

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIVISION SERVICE PLAN 2003/2004

HALF YEARLY REPORT (SEPTEMBER 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 HALF YEAR IN CONTEXT

During the past 6 months the Division has made substantial progress. Following the appointment of Heather Bell as Economic Development Assistant, we have been more pro-active in a number of areas, including the development of more co-ordinated service delivery with other partners, such as Business Link, emda and other sector representatives. We have marketed the opportunities available to businesses through the Environmental Improvement Scheme and received an excellent take-up.

In respect of Tourism we have continued with our fruitful partnership working with the National Forest Partnership. There are a number of changes taking place in the regional delivery structures, with significant potential impacts onto local authorities, and we have endeavoured to be as involved as possible in the negotiations and discussions on these changes.

We have co-ordinated bids to the Derby & Derbyshire Economic Partnership and have been working with both the DDEP and the LSP as they find their feet.

In respect of the Estates function, we have progressed a number of issues which need resolution, such as leasing arrangements for Village Halls and the space requirements of the different users of the Civic Offices and Depot. Occupancy rates for the commercial portfolio remain at 95%.

The Asset Management Improvement Plan has been rolled out, including a review of committee responsibilities for Asset Management, and the auditing of all the Council's Public Buildings for Disability Access purposes. There is still the opportunity for improvements, particularly in the delivery of maintenance services and Facilities Management and these are being pursued.

The Division continues to provide an effective Footpath Management service on behalf of the County Council.

ACHIEVEMENTS

i.e. completed tasks

Best Value Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work continuing on delivery of Asset Management Review Improvement Plan
Performance Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local property PI's developed and submitted with 2003 AMP. National pPI's reviewed and updated • Continue involvement with Benchmarking clubs
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-ordination of bids to the DDEP • Submission of Expressions of Interest for Footpath leaflet development, and Feasibility Study for 'Swadlincote Regeneration Route'.
E Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism Destination Management System populated with data
Property Transfer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Numerous disposals undertaken including 14-16 Wellwood Road, 18 Bridge Street, Residential development land at Alma Road etc • Disposal of surplus Public Toilets progressed
Business Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marketing of Environmental Improvement Scheme commenced - high degree of interest achieved. • Register of available sites & premises updated • Improved working relationship with Business Link & emda • Links developed with sector representatives such as Connect UK (Creative Industries) • Part of McVities taskforce for job losses in Ashby
Statistics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing a database of statistical information for internal and external enquiries
Community Enterprise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Money Spider Credit Union registration with FSA completed
Tourism Promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successful lobbying of emda re draft strategy - National Forest is now one of the 'special projects' within the strategy • New arrangements developed for annual visitor guides publication - significant saving of staff time • Working with emda & Derbyshire LA's to develop a Destination Management Organisation structure for the County
Footpath Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successful outcome achieved for controversial footpath diversion
Asset Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Asset Management Plan produced • Committee responsibilities reviewed
Estate Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 95% occupancy rate for commercial portfolio • Numerous lettings and sales completed • Professional advice provided to Members, officers and the public

TASKS AT RISK OF NON-DELIVERY DURING THE YEAR

ACTION	EXPLANATION
E-Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement Countryside Access Management System - County Council not installed system to date due to staff sickness

