during 2004/05. This will allow the Council the opportunity to develop a corporate policy on charging which can then be reviewed after a year of operation.

### **Best value inspection judgements**

During the past year we received a number of reports from the Best Value Inspectors about the reviews that had been undertaken. In addition to those we report above external inspectors also commented upon the review of **Development and Training**, which the Inspectors judged to be a good service that will improve.

So far the Council has received five full inspection reports and the judgements are:

- A one star (fair) service that is likely to improve (IT)
- A one star (fair) service that will probably improve (Trading Standards)
- Three two star (good) services – one that will improve (Training and development); one that has promising prospects for improvement (educational Psychology Service) and one with excellent prospects for improvement (Libraries and Information Service).

This is an encouraging trend that points to the Council's commitment to continuous improvement and the capacity to deliver those improvements.

Finally during the year the Council also received the reports of what are called "light touch inspections" in respect of eight council services that had been reviewed during the previous year. These reports are not published but if you wish to see a copy of the Inspectors' comments please contact the Policy and Review Unit at County Hall (tel: 01905 766680).

Generally the reports were positive about the Council's reviews but the inspectors did make some general overarching comments about Best Value in Worcestershire. In particular the Inspectors recommended that there should be

more member involvement in best value reviews. The role of elected members will be more clearly defined in councillor job descriptions in the future.

### **Local Public Service Agreement**

This year the Council, working in partnership with the District Councils, the Fire, Police and Health Authorities entered into a Public Service Agreement (PSA) with the Government. This agreement will help us and our partners to continue to improve our public services and deliver best value. It will do so by generating more income from the Government and by setting us more demanding targets for improvements. The PSA includes the following 12 areas each with a more challenging target.

**Assisting older people to live as independently as possible** – we have set a target of increasing to 90 per 1000 people over 65 being helped to live at home by 2004/05 compared with an achievement of 54.7 per 1000 people aged 65+ in 2000/01.

**Supporting people with learning difficulties to live at home** – we aim to increase the support to people with learning difficulties with a target to increase by almost 100% from the current level the number of people with learning difficulties helped to live at home by 2005.

**Reducing accidental fires in domestic dwellings** – we are supporting the Fire Brigade in achieving this target with Social Services staff helping to accurately identify those people most at risk of having an accidental fire in their home.

**Reduce road accident casualties** – we aim to meet the national targets for road traffic casualties by 2005 rather than the national deadline of 2010.

**Highway maintenance** – the government has set a national target to arrest the deterioration of the roads by 2004. We aim to stretch ourselves to reach this target by the end of 2003.

**Improving educational attainment** – through the PSA the Council have increased by 1% the educational attainment targets for key stage 3 (14 year olds) that we originally agreed with the Department for Education and Skills.

**Active communities through sport and recreation** – the 'Worcestershire All Sport Partnership' aims to narrow the gap between the amount of sport/exercise enjoyed by young people from disadvantaged backgrounds (the target group) and other young people in the County. Through the achievement of the target, the following outcomes will be achieved:

- Help disadvantaged people develop self-confidence and belief through involvement in constructive & purposeful activity.
- Strengthen the resolve of people to resist the temptation of involvement in crime (principally drug-related crime) and anti social behaviour through involvement in diversionary recreational activities.
- Provide an inter-agency counselling and advisory service and develop training opportunities, including volunteer leadership programmes etc.

- Identify and create exit routes for people to become involved in long term structured recreational activity.
- Use the stability of established community groups and clubs to build a wider self-sustaining infrastructure to promote lifelong participation in recreational activity.

It is possible that the scope of this target will change following further negotiations with central government

**Reduce the supply of class A drugs** – the Council’s Drugs Action Team and other partners are supporting the Police to reach the target of an increase of 30% in the number of offenders dealt with for supplying class A drugs by 2004/05.

**Improving prospects for teenagers in Worcestershire (including educational and health attainment of children in the looked after system)** - The Council is proposing to achieve a target of 18% of children leaving the looked after system with 5 or more GCSEs at grades A\*-C in 2004/5. This represents a 100% increase in the current position of 9%.

**Reducing offending by young people** – The Worcestershire and Herefordshire Youth Offending Service is a multi-agency partnership between Worcestershire County Council, Herefordshire Council, West Mercia Constabulary and the Health Authorities of Worcestershire and Herefordshire. It is proposed that the local PSA could credibly support a stretch target of 8% reduction in re-offending rates of young people.

**E-Government/One Stop contact centres** - In line with the priorities identified in the County Council’s Implementing E-Government Statement, we aim to establish 7 multi-partner, multi-service contact centres by March 2004. These contact centres will be staffed by front of house personnel capable of dealing with a large percentage of customer queries across a range of services, including both county and district council services and potentially those of other partners as well. The contact centres will be electronically facilitated and supported by appropriate systems, data warehousing, and customer relationship management software.

### **External independent assessments**

This year we have further reinforced our commitment to provide best value services by starting the process of testing ourselves against the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) Excellence Model. The EFQM Excellence Model is a widely used and well-respected management tool. It is used to identify strengths and areas for improvement in both the private and public sectors throughout the whole of Europe. The Excellence Model will help us to identify where we want to make improvements and these can be built into our planning process.

We carried out self-assessment against the model during February/March. At about the same time the Government announced its intention to change the way in which the performance of local authorities is measured. The White Paper ‘**Strong Local Leadership – Quality Public Services**’ sets out the Government’s vision for achieving high quality, customer focused, public services. This includes a revised performance management framework and the

introduction of a Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) of each local authority to be carried out by the Audit Commission and other Inspectorates.

The CPA includes evidence of performance as set out in best value performance plans and from best value reviews and inspections. This will lead to all local authorities being classified as either: -

- High performing;
- Striving;
- Coasting; or
- Poor performing.

High performing and striving authorities will have more flexibility to determine the services that have to be reviewed as part of the best value process, while those classified as coasting or poor performing will be required to negotiate a programme of reviews with the relevant inspectorate or department.

The Council volunteered to be involved early in the assessment process and has already submitted a self-assessment. In drafting its self-assessment for CPA the Council was able to draw upon work it had undertaken earlier in the year to test itself against the EFQM Excellence Model. The self-assessment was followed by a visit from Inspectors to determine the Council's "capacity to improve" and we hope to learn the outcome of this part of the assessment towards the end of June.

Between June and November the government will look at other aspects of our performance and in December we will be told our classification. Following this announcement, we will publish an action plan to ensure that we continue to improve our services.

We value the opportunity to have external assessors take an independent look at the way we perform and to help us to identify where we need to improve.

Finally the White Paper also sets out a number of changes to the requirements to produce future editions of this best value performance plan which will be published by 30 June each year.