

13 June 2006

Our Ref. PARC 6/06

Your ref:

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To: The Chairman and Members of the Performance, Audit and Review Committee:

Councillors: J. M. Cunningham (Chairman), D. Miller (Vice-Chairman), A.F. Hunter, Marilyn Kirkland, David Levett, Bernard Lovewell, L. McNamara, L.W. Miller, Diane Proudlove, Deepak Sangha, Derek Sheard, Mrs C.P.A. Strong and M.E. Weeks.

Substitutes: (Councillor Liz Beardwell)

You are invited to attend a meeting of the

PERFORMANCE, AUDIT AND REVIEW COMMITTEE

to be held in

**COMMITTEE ROOM 1,
COUNCIL OFFICES, GERNON ROAD,
LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY**

on

22 JUNE 2006

at

7.30 p.m.

Yours sincerely,



David Miley
Democratic Services Manager

AGENDA
PART 1

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1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE	-
2. MINUTES To take as read and approve as a true record the Minutes of the meetings held on 25 May 2006.	-
3. NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS Members should notify the Chairman of other business which they wish to be discussed by the Committee at the end of the business set out in the agenda. They must state the circumstances which they consider justify the business being considered as a matter of urgency. The Chairman will decide whether the item(s) raised will be considered.	-
4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST To receive from Members of the Committee any declarations of interest in respect of any business set out in the agenda. Members should either declare a prejudicial or personal interest and are required to notify the Chairman of the nature of any interest declared. Members declaring a prejudicial interest should leave the room and not seek to influence the decision during that particular item of business. Also to receive advice from any Member of this Committee concerning a party whip direction.	-
5. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION To receive petitions, comments and questions from members of the public. At the time of producing the agenda none have been received. Any other public participation requests received within the agreed time will be notified to Members as soon as practicable.	-
6. PERFORMANCE, AUDIT AND REVIEW COMMITTEE - WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2006-2007 STRATEGIC DIRECTOR OF CUSTOMER SERVICES.	1
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	REPORT OF THE HEAD OF POLICY, PARTNERSHIPS AND PERFORMANCE <i>To allow PARC review the year-end performance results for the period April 2005 to March 2006.</i>	
14.	BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE PLAN (BVPP) 2006-07	173
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	REPORT OF THE HEAD OF POLICY, PARTNERSHIPS AND PERFORMANCE <i>To update PARC on the current progress in meeting the targets for the High Level Performance Indicators for April 2006.</i>	

Dates of future meetings of PARC in 2006/07:

20 July 2006
7 September 2006
12 October 2006
7 December 2006
25 January 2007
22 March 2007
19 April 2007

PERFORMANCE AUDIT AND REVIEW COMMITTEE
22nd June 2006

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

AGENDA ITEM No.

6

**TITLE OF REPORT: PERFORMANCE, AUDIT & REVIEW COMMITTEE – WORK
PROGRAMME 2006/7**

REPORT OF THE STRATEGIC DIRECTOR CUSTOMER SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report asks Performance, Audit & Review Committee (PARC) to agree an outline work programme for its work during 2006/7 in order to ensure:
- the Committee's business reflects the Terms of Reference and that these are effectively discharged;
 - that a clear direction is agreed in order to co-ordinate PARC's work with that of the Scrutiny Committee, and;
 - arrangements to assist in the development of PARC's function, the support needed for Committee business can be arranged at an early stage.
- 1.2 The report will need to be considered in the context of the planning workshop arranged for PARC on 20th June 2006. A verbal update on the workshop will be provided for Members who are unable to attend.
- 1.3 The work programme, once agreed, will be used to shape the Committee's agenda plan.

2. FORWARD PLAN

- 2.1 This Report does not recommend a key decision and has not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Terms of Reference for PARC are attached at Appendix A for information.
- 3.2 A draft work programme, attached at Appendix B, has been prepared for consideration pending the outcome of the Members to the Committee workshop.

3.3 Section 4 below details the main suggested areas of PARC's work programme together with a commentary on the likely constituent elements as a starting point for the Committee's discussions.

4. PERFORMANCE, AUDIT AND REVIEW COMMITTEE DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME 2004/2005

4.1 It is envisaged that the work programme will provide the overall direction for the work of PARC during 2006/7, whilst making provision for ad hoc policy development, and the coordination of scrutiny arrangements through the roles of PARC and the Scrutiny Committee. In accordance with previous practice the anticipated work programme has been discussed by the Chairmen of PARC and Scrutiny Committee in order to minimise duplication.

4.2 As the work of PARC had broadened in recent years to include an audit committee function, performance management oversight etc it is suggested that Committee may once again wish to consider establishing sub groups to deal with more detailed technical work such as the review of performance measures or specific policy development.

4.3 The sections below detail the five suggested strands of PARC's work for 2006/7.

Performance

4.4 Monitoring, reviewing and learning from information in the Council's Performance Management System will allow PARC to:

- Focus on under performing areas
- Learn from and disseminate the best practice from areas of good performance
- Monitor the overall performance of the council on behalf of Cabinet

4.5 The principal constituent performance reports in this category are suggested as:

Report	Frequency
Corporate Performance Reports	4 per year
Ad-hoc Performance reports e.g. telephone call handling	4 per year
Target Setting Challenge/Approval	2 per year
Proposed High Level Indicators	1 per year
High Level Performance Reports	8 per year
Corporate Plan monitoring (including CPA Improvement Plan)	4 per year
Service & Financial Planning	3 per year

Best Value/CPA/Improvement Planning
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4.6 The Committee will need to consider a revised programme for Fundamental Service Reviews, broadly following the priority improvement actions arising from CPA inspection and other factors. Elements of Comprehensive Performance Assessment – the CPA Improvement Plan, and the continued development of the CPA framework will continue to be monitored by the Committee. FSR scoping and improvement reports will also continue throughout the year.

4.7 The principal elements suggested for inclusion in this category are:

Report	Frequency
FSR Programme	1 per year
Best Value Performance Plan	1 per year
Best Value Performance Plan Summary	1 per year
Fundamental Service Review Improvement Plans – Monitoring Reports & FSR programme	1 per year
Fundamental Service Review Scope Reports	As required
CPA Improvement Plan	Bi-monthly (until included in Corporate Plan)
Access to Services FSR	4 per year

Policy & Review

4.8 To identify specific action required to address particular policy issues and in response to specific external inspection and audit reports. . The format of these 'reports' could remain flexible in order to consider using a workshop format, enabling more effective participation (and thereby informing Cabinet of the committee's considerations) and their role as an ongoing development opportunity for members?

Report	Frequency
Policy Development	6 per year
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnerships/Governance/Scrutiny • Future CPA arrangements • Local Government Re-organisation 	
Annual Report	1 per year

References

- 4.9 To provide the opportunity to co-ordinate activity with the work of other committees, Cabinet and officers.

Report	Frequency
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References from and to Cabinet, portfolio holders and committees	As required
Strategic Objectives – to receive a report from the Leader of the Council's priorities for the coming year and its performance in the previous year	1 per year

Audit & Risk

- 4.10 To provide the Committee with an independent and objective opinion on NHDC's control environment comprising risk management, control and governance which indicates how successfully the organisation is achieving its objectives.
- 4.11 Under the risk management strategy this Committee has the role of overseeing the effective management of risk by officers. In effect this means agreement of the Strategy, framework and process put forward by officers – as well as the priorities for action. They will also review the effectiveness of risk management. The quarterly risk management reports support this function.
- 4.11 The CPA Use of Resources element relating to internal control requires that *“There is a specific member group (such as an audit sub-committee or member panel) which has audit and governance issues as the principal responsibility in its terms of reference, and that the member group provides effective leadership on audit and governance issues. It is proactive and has a forward-looking programme of meetings and agenda items to ensure comprehensive coverage of all responsibilities in relation to the internal control environment”*. This may require additional reporting to the 'audit committee'. An officer review of the appropriate type of 'audit committee' will report on its findings in July this year.

Report	Frequency
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Progress reports from Audit and Consultancy Services	3 per year (6, 9 & 12 months) Including Annual report
Annual Internal Audit plan	1 per year
Audit and Consultancy Services and external audit recommendations – monitoring reports	As required
Risk management reports	4 per year (quarterly) Including Annual report
External audit reports	As required
External auditor's annual Audit and Inspection plan	1 per year

External auditor's annual Audit and inspection letter	1 per year
Corporate response to external auditor's report on the annual Audit and inspection letter	1 per year
External audit reports	As required
Corporate Governance activities	Bi-annual

- 4.12 Both audit and risk awareness training is required by way of structured sessions, these may need to be incorporated within the committee meeting at some point(s) during the year.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 An agenda plan for PARC will ensure that the Committee acts in a way, which is consistent with the duly agreed Terms of Reference for the Committee.

6. FINANCIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no direct financial or human resource implications arising from this report other than those relating to PARC's role in assisting the Council and Cabinet in the development of its budget and policy framework as detailed in the Terms of Reference.

7. CONSULTATION WITH EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS AND WARD MEMBERS (if appropriate)

- 7.1 Consultation has taken place with the Chairman and Vice Chairman in addition to the outgoing Chairman and Vice Chairman, Chairman of Scrutiny Committee and Vice Chairman.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 That PARC consider the draft work programme attached as Appendix B and, subject to this, agree the programme for 2006/7.

9. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 9.1 The recommendation contained within paragraph 8.1 is made in accordance with the Council's agreed Terms of Reference for PARC and will ensure that the Committee's agenda plan is consistent with them.

10. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

10.1 N/A

11. APPENDICES

11.1 Appendix A: Performance, Audit & Review Committee Terms of Reference

11.2 Appendix B: Performance, Audit & Review Committee Draft work programme 2005/6 and Draft Work Programme 2006/7.

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PERFORMANCE, AUDIT AND REVIEW COMMITTEE -TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Performance, Audit and Review Committee will:

1. Assist the Council and the Cabinet in the development of its budget and policy framework by in depth analysis of policy issues;
2. Conduct research, community and other consultation in the analysis of policy issues and possible options;
3. Consider and implement mechanisms to encourage and enhance community participation in the development of policy options;
4. Question Members of the Cabinet and/or Committees and officers about their views on issues and proposals affecting the area;
5. Review and scrutinise the performance of other public bodies in the area and invite reports from them by requesting them to address the Committee and local people about their activities and performance;
6. Monitor the Council's Best Value Performance Plan;
7. Conduct Best Value reviews;
8. To receive reports from the Leader at its first meeting after each annual council meeting on the Cabinet's priorities for the coming year and its performance in the previous year;
9. To put in place a system to ensure that referrals from itself and the Scrutiny Committee to the Cabinet, by way of a report for reconsideration, are managed efficiently and do not exceed any limits set out in this Constitution;
10. In the event of reports to the Cabinet exceeding such limits, or becoming unmanageable in number to advise the Cabinet about the priority of referrals made;
11. Fulfil the functions of an Audit and Risk Committee.
 - a) Receive and consider scheduled progress reports from Internal Audit and from Risk Manager;
 - b) Receive and consider the risk register and risk management reports;
 - c) Receive and consider all external audit reports;
 - d) Receive and consider all external auditor's annual plan and audit letter;
 - e) Receive, consider and respond in writing to the external auditor's report on the Authority's accounts;
 - f) Receive bi-annual progress reports regarding the Council's Corporate Governance activities;
 - g) Monitor the implementation of internal and external audit recommendations;
 - h) Meet in Spring, Summer and Winter solely to address Audit and Risk Committee functions.

Membership, Quorum and Meetings

The Performance, Audit and Review Committee will consist of 12 members of the Council, who are not Cabinet members. The Committee shall be politically balanced. The quorum for meetings of the Committee shall be three. In the event of a tie the Chairman will have a casting vote.

There will be ten timetabled meetings of the Committee per annum.

DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME

PERFORMANCE, AUDIT & REVIEW COMMITTEE 2005/2006 & 2006/2007

Report	2005/6	2006/7
Performance		
Corporate Performance Reports	4 per year	4 per year
Ad-hoc Performance reports e.g. telephone call handling	4 per year	4 per year
Target Setting Challenge/Approval	2 per year	2 per year
Proposed High Level Indicators	1 per year	1 per year
High Level Performance Reports	8 per year	8 per year
Corporate Plan Monitoring (inc CPA Imp Plan)	4 per year	4 per year
Service & Financial Planning	3 per year	3 per year
Best Value/CPA/Improvement Planning		
FSR Programme	1 per year	1 per year
Best Value Performance Plan	1 per year	1 per year
Best Value Performance Plan Summary	1 per year	1 per year
Fundamental Service Review Improvement Plans – Monitoring Reports & FSR programme	1 per year	1 per year
Fundamental Service Review Scope Reports	As required	As required
CPA Improvement Plan	Bi-monthly (until included in Corporate Plan)	Bi-monthly (until included in Corporate Plan)
Access to Services FSR	4 per year	4 per year
Policy & Review		
Policy Development	2 per year	6 per year
Partnerships/Governance/Scrutiny		
Future CPA Arrangements		
Local Government Reorganisation		
Annual Report	1 per year	1 per year
References etc		
References from and to Cabinet, portfolio holders and committees	As required	As required
Strategic Objectives – to receive a report from the Leader of the Council's priorities for the coming year and it's performance in the previous year	1 per year	1 per year

Audit & Risk

Progress reports from Audit and Consultancy Services	3 per year	3 per year (6, 9 & 12 months) Including Annual report
Annual Internal Audit plan	N/A	1 per year
Audit and Consultancy Services and external audit recommendations – monitoring reports	As Required	As required
Risk management reports	4 per year	4 per year (quarterly) Including Annual report
External audit reports	N/A	As required
External auditor's annual Audit and Inspection plan	N/A	1 per year
External auditor's annual Audit and inspection letter	1 per year	1 per year
Corporate response to external auditor's report on the annual Audit and inspection letter	1 per year	1 per year
External audit reports	As required	As required
Corporate Governance activities	Bi-annual	Bi-annual

PART 1* PUBLIC DOCUMENT

AGENDA ITEM No.

7

TITLE OF REPORT: AUDIT AND INSPECTION PLAN

The report from the Audit Commission is overleaf.

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PART 1* PUBLIC DOCUMENT	AGENDA ITEM No.
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TITLE OF REPORT: ANNUAL AUDIT LETTER FOR 2004-2005

REPORT FROM THE AUDIT COMMISSION

This item will be presented on an oral format by the Audit Commission.

The Annual Letter from the Audit Commission is attached.

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Annual Audit and Inspection Letter

North Hertfordshire District Council

Audit 2004/2005

External audit is an essential element in the process of accountability for public money and makes an important contribution to the stewardship of public resources and the corporate governance of public services.

Audit in the public sector is underpinned by three fundamental principles.

- Auditors are appointed independently from the bodies being audited.
- The scope of auditors' work is extended to cover not only the audit of financial statements but also value for money and the conduct of public business.
- Auditors may report aspects of their work widely to the public and other key stakeholders.

The duties and powers of auditors appointed by the Audit Commission are set out in the Audit Commission Act 1998, the Local Government Act 1999 and the Commission's statutory Code of Audit Practice. Under the Code of Audit Practice, appointed auditors are also required to comply with the current professional standards issued by the independent Auditing Practices Board.

Appointed auditors act quite separately from the Commission and in meeting their statutory responsibilities are required to exercise their professional judgement independently of both the Commission and the audited body.

Status of our reports to the Council

The Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies issued by the Audit Commission explains the respective responsibilities of auditors and of the audited body. Reports prepared by appointed auditors are addressed to members or officers. They are prepared for the sole use of the audited body. Auditors accept no responsibility to:

- any member or officer in their individual capacity; or
- any third party.

Copies of this report

If you require further copies of this report, or a copy in large print, in Braille, on tape, or in a language other than English, please call 0845 056 0566.

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For further information on the work of the Commission please contact:

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Key messages

Council performance

- 1 The Council has made progress in implementing its CPA Improvement Plan, which addressed the areas for improvement identified in the Council's Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) in 2004. Further work is required to embed and develop the progress already made. Whilst the Council's performance has improved, as measured by performance indicators, this performance improvement has not been uniform and opportunities remain for further improvement.
- 2 Our inspection of the Council's planning service, reported in February 2006, assessed the Council's performance in this area as 'fair' with promising prospects for improvement.
- 3 Our use of resources assessment assessed the Council's arrangements in place for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness from its use of resources as being adequate (a score of 2 out of a possible 4).

The accounts

- 4 An unqualified opinion was issued on the accounts on 31 October 2005.
- 5 As part of the 'whole of government accounts' initiative, the accounts deadline will again move forward by one month this year and the Council needs to continue to plan for this.

Financial position

- 6 The Council reported an in-year surplus of £528,000 increasing the general fund balance to £3.6 million. The balance represents just over 6 per cent of gross expenditure and 15 per cent of net operating expenditure. Earmarked reserves decreased by £1.6 million from £7.1 million to £5.5 million, mainly due to the application of funds to finance capital expenditure. The Council remained within its budget in 2004/05.

Other accounts and governance issues

- 7 The Council's main financial systems are well-established, although some weaknesses have been identified in the payroll system. There were no matters arising from our work on the Council's arrangements for ensuring that proper systems of internal financial control are in place that need to be reported to councillors.

Grant claims

- 8 At the time of writing, the 2004/05 housing benefits grant return audit was still ongoing as the initial testing revealed a large number of errors which resulted in additional audit tests being necessary. The council recruited consultants to perform the additional work. We have drafted a qualification letter which we are in the process of agreeing with council staff. We are awaiting a revised claim from the council.

Action needed by the Council

- 9 The Council should:
 - continue to plan for the brought forward 'whole of government account's deadlines';
 - ensure that the payroll module in the new HR system addresses the weaknesses highlighted by Internal Audit;
 - prepare an action plan to address the areas for improvement identified from our use of resources assessment;
 - build on the progress already made in relation to improvement planning and implementation made since CPA; and
 - carry out early testing on the 2005/06 Benefits return before we commence our audit work, to assess if errors identified in 2004/05 are still occurring.

Council performance

The Council has made progress in implementing its CPA Improvement Plan, which addressed the areas for improvement identified in the Council's Comprehensive Performance Assessment in 2004. Further work is required to embed and develop the progress already made. Whilst the Council's performance has improved, as measured by performance indicators, this performance improvement has not been uniform and opportunities remain for further improvement.

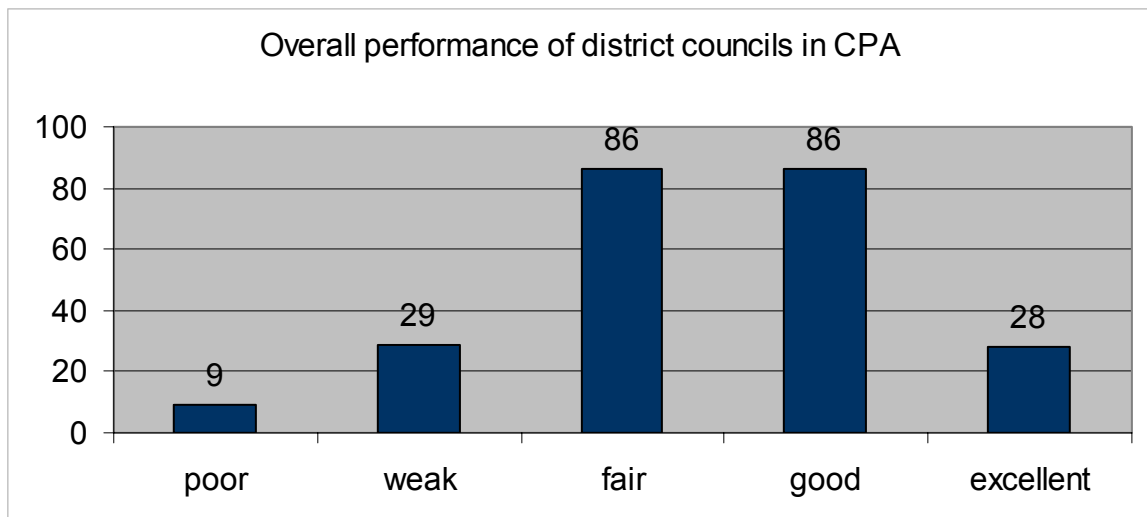
Our inspection of the Council's planning service, reported in February 2006, assessed the Council's performance in this area as 'fair' with promising prospects for improvement.

Direction of travel report

- 10 North Hertfordshire DC was assessed as 'fair' in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment carried out in 2004. These assessments have now been completed in all district councils with the following results.

Figure 1 Overall performance of district councils in CPA

Three times as many district councils are rated good or excellent than poor or weak



Source: Audit Commission

- 11 The Council has made overall progress with its performance and capacity over the past two years, but this progress has not been uniform. Fifty-one per cent of 2004/05 local service performance indicators have improved since 2002/03. There have been improvements in capacity in most aspects of interactions, people and housing benefits. In 2004/05, 36 per cent of local service performance indicators (PIs) were in the best quartile of national performance and 22 per cent were in the worst quartile.

Progress with the CPA improvement plan

Ambition

- 12 The Council has made progress with clarifying its ambitions. It has produced a Corporate