2003/2004 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Best Value Indicator	2002/03 (actual)	2003/04 (target)	2003/04 (estimate)
156 - % of buildings open to the public in which all public areas are suitable and accessible to disabled people	See note 1 below	See note 1 below	See note 1 below
180a (i) - Energy consumption/sq m of local authority operational property, compared with comparable buildings in the UK as a whole - Electricity	67%	67%	67%
180a (i) - Energy consumption/sq m of local authority operational property, compared with comparable buildings in the UK as a whole - Fossil fuels	30%	30%	30%
National Property Performance Indicators			
% gross internal floor-space in condition categories A - D (A is good, D is bad)			
A	9%	9%	9%
B	80%	91%	91%
C	11%	0%	0%
D	0%	0%	0%
Backlog of maintenance by cost expressed as a % in priority levels 1 - 3 and by value (1 is a high priority, 3 is low)			
1	£7050 (4%)	£0	£0
2	£14,935 (8%)	£0	£0
3	£160,235 (88%)	£100,235 (100%)	£100,235 (100%)
Overall average internal rate of return (IRR) for each of the following portfolios (a) Industrial, (b) Retail and (c) Agricultural investment	(a) 7.4% (b) 11.1% (c) n/a	(a) 7.4% (b) 11.1% (c) n/a	(a) 7.4% (b) 11.1% (c) n/a
Total annual management costs per sq. m (GIA) for the property portfolio (only covers strategic management costs)	£2.50	£2.50	£2.50
Revenue running cost per sq. m. for Civic Offices & (Depot)			
Repairs & maintenance costs per sq.m GIA	£5.22 (£2.69)	£5.22 (£2.69)	£5.22 (£2.69)
Energy costs per sq.m GIA	£4.80 (£2.98)	£4.80 (£2.98)	£4.80 (£2.98)
Water costs per sq.m GIA	£0.65 (£1.87)	£0.65 (£1.87)	£0.65 (£1.87)
CO2 emissions in tonnes per sq m	£0.073(0.049)	£0.073(0.049)	£0.073(0.049)
% of projects where outturn falls within +/- 5% of the estimated outturn, expressed as a % of the total number of projects completed in the financial year	60%	100%	100%
% of projects falling within +5% of the estimated timescale, expressed as a % of the total number of projects completed in that financial year	50%	100%	100%
Local property indicators			
Number of lettable commercial units provided by the Council	70	69	69
Number of units occupied as % of total	94% (target was 80%)	95%	95%
Income received for commercial units as a % of under or over performance to target level income level for the year	5% additional income (target was 0%)	0%	0%
No of Facilities whose management has been devolved to the community on long term leases	2	6	6
No of partners located in Council buildings	6	6	6
No of formal consultation exercises with stakeholders per annum	11 between 2000 and 2002	2	2
No of actual changes costed and considered as % of changes requested through consultation exercises	100%	100%	100%
% of tourism enquiries dealt with within 4 working days	95%	95%	95%
Number of media items	No target	12	50

Note 1: The Council previously reported a figure of 60% for this indicator i.e 6 buildings out of 10. However, in practise there are 29 corporate buildings which have public access, including village halls, sports pavilions and toilets. Since the Council calculated its return at 60%, the provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) have come into effect which have increased the standards which should be applied. The Council has now audited all its public buildings to see whether there are issues which need to be dealt with to achieve compliance with the DDA. In all but one cases there are issues. Potentially therefore, the % of buildings complying with current standards is 3.5%. However, it is unclear whether the standard expected under BV156 is the same as under the DDA. As things are rapidly changing, and we are aiming to have undertaken all necessary works to meet the provisions of the DDA by October 2004, it would seem sensible not to report a figure for 2002/03, or a target for 2003/04, but to note that our target for 2004/05 will be 100%.

EMERGING ISSUES

None specific which are not referred to in the service plan

LEGAL & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES DIVISION
SERVICE PLAN 2003/2004
HALF-YEARLY REPORT (SEPTEMBER 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 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 and media relation functions of the Council.

THE HALF-YEAR IN CONTEXT

The main challenges faced by the Division were:-

- **Members' Training** - The need for a structured training programme following the 2003 Elections was recognised and is in the process of being progressed in line with Members' requirements.
- **Customer Satisfaction** - Service departments are to be consulted through focus groups and questionnaires to assess the level of support required.
- **Independent Remuneration Panel** - The appointment of a new Panel was necessary to make recommendations on the level of Members' Allowances by the end of the year, following the resignation of the previous Panel and introduction of new Regulations.

The main opportunities faced were:-

- **Ethical Framework** - Section 66 Regulations relating to local determinations have recently been introduced and we are currently in the process of working with neighbouring authorities to produce a joint procedure for hearings which can be implemented county-wide.
- **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 (CPA)**- The continuous development and revision of the Action Plan to prepare for the Assessment in the new year.
- **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.

ACHIEVEMENTS

Over the past 6 months, the Division's main achievements have been:-

ACTION	OUTCOMES
E-government	The Division has made a significant contribution to the development of the Council's website involving the availability of agendas and Minutes. The Minute Retrieval System is also in the process of being made available throughout the Council.
Elections and Electoral Administration	The annual canvass of over 30,000 properties started in August, with the personal canvass of properties taking place in October and the Register being published on 1st December. New legislation relating to opt-out of electors has been implemented, involving the publication of two versions of the Register instead of the one version previously required.
District Council Elections	The successful undertaking of the 2003 Elections which resulted in the appointment of 36 Members to the Council
Debt Recovery	A review of current sundry debt cases has recently been completed, with appropriate action being undertaken to pursue outstanding matters.
Prosecutions	Successful prosecutions were carried out for a number of offences, including health and safety, environmental health and planning enforcement.
Ombudsman	There have been no complaints over the past 6 months resulting in a finding of maladministration by the Council.
Public Relations	Production of the Core Brief document weekly.
Implementation of Absence Management Policy	The Division's sickness absence for the half year is below the 3% government target for absence.
Members' Induction Programme	4 informative induction sessions introducing Members to the workings of the Council were organised within the days following the Elections
Training for Members	All Members have attended a specific training session on the Planning function. This has been followed by an invitation to attend a variety of courses on the Modern Members Development Programme, run by the East Midlands Regional Local Government Association.
New Ethical Framework	Training on the Members' Code of Conduct, Personal and Prejudicial Interests, Dispensations, the Register of Interests and the quasi-judicial role relating to Regulatory Committees has been provided to all Members. The Monitoring Officer has also provided training for Parish Councillors, which included a discussion on her role and the District Council's Standards Committee in relation to the Code of Conduct, Personal and Prejudicial Interests, together with the Register of Gifts and Hospitality.
Arrangements for Good Corporate Governance	All Members have signed the Declaration of Office, accepting the Code of Conduct and have completed the Register of Interests. <u>Employee Code of Conduct</u> – this Code was produced four years ago and following the introduction of modernising legislation and the CPA regime, it was deemed necessary to review, communicate, implement and monitor the Code. This has involved consideration both by Unions and Members and the revised Code is available on Public Folders. <u>Member/Employee Protocol</u> – The Council did not have a written Protocol, however, the introduction of the modernisation legislation and the CPA regime deemed it necessary that such a Protocol should be produced, communicated, implemented and monitored. The Protocol has been considered by Members and Trade Union Representatives and is available on Public Folders

Standards Committee	The Standards Committee recommended to Full Council which agreed that an Independent Member should chair the Committee and the Constitution has now been amended to reflect this. The profile of the Standards Committee has been raised recently by the production of a leaflet explaining its duties. This will be circulated to the Media, Parish Councils, Area Meetings and placed on the Council's website, as well as being highlighted in the Core Brief.
Constitution	The Constitution has been reviewed in light of Member and Employee changes to the Council since its introduction in 2001. A copy of the updated Constitution is to be circulated to all Members and is available on Public Folders
Independent Remuneration Panel	Three individuals have recently been appointed to the Panel, who will make recommendations to Council before the end of the year in relation to the Members' Allowance Scheme
Land Charges – National Best Value Performance Indicator	During the last six months, the Council have completed all searches within the 10 working day period. This is the first time 100% has been achieved within recent years and is a testament to the hard work and dedication of the Land Charges, Environmental Health and Planning Sections.
Public Relations	The recent appointment of an Administrative Assistant will provide the Public Relations Officer with additional capacity to undertake the drafting of essential Corporate Strategies, including a Media and Public Relations Strategy.
Democratic Services	The servicing of an increasing number of meetings, following the introduction of Alternative Arrangements, has represented an additional workload in the Section. This has led to a new post being approved by Members which will be filled within the following weeks.
VDU Workstation Assessments	The Division has benefited from an assessment by the Health & Safety Officer of the VDU workstations. This has resulted in equipment being purchased to improve the working environment of employees in the Division.
Local Strategic Partnership	Formed to represent the public, private, community and voluntary sectors and involve them in the choices about services and local priorities. The Constitution has been prepared in consultation with Legal Services and from October the LSP will be serviced by Democratic Services.
Section 106 Agreements	A pro-forma has been produced by Legal Services to ensure consistency in the content and nature of the agreement, as well as speeding up the process of drafting. A checklist has also been devised to facilitate the smooth delivery of information from Planning Services to Legal Services.

TASKS AT RISK OF NON-DELIVERY DURING THE YEAR

The following table outlines tasks that may not be delivered during the year:-

ACTION	EXPLANATION
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.
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. It is anticipated that the function will be returned in-house provided there are adequate staffing resources.

2003/2004 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

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

No.	INDICATOR	Actual 2002/03	Target 2003/04	Actual 2003/04
	Best Value Performance Indicators			
	% of standard searches carried out in 10 working days	76	98	100
	Local Performance Indicators			
	Democratic Services			
L.1	% of agendas despatched 5 clear days before meeting	100	100	100
L.2	% of decisions that are recorded accurately in Minutes	99	100	99
L.3	To provide public notice of all Council Meetings and make available agendas for the public	100	100	100
L.4	% of decision/action sheets issued within deadlines	95	100	100
L.5	To make Tree Preservation Orders within 5 working days of receipt	90	95	95
L.6	% of events where the Chair arrives punctually	100	100	100
L.7	% of civic invitations responded to within 5 working days	95	95	95
	Elections and Electoral Administration			
L.8	% of households returning the Electoral Registration Form	99	100	N/A
L.9	Compliance with prescribed election timetables	N/A	100	100
L.10	User satisfaction – lack of election petitions/complaints	N/A	Nil	Nil
	Legal Services			
L.11	% of draft contracts sent out within 15 working days of receipt of proper detailed instructions	85	90	90
L.12	% of draft shop leases sent out to prospective tenants or their solicitors within 15 working days of receipt of proper detailed instructions	85	90	90
L.13	Within 25 working days of receipt of an initial instructing memorandum requesting the initiation of prosecution proceedings, to confirm to the instructing officer that their instructions are adequate or to advise what further information or action is required	85	90	90
L.14	% of written communications responded to within 10 working days	97	97	97
	Public Relations			
L.	Increase press/media coverage of the services/functions undertaken by the Council to average 4 press releases per week while bearing in mind that preventing adverse publicity cannot always be measured	4	5	6

EMERGING ISSUES

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 Public Relations and 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.

FINANCE SERVICES DIVISION

SERVICE PLAN 2003/2004 HALF YEARLY REPORT (SEPTEMBER 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 HALF YEAR IN CONTEXT

The major pieces of work that the Division dealt with during the first part of the year were the initial implementation of the new Financial Management System (FMS) together with the completion of the Best Value Review of Finance Services.

The implementation of the FMS is now gathering pace with training for key users of the system and the initial configuration of the various modules well underway. The system is being implemented on a joint basis with Derbyshire Dales D.C. and the whole system is being provided via South Derbyshire as the host/client authority.

A development plan arising out of the Best Value Review was approved in July 2003, the main cornerstones of which were the FMS and the changes to business process arrangements likely to arise from it.

In addition, the Division also took a further step forward in maintaining its improved performance for the second year in succession, by bringing forward the closure and preparation of the Council's Statement of Accounts to the end of July 2003.

In addition, the Division was required to undertake a detailed review of its Treasury Management Policy during this half year. This task was unplanned and was in response to an issue arising from work required to meet the Comprehensive Performance Assessment.

The result of the task is that the Council now fully embraces the various treasury management practices as part of the professional code of practice in this area.

FINANCE SERVICES DIVISION

3. ACHIEVEMENTS

The main tasks as set out in the approved service plan that have been completed as planned are detailed below.

ACTION	OUTCOMES
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.
Completion of the Best Value Review into the delivery of Finance Services at the Council.	The development plan is intended to provide a good basis to develop services to internal users and to enhance accountability and external reporting arrangements.

4. TASKS AT RISK OF NON DELIVERY DURING THE YEAR

It is not envisaged at this stage, that any tasks will not be completed during the year.

Some activities that were planned to be completed within this half year are still on going, but will now be completed during the second half year. These are as follows:

ACTION	EXPLANATION
Insurance	<p>Currently reviewing claims history for risk management group to target resources in problem areas. Now a key issue due to recent increase in insurance premiums.</p> <p>Currently reviewing method of allocating premiums across Council services to encourage accountability.</p>
Treasury Management	Use of Money Market Funds for temporary investments – independent brokers have been invited to provide more information and how they better current arrangements.

FINANCE SERVICES DIVISION

5. 2002/2003 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

INDICATOR	2002/03 (actual)	2003/04 (target)	2003/04 (actual)
BVPI 8 – the percentage of undisputed invoices for commercial goods and services, which were paid by the Council within 30 days of such, invoices being received.	92.2%	100.0%	97.5% (Estimated)

Notes on Performance Indicators

- a) Although the Division is responsible for improving performance in the payment of invoices, it is reliant upon the co-operation of all other Divisions to process invoices to the payment stage, as quickly as possible.
- b) Improving performance in this area was a key issue arising from the Best Value Review. This is currently being pursued via consultation with other Departments and by developing information for monitoring purposes.
- c) There are currently no local indicators in place. However, several indicators have been recommended from the Best Value Review, and these will be incorporated and implemented within the service plan for 2004/05.

6. EMERGING ISSUES

The main issues that have emerged over recent months are the new prudential system for capital and housing finance, and work that is required on housing stock options.

Although these issues will have more strategic and corporate implications around medium term service and financial planning, the Division will be heavily involved in undertaking detailed work and providing advice for decision making in these areas.

**REVENUE DIVISION
SERVICE PLAN 2003/2004**

HALF YEARLY REPORT (SEPTEMBER 2003)

SERVICE DESCRIPTION

The Division is responsible for the collection and recovery of Council Tax and the National Non-Domestic Rate, the administration of the Housing and Council Tax Benefit Scheme along with the provision of remittance processing facilities and the administration of the Concessionary Fares Scheme.

THE HALF YEAR IN CONTEXT

The following items reflect the main achievements so far during 2003/04:

- Work has progressed, albeit at a slower pace than anticipated, on the introduction of the replacement Revenues and Benefits computer system.
- Membership of the Joint Committee for Revenue and Benefit service provision (to introduce modern computer systems provided through a partnership between local authorities and the service providers) has proved a strong asset during the difficulties that have been experienced with the implementation of these systems.
- The continuing elimination of the benefit backlog and the high performance is a direct result of the joint approach taken by members, management, staff and claimants. We continue to offer a high level of service to our claimants with complete applications being dealt within very short timescales.
- The benefit service leaflets have been developed further in partnership with other authorities and have been awarded the Plain English approved logo.
- The use of debit/credit card payments throughout the authority has continued to increase.
- A fraud awareness campaign has been undertaken using advertisements on local buses.
- The maintenance of performance indicators giving favourable comparison with top performing councils.

ACHIEVEMENTS

ACTION	OUTCOMES
<i>Corporate Key Tasks</i>	
Develop a more outward looking focus for the organisation by forging links with local, regional and national networks	<p>Joint working with the Derbyshire Revenues and Benefits Consortium.</p> <p>Joint working with other Derbyshire and neighbouring authorities to produce information leaflets.</p> <p>Joint working with East Staffordshire BC to improve revenue recovery procedures and progress other joint initiatives.</p>
Improve Morale	<p>The issues covered in this action plan will improve the service that is offered to the customer, thus laying the foundations for a service staff members can be proud of.</p> <p>Replacement computer systems, once introduced, should give staff more control over the workload.</p> <p>They also incorporate "help screens" which will assist in training issues.</p>

Improve Communication	Team Briefings and staff meetings take place each week.
Support and promote team working	Regular staff briefings have involved the staff in the shaping of the future of the service.
Establish training and development plans for employees Work towards investors in people accreditation	All staff within Revenue Services have a training and development plan.
Reduce levels of sickness absence	The sickness absence management policy has been fully implemented
Improve Performance in areas where government has set national targets	Revenue Services performs at, or above, the top quartile in most areas
<i>Departmental Key Tasks</i>	
<i>Revenues and Benefits</i>	
Revenues & Benefits General	Revenue Services performs at, or above, the top quartile in all areas. Existing processing and recovery performance has been maintained. Keeping up to date with new legislation/regulations affecting service to ensure that the legislation is administered correctly and customers are given correct information. The Benefit Information Leaflets have been awarded the Plain English approved logo.
Revenues & Benefits System	Implementation date for Revenues and Benefit System under review by weekly meetings of the Project Board. Work to implementation for new system is ongoing Liasing with other consortium members to look at how the new system will enable closer and more consistent working.
Council Tax Billing – ensure prompt and accurate despatch of bills	Despatch of Council Tax Bills was on time.
Council Tax Recovery – maintain existing recovery rates and improve recovery of previous years debt	Existing recovery levels maintained Recovery enhanced by using bankruptcy/committal provisions as appropriate
Benefits Administration – maintain good processing times	Existing processing times maintained.
Benefits Administration – changes in legislation	Implemented the changes to benefit legislation (tax credits, pension credits, etc)
Benefits Standards	Currently assessing how the Council's service measures to the benefits standards issued by the DWP. Working with other councils to look at ways the Council can increase the number of standards it achieves.
Benefit Fraud Investigation – prepare for changes in procedures.	Half-yearly reports on work of team prepared for review by Finance & Management Committee. Fraud awareness campaign undertaken using advertisements on local buses.

Cash Office	The Debit and credit card payments system continues to deal with an increasing number of payments.
Concessionary Fares	processing applications (including the extension of the scheme to include men over 60) and preparing for the new issue of passes.
<i>Service Key Tasks</i>	
Maintain Performance in all areas	The monitoring of national and local indicators is carried out on a weekly/monthly/quarterly/annual basis as appropriate
Training and development plans for employees	Regular monitoring to keep plans up to date
Subsidy Claims and Statistical Returns	Continue to complete all claims and returns within agreed timescales

TASKS AT RISK OF NON DELIVERY DURING THE YEAR

ACTION	EXPLANATION
Introduction of the Revenue and Benefits computer system	Delays have been experienced with this project and it is now estimated that the system will be introduced in June 2004. This has caused a delay in the implication of some of the joint working initiatives with the other members of the Consortium.
Revenues & Benefits General	Revenue leaflets remain to be reviewed.
Council Tax Billing	On-line Council Tax Billing to be investigated on the introduction of the new computer system along with alternative methods of billing.
Council Tax Recovery	The introduction of telephone recovery has not proceeded beyond two trial sessions.
Implement proposals stemming from the Best Value Review	Most proposals in the review are dependent on the implementation of the new computer system.

2003/2004 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

INDICATOR	2002/03 (actual)	2003/04 (target)	2003/04 (actual)
Best Value PIs			
9- Percentage Council Tax Collected in year	98.57%	98.00%	49.33% to 31 Aug.
10- Percentage NNDR collected in year	99.02%	99.00%	46.65% to 31 Aug.
76- Fraud Strategy	Yes	Yes	Yes
78a- Average number of days to process new benefit claims	14 days	30 days	16 days
78b- Average number of days to process changes of circumstances	4 days	7 days	4 days
78c- Percentage of renewals processed on time	100%	85%	100%

79a- Accuracy of processing calculations)	98.00%	98.00%	99.20%
79b- Accuracy of processing (percentage of overpayments recovered)	Not available due to software limitations		
User Satisfaction Survey	2000/01 only	Currently being undertaken	
Local PIs			
Average number of chargeable Council Tax dwellings per Revenue Assistant	3,850	2,750	3,900
Average number of chargeable NNDR properties per Revenue Assistant	1,125	1,125	1,125
Average time for paying new claims for Council Tax Benefit	14 days	7 days	17 days
Average time for paying new claims for Rent Rebate	14 days	7 days	14 days
Average time for paying new claims for Rent Allowance	24 days	7 days	18 days
Average time for processing changes of circumstances for Council Tax Benefit	4 days	6 days	4 days
Average time for processing changes of circumstances for Rent Rebate	5 days	6 days	3 days
Average time for processing changes of circumstances for Rent Allowance	4 days	6 days	5 days
Average number of claimants per Benefit Assistant	790	750	790
Percentage of claims not processed at the end of the year	0.90%	2.50%	0.32%
Number of transactions processed per cashier (per annum)	18,525	19,500	Est: 19,000

EMERGING ISSUES

The major area of development is the implementation of the new Revenue and Benefit computer system. This involves working with four other authorities and a private sector provider requiring a wide range of skills to achieve the desired outcome. The project has met a number of delays, and is now on course to deliver the new system in June 2004. However, there are a number of challenges yet to be met, not at least the updating of current systems to meeting legislation changes and maintaining a service to our customers during the period of conversion. The amount of resource required to manage the project should not be under-estimated and a sharp focus on the project has to be maintained at all times.

The recent Local Government Act includes provisions to vary the discount on Council Tax awarded on second homes and long-term empty properties as well as giving local authorities discretion to vary discounts and exemptions. These issues will form the subject of an early committee report.

The implementation of the amendments to Housing and Council Tax Benefit due to the introduction of Pension Credits is taking place and preparations are also being made for the introduction of the Benefit Verification Framework.

A considerable amount of work is being undertaken in connection with the assessment from the Benefit Fraud Inspectorate as part of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment.

