

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIVISION SERVICE PLAN 2002/2003

FINAL REPORT (MARCH 2003)

SERVICE DESCRIPTION

The Division is responsible for **Economic Development** activities such as encouraging inward investment, providing support to businesses, promoting the availability of sites and premises; developing partnerships and working with a wide range of organisations to promote regeneration of the area; **Tourism** promotion and development; **Asset and Estate Management** including strategic management activities, the efficient management of the Council's land and non housing properties, and disposal of any surplus assets; and **Footpath Management**, ensuring that the district's 350 miles of public rights of way are walkable and well maintained.

THE YEAR IN CONTEXT

Over the life of this plan the Division has pursued a range of opportunities. One of these has been to develop more co-ordinated service delivery with other partners. This has been particularly fruitful with Tourism Promotion, as we have developed joint working within Derbyshire and across the National Forest. We have refined our working relationship with Southern Derbyshire Chamber, transferring to them the management building at George Holmes Business Centre, and the Business support responsibilities which we previously funded. We have obtained £60,000 of funding from East Midlands Development Agency (emda) to develop, together with Groundwork Erewash Valley, an Environmental Improvement Scheme for industrial site frontages.

Within the Council we have improved the way that we corporately manage our assets, including the development of an Asset Management and Monitoring Group, and closer working with other divisions including legal and Technical Services. There is still the opportunity for improvements, particularly in the delivery of maintenance services and Facilities Management and these are being pursued.

In addition the Division has taken on the Footpath Management function previously undertaken by Planning.

The main challenge has been to continue to deliver services with reduced staff numbers. The division lost three members of staff during the year and only moved back to full strength in March 2003. Despite these problems, performance has been sustained in most areas of work

ACHIEVEMENTS

ACTION	OUTCOMES
Best Value Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asset Management Review completed and work on delivering Improvement Plan commenced
Performance Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PI's developed for Asset Management, Tourism and Economic Development. • Involved with Benchmarking clubs for each area
E Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism Destination Management System developed
Property Transfer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • George Holmes Business Centre Management Building transferred to Southern Derbyshire Chamber. • Disposal of surplus Public Toilets progressed • Numerous small areas of land sold
Business Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of Environmental Improvement Scheme with Groundwork Erewash Valley - £60,000 from emda. • Register of available sites & premises
Community Enterprise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued support for Money Spider Credit Union
Tourism Promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of joint visitor guide with National Forest authorities, plus joint advertising and distribution. • Liaison with emda, Heart of England Tourist Board, Derbyshire County Council and Derbyshire Districts over strategic and promotional issues • Preparation and distribution of annual events guide • Tourism Economic Impact Assessment obtained
Footpath Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective integration of service from Planning
Asset Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Asset Management Plan produced • Joint Asset Management/Capital Programme steering group formed
Estate Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 94% occupancy rate for commercial portfolio • Numerous lettings and sales completed • Professional advice provided to Members, officers and the public

UNFINISHED TASKS

ACTION	EXPLANATION
Business Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service level agreement with Business Link not completed - reprogrammed for 2003 • Understanding of funding sources not improved - due to staff shortages - new Economic Development Assistant pursuing this
Community Enterprise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food Economy Initiatives not developed - now pursuing alternative priorities

2002/2003 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

INDICATOR	2001/02 (actual)	2002/03 (target)	2002/03 (actual)
Best Value Indicators			
156 - % of buildings open to the public in which all public areas are suitable and accessible to disabled people	60%	60%	60% (target will be 100% by October 2004)
180a - Energy consumption/sq m of local authority operational property, compared with comparable buildings in the UK as a whole	Not available	New indicator - target not yet agreed	
National Property Indicators (note that the 2001/02 figures are being used for the AMP submission in July 2003, and will all be reviewed over the coming year)			
% gross internal floor-space in condition categories A - D (A is good, D is bad)	A - 9%, B - 80%, C - 11%		
Backlog of maintenance by cost expressed as a % in priority levels in 1 - 4 and by value (1 is a high priority, 4 is low)	1 - £7050 (5%) 2 - £14,935 (11%) 3 - £22,635 (17%) 4 - £91,100 (67%)		
Current internal rate of return (IRR) for the portfolio expressed as an average for (a) Industrial, (b) Retail and (c) Agricultural investment property	(a) 6.68% (b) 6.02% (c) n/a		
Annual Management costs per sq. m. (a) Total for operational property (b) Total for non- operational property	(a) £9.40 (b) £2.62		
Civic Offices Repairs & Maintenance costs	£5.22 sq/m		
Civic Offices Energy Costs	£4.80 sq/m		
Civic Offices Water costs	£0.65 sq/m		
Civic Offices CO2 emissions	0.073 tonnes/sq m		
% of new capital projects where outturn falls within +/- 5% of the estimated outturn, expressed as a % of the total number of projects completed in the financial year	100%		
% of new capital projects falling within +/- 5% of the estimated timescale, expressed as a % of the total number of projects completed in the financial year	76%		
Local Indicators			
% of tourism enquiries dealt with within 4/5 working days	100% in 5 days	100% in 4 days	95%
Number of first enquiries from business start-ups and businesses with less than 10 employees dealt with by the Small Business Service	189	160	To follow
Number of units void as a % of the total	25%	20%	6%
% of under or over performance related to target income level	0%	0%	5% increase on target

LESSONS LEARNED

Anything to share with the rest of the organisation in terms of what went well/didn't go so well/would do differently next time etc.

Through the development of the National Forest and beyond Tourism Partnership, one very basic lesson learned is the need to clearly determine the role and responsibilities of each partner from the outset, to avoid disproportionate workloads.

**PERSONNEL & DEVELOPMENT DIVISION
SERVICE PLAN 2002/2003
FINAL REPORT (MARCH 2003)**

SERVICE DESCRIPTION

The Division's key role is to provide and continually improve a quality, professional human resource management service to the council. We provide specialist advice and support to the Council Members, Chief Officers and Management as an internal support service. The Division is responsible for both Personnel Services and Training & Development.

THE YEAR IN CONTEXT

The main challenges faced by the department were corporate key challenges arising from the Council's Corporate Plan, these included:-

- ❖ Put In Place Arrangements for Good Corporate Governance
- ❖ Establish training and development plans for employees & members
- ❖ Implement Best Value Review
- ❖ Improving levels of Sickness Absence
- ❖ E-government in service delivery
- ❖ Organisational Change
- ❖ Improving Morale
- ❖ Ensuring people are treated fairly and equally
- ❖ Attaining evidence and accreditation to the Investors in People standard for the whole organisation.
- ❖ Working to conclude a Single status agreement, including implementing Job Evaluation
- ❖ Formulating policies and practice that assist in the introduction of an effective, integrated performance management culture

Other service related challenges identified by the Division were:-

- ❖ National and European legislation & guidance continually being introduced / amended
- ❖ To widen participation in learning, and help the organisation to move towards it's targets for E-Govt.
- ❖ The development where possible of training & development related to NVQs.
- ❖ The development of quality systems and procedures to improve our efficiency.
- ❖ The development of further customer feedback, to inform future decision making.

The main opportunities faced by the department were:-

- ❖ to focus the resources of the Division on the key strategic priorities of the organisation
- ❖ to contribute to the significant people related challenges in the Corporate Plan
- ❖ to contribute to the ongoing organisational change and support ongoing improvements
- ❖ to deliver Best Value
- ❖ to assist the organisation in being an Investor in People employer
- ❖ to contribute to the development of members, management and all employees of the council, to enable the Council to meet to its corporate aims.
- ❖ to assist the organisation in its aim of treating all people fairly
- ❖ to assist the organisation in safely adhering to UK and European employment legislation and developing best practice as an employer
- ❖ to contribute to joint working with the trade unions through the implementation of the Single Status Job Evaluation Scheme.

ACHIEVEMENTS

ACTION	OUTCOMES
To undertake the HRM Best Value Review	Clear understanding of service position, through extensive benchmarking exercise and customer consultation. Draft action plan drawn up and consulted upon, to improve service delivery for our customers, with many tasks already actioned. Development of partnership opportunities with other local authorities and other external organisations
Re-launch Investor in People assessment for the whole organisation.	Accreditation of the Investor in People Award for the whole organisation. The assessor considered the organisation had a 'forward looking and professional HR department committed to introducing appropriate change for the right reasons'. Internal / External recognition and publicity for the Authority of the high standards and practices it provides for employees, enabling employees to feel valued, and for morale to improve. Examples include:- Implementation of the Performance Development Review process for employees, which sets clear objectives for employees, and allows them the opportunity to request relevant training needs to assist them achieve. This is linked to a Corporate overview of the planning and evaluation of employee development,

	<p>linking development needs to organisational objectives. The no. of employees who have a training plan following a PDR interview has risen significantly to 73%.</p> <p>A change to the Annual training budget allocation process, so that Divisional Training budgets are now allocated annually on a 'needs basis', focusing training resources where they are of greatest need.</p> <p>Corporate evaluation of employee development, in relation to its links to the organisation's achievements against the first corporate plan. This report to Council recognised how employees and their development contribute to the organisation's successes. Improved evaluation processes for our service plans.</p> <p>Improved 2-way communication with employees through the launch of weekly team briefings, with a corporate core brief produced weekly by CMT. Understanding of employee views from exit interviews, and follow up focus groups.</p> <p>Development of management competencies, and team building development arranged for Divisional Managers, as first module in a wider Mgt. Devt. Programme to support them in the attainment of the standards set within the competencies.</p> <p>Increased numbers of front line employees working towards / have achieved NVQ's e.g. Cleaners, Grounds Maintenance, Administrative employees, with funding to assist from Learning Skills Council.</p>
<p>Improving Sickness Absence Levels</p>	<p>Development and implementation of Sickness Absence Management Procedure. Plus a further review and amendments made after 12 months operation.</p> <p>Development of managers to manage absence, and supporting them through this work. Regular reports provided as appropriate within Data Protection Guidelines.</p> <p>Fundamental review of Occupational Health provision, providing improved service levels, and on site access to professional advisors, for no greater cost per appointment, utilising the flexible benefits of a partnership approach with 3 other local authorities.</p> <p>Levels of absence across all Division's but one, have either stayed below or at Government target of 3%, or have been reduced dramatically to around this level. The number of employees in long term absences has reduced, through a combined approach of dismissals on grounds of capability due to ill health, and phasing employees back to work following ill health where possible. We have also seen a reduction in no. of ill health retirements to government target levels.</p> <p>Establishment and use by employees of access to independent Counselling services, where Occupational Health feels it is appropriate.</p> <p>Reviewing absence relating to type of illness and setting up process to plan resources for areas of greatest need for pro-active occupational health work.</p>
<p>Implementing E-Government</p>	<p>Opening of the Open Learning Centre for all employees and members, TACT members, providing them with alternative and flexible routes to learning, through on-line facilities, audio visual packages, shared reading resources and other development products helping the organisation to achieve its E-Govt targets.</p> <p>Contributed to the national Idea Pilot Project ' Learning Pool', which has enabled us to utilise their resources at no cost and develop bespoke E-Learning materials. Also external recognition as we are to be in their brochure, as an example of good practice for what can be achieved with E-Learning in small district authorities.</p>
<p>Implementing Organisational Change</p>	<p>Significant workload on supporting many organisational reviews throughout the year, including market testing of salaries, consultation procedures, redundancy, redeployment and recruitment, enabling the organisation to continue to refocus and reprioritise its resources effectively as required.</p>
<p>Implementing Single Status Agreement</p>	<p>Commencement of Single Status Steering Group (SSSG), with extensive research having being undertaken, to ensure the authority enters into this project</p>

	jointly between members, management and trade unions, being responsible in approach, due to developing knowledge of all the relevant issues. A project plan is in place and progress has begun to work within it. The first key achievements have been to produce key corporate policy documents, and draft all local conventions / factor descriptions, to minimise ambiguity in the scheme.
Improving Equal Opportunities for employees at work	Development of equalities monitoring systems and reports, with first reports going to January 2003 committee. Utilising the information to inform future prioritising of actions. Implemented on-line recruitment system, with targeted promotional links to minority community websites. Applications received online have been 16%, with 9% of appointees having used this media. This is in line with national statistics.
Addressing national and European Legislation	Development/review of, with follow up training and support for the following procedures:- Grievance Procedure, Relocation Scheme, Corporate Training Plan – 'Training Matters', Sickness Absence Management Policy – plus follow up review, Disciplinary Procedure, Temporary Regrading Procedure - plus follow up review and a new package of family friendly leave entitlements, which are to contribute towards addressing recruitment and retention issues. We also have in draft format policies relating to, Recruitment & Selection in relation to CRB, managing capability of employees, Car Allowance Scheme, Consideration of flexible working opportunities, including part time employment / job share arrangements etc.

UNFINISHED TASKS

ACTION	EXPLANATION
Revising existing codes of conduct, and member/officer protocols.	Have been awaiting national guidance, which has still not been received. Now have some examples from other authorities where they have developed these without national guidance, and will look to do the same for SDDC. Drafts are being produced with L&DSM, and will go through negotiation process shortly.
Development of a mgt. development programme.	The first module has been organised on Team Building for June 2003. This is a 12 – 18 month programme that will be developed in conjunction with Divisional Managers, and in line with the Management Competencies already developed.
Assisting with reducing overall levels of absence in the authority, and some targeted support in areas with high levels of absence continuing.	Attention now needs to be given to short term absences including employees reporting in using the proper procedures, and managers undertaking return to work interviews, and absence monitoring interviews consistently. We have recently started to report the % of cases where we have not been notified that return to work interviews have been undertaken reported. These are essential parts of managing the short – term absences. Success with this requires the commitment of all managers to succeed. CMT have also asked us to review the information on Absence Management that is reported to Members. There is one division with very high levels however, that will need some targeted support over the next year, if overall corporate levels are to be reduced. Implementation of some proactive support for employees based on research undertaken this year. Implementation of revised policy, which has tighter 'trigger dates', higher levels of support by Occ. Health, and improved clarity of roles /expectations.
Targeted support in areas where PDR's have not been undertaken	This is an annual process, but there are a small number of areas where we still have not received PDR documentation for employees. Concentrated efforts are needed if we are to achieve 100%, which we should to be fair to all employees. This requires the co-operation of management to succeed.
Developing further family friendly policies & to cover p/t workers.	There are further policies in draft form, but need to go through the negotiation process. They have been delayed due to heavy reactive workload this year that was not anticipated in Housing.
Single Status.	This is a 2 year project, following a project plan.
Strengthening policies for promotion of equal Ops. in employment	Awaiting Corporate Policy & BV Mgrs corporate guidance, timetable etc. Will undertake work as part of her rollout of a corporate programme to address Equal Ops org wide.
Member Development Programme	Training has been made available to members through internal programmes, modern members programme by EMRLGA and the Learning Centre.

	However, there needs to be a fresh review of development needs, to reflect the current needs of the organisation, and with the support of the new Legal & Democratic Services Manager.
HRM Best Value Review	To gain approval by BVWG, Corporate Scrutiny Committee, and F&M Committee for the final action plan, originally drafted in January 2002. There have been delays as reported to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee that were outside the HRM Review team's control that have meant that the review is now over a year past the completion date. Work is therefore still outstanding to complete the review.

2002/2003 BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

BVPI No.	Title	Government Target	Actual 2002/03	Target 2002/03	Actual 2001/02
11a	The percentage of top 5% of earners that are women	N/A	25%	24%	18%
11b	% of top earners from black & ethnic minority communities	N/A	0	<i>new</i>	N/A
12	No. of working days lost due to sickness	6.8 days	14.93 days	11 days	15.48 days
13	Voluntary leavers as % of staff in post	N/A	8.86%	N/A	10.36%
14	% of employees retiring early excluding ill health retirements	0.45%	0	0.89%	2.20%
15	% of employees retiring early due to ill health	0.35%	0.37%	0.64%	0.63%
16a	% of employees who are disabled	N/A	3.63%	3.5%	2.51%
17x	% of employees who are from ethnic minority communities	N/A	0.66%	1.5%	0.94%

LOCAL PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Local Indicator	Actual 2002/03	Target 2002/03	Actual 2001/02
Number of employees who have an individual training plan, following a PDR interview	73%	100%	42%

We have an improvement in our BVPI's and local indicators this year, with 2 out of 3 govt targets being met, and an improvement in 6 out of 9 indicators. Further work is needed particularly to increase the number of employees from ethnic minority communities, at all levels in the organisation, and to continue to address levels of sickness absence.

LESSONS LEARNED

Customer feedback surveys / IIP review show clear positive steps of progress for the authority, with an improvement in morale, which we should all feel proud of. Work still needs to continue, to ensure the improvement process achieves its full potential, and so that we do not become complacent. However the Authority has made significant step changes in these areas.

Consistent application of corporate procedures across the whole organisation remains essential; if we are to achieve Government and Local targets, continue to improve the morale of employees, improve performance and ensure all employees are managed equally and fairly.

Greater understanding is now needed of how prospective candidates see SDDC as an employer, so we can effectively promote the organisation and continue to improve recruitment and retention levels of employees from ethnic minority backgrounds.

As a Division we need to allow more time for unplanned 'reactive' work, as this is continuing to increase, and is likely to continue to do so, through organisational / Best Value Reviews, and can make targets difficult to achieve.

LEGAL & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES DIVISION SERVICE PLAN 2002/2003

FINAL REPORT (MARCH 2003)

SERVICE DESCRIPTION

The Division is responsible for:-

- **Legal Services** - To advise the Council on all legal matters e.g. contractual arrangements, housing, planning, environmental health, conveyancing, employment matters and to represent the Council in courts and tribunals. It also advises on human rights issues, the provision of information and ensuring that the new constitution is followed and kept up to date.
- **Democratic Services** - The management and administration of the committee process, including support for the Chief Executive, Members and the civic functions of the Council, particularly the Chair.
- **The Elections Service** - Maintains and updates the register of electors annually and on a rolling basis and administers parish, district, county, parliamentary and European elections and referenda.
- **Land Charges** - Ensures that the Local Land Charges Register is maintained and provides searches on payment of a fee for residents of the District when they purchase new property.
- **Public Relations** - To oversee the public relations and media relations functions of the authority.

THE YEAR IN CONTEXT

The main challenges faced by the Department were:-

- **Members' Training** - The need for a structured programme of Members' training is recognised and this will be progressed in line with Members' requirements following the District Elections in May 2003.
- **Customer Satisfaction** - Service departments are to be consulted through focus groups and questionnaires to assess the level of support required.
- **Public Relations** - Re-defining the role of the press officer to work more strategically and to become more involved in internal communications.
- **Personnel Development Review (PDR) interviews** - Not all staff within the Division have benefited from PDR interviews due to two senior management staff vacancies. These have recently been filled and the necessary training arranged to enable the issue to be progressed.

The main opportunities faced were:-

- **Constitution** - The Modernising Local Government Working Panel will be reconvened to progress the outstanding issues contained in the Action Plan. The servicing of an increasing number of meetings has become necessary in connection with the new Constitution, which represents an additional workload and will require an assessment of whether further resources are necessary.
- **Ethical Framework** - Section 66 Regulations relating to local determinations are expected shortly.
- **Independent Remuneration Panel** - The appointment of a new Panel will be necessary to make recommendations on the level of Members' allowances, following the resignation of the previous Panel.
- **Minute Retrieval System** - Following the necessary staff training, this system will then be made available throughout the authority.
- **Regional Assemblies** - A referendum may be necessary on an elected assembly for the region.
- **Transfer of Liquor Licensing** - This function is to be transferred from the Magistrates' Courts, which will increase the Division's workload considerably due to the high number of public houses, restaurants and off-licences which are currently outside the Council's control.
- **Comprehensive Performance Assessment** - The development of an Action Plan to prepare for this Assessment will be necessary, which will involve the Division.
- **Land Charges** - National Land Information Service (NLIS) – the need to transfer all land and property information and registrations onto a national database to provide, by electronic means, a one-stop shop for conveyancing transactions.
Geographical Information Service (GIS) – the plotting of areas of land affected by Land Charges issues and storing this captured information online, in order to allow easier access to previous searches.

ACHIEVEMENTS

Over the past 12 months, the Division's main achievements have been:-

ACTION	OUTCOMES
Governance	Following a trial period of one year, the new political management arrangements were agreed by the Council for adoption. From October 2002, the publicity arrangements for agendas and reports were increased from 3 days to 5 days which has necessitated changes in working practices. The new Ethical Framework was also implemented and training sessions were held for District and Parish Councils on the new Code of Conduct
E-government	The Division has made a significant contribution to the development of the Council's new website involving the availability of agendas and Minutes on the site. Progress has also been made on a Minute Retrieval System which will be made available throughout the authority following the necessary staff training
Elections and Electoral Administration	A review of Polling Districts has been undertaken as a result of the Ward Boundary Review. A return of 99% was achieved on the annual canvass, despite a reduction in the canvass period and a limited level of support within the unit. New legislation relating to opt-out of electors was implemented, involving the publication of two versions of the Register instead of the one version previously required.
Debt Recovery	A review of current sundry debt cases has recently been completed, with appropriate action being undertaken to pursue outstanding matters
Prosecutions	Successful Magistrates' Court prosecutions were carried out for a number of offences including health and safety, planning enforcement, and breach of a Tree Preservation Order resulting in a fine of £5,000
Freedom of Information	The Council's Publication Scheme has been approved by the Information Commissioner and is available on the Council's website.
Ombudsman	There have been no complaints over the year resulting in a finding by the Local Government Ombudsman of maladministration by the Council
Public Relations	Producing the weekly Core Briefing document
Restructuring of Division	Following the departure of two senior officers, a restructuring of the Division was approved in May 2002 as part of a recruitment and retention exercise
Elections and Administrative Assistant	This new post was approved and filled in November 2002, primarily to assist the Elections Service, but also to provide administrative support to the Public Relations Officer and to the Division in general. Unfortunately, the postholder has left and the position is being readvertised.
Land Charges	The role and function of the Land Charges service has been raised amongst Members and Officers by way of a report to Council and establishment of an Officer Working Group.
Information Technology	The Division has benefited from the upgrade of three computers and a new printer and scanner have been purchased for the Public Relations Officer.
Implementation of Absence Management Policy	The Division's sickness absence for the year was 2.76% which is below the government target for absence which is 3%.

UNFINISHED TASKS

The following table outlines tasks that were not completed along with an explanation:-

ACTION	EXPLANATION
Arrangements for Good Corporate Governance.	Revision of the Officer Code of Conduct was delayed until central government issued a National Officer Code of Conduct. As this has still not been provided, the Council's current Officer Code of Conduct will be revised (if necessary) and a protocol covering employee/member relationships will be developed. After the District Council Elections, the Modernising Working Panel will be reconvened to monitor and revise (if necessary) the Constitution.
Training and Development Plans for Members	The finalised training strategy for Members could not be progressed until after the District Council Elections to ensure that all Members could evaluate their training needs and requirements.
Departmental and Service Planning Framework	Customer Satisfaction Questionnaires to service users for Legal, Democratic Services, Public Relations and Land Charges will be followed up by use of Focus Groups and regular update meetings to improve on current service delivery.
Training and Development plans for Employees	Two senior management vacancies were not filled until mid November 2002, therefore, not all staff within the Division had received a PDR interview or an individual training and development plan. This issue is now in the process of being addressed.
Modernisation of Local Government – Improvements to Democratic Services	An effective Minute Retrieval System has been established. When IT training is provided, this system will be made available throughout the Council. An Independent Remuneration Panel will need to be appointed after the District Council Elections, to make recommendations to Council on the level of Members' Allowances.
Legal Services – Right to Buy Function	A review of the current Right to Buy procedure, part of which is currently undertaken by external Solicitors, is to be undertaken by the Legal & Democratic Services Manager and Principal Legal Officer, who started with the Council in mid November. It is anticipated that the function will be returned in-house provided there are adequate staffing resources.

2002/2003 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The table below shows the Best Value and Local Performance Indicators that relate to the service provided within this Division:-

	Actual 2001/02	Target 2002/03	Actual 2002/03
Best Value Performance Indicators		(bold italic if new/revised)	
% of standard searches carried out in 10 working days	84.36%	90.00%	76%
Local Performance Indicators			
Democratic Services			
% of items/reports not available 5 clear days before relevant meeting	5%	5%	5%
% Member attendance at meetings	90%	95%	95%
No. of members of the public speaking at Member meetings	5	20	3
No. of Member training days provided	100 days	150 days	122 days
% overall satisfaction immediately after internally provided Members' training	90%	70%	85%
No. of attendance by Chair and Vice-Chair at non-civic organised functions	290	350	270
% of events where Chair arrives punctually	100%	100%	100%
% of replies to invitations to the Chair prepared and sent out within 3 working days of the invitation being received	90%	90%	90%
Elections and Electoral Administration			
% of households returning the Electoral Registration Form	99%	99%	99%
Legal Services			
% of written communications responded to within 10 working days	95%	97%	93%
Public Relations			
% increase in press/media coverage of the services/functions undertaken by the Council	n/a	20%	

LESSONS LEARNED

The following highlights some of the lessons learned over the past year:-

Reorganisation of Legal & Democratic Services

Due to the inability to recruit sufficiently experienced officers, it was necessary to carry out a reorganisation of the Division. This led to a 10 month period when the Department was operating without a Divisional Manager and a Principal Legal Officer. This placed a large strain on the Legal Section in particular and the Division in general. To avoid a similar situation happening in the future, it is important to continue to be aware of current market trends and shifts in employment matters, including remuneration, especially in relation to specialised positions.

Land Charges Best Value Performance Indicator - % of standard searches carried out in 10 working days

In order for the Council to achieve the upper quartile in relation to this Indicator, it is necessary for there to be a commitment throughout the Council to ensure that there are sufficient staffing resources to cover periods of absence so that search information can be collated and sent out within the 10 day working period. Without this depth of cover, the Council will fail to reach its full potential in this area.

Absences in the Legal & Democratic Services Division

The Division comprises of 5 highly specialised work areas, staffed by dedicated, professionally qualified officers. Due to our current levels of staffing, if an officer is absent, then the Division struggles to continue to provide the high level of service necessary in these areas. This has been most apparent in the last year in relation to Electoral Services, when a member of staff left the Council, which resulted in a reorganisation and reprioritisation of duties throughout the Division to enable us to roll out the District Council Elections. It is, therefore, necessary to look at how such specialised areas can be sufficiently staffed to ensure the service is constantly available.

U:\JAYNE\Servplan\Monitor0203.doc

FINANCE SERVICES DIVISION

SERVICE PLAN 2002/2003 FINAL REPORT (MARCH 2003)

1. SERVICE DESCRIPTION

The Division provides Accountancy and Exchequer Services for the Council. This covers statutory financial management and control, together with the provision of internal support to service departments.

2. THE YEAR IN CONTEXT

The key opportunities and challenges that faced the Division mainly arose from the Best Value review into Financial Management and Control at the Council (July 2001). Broadly, they focused on the following:

- The procurement and initial implementation of a new Financial Management System.
- Co-ordinating the implementation of a risk management policy statement and strategy.
- Developing regular monitoring of budgets.
- Undertaking a Best Value Review of the Division's services.
- Dealing with new Government legislation surrounding the distribution of resources.

At the same time it should not be forgotten that the Division also took a further step forward in maintaining its improved performance, as follows.

- Brought forward further the closure and preparation of the Council's Statement of Accounts to mid August.
- Achieved an unqualified opinion on those accounts.
- Enhanced consultation arrangements with the public on the council's budgets.

FINANCE SERVICES DIVISION

3. ACHIEVEMENTS

The main tasks (developmental) as set out in the approved service plan that were completed are detailed below.

ACTION	OUTCOMES
Procured new financial management system.	Partner and tools now in place to help develop the delivery of finance services and to embrace the requirements of E-Government.
Developed policy statement and strategy for risk management.	Council's business risks have been formally identified and prioritised. Building blocks in place for this to inform the service and financial planning process.
Revised the method of allocating and reporting the costs of central and departmental expenses.	Costs of central services in particular, should now be more transparent to service users.
Produced the Council's Annual Statement of Accounts earlier and ahead of the Government's Target.	The Council's overall financial position and resources available were known earlier than previously. This enabled decisions to be made on additional spending in the year.
Developed arrangements for collecting sundry income, as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparatory legal work undertaken • More regular reminder notices • Older debt written-off, especially that relating to bankruptcies 	Outstanding debt reduced from around £1m at March 2002, to £700,000 at March 2003. In addition, overall recovery rate on new debt rose from 84% to 88% between years. Furthermore, additional income generated via bad debt relief from customs & excise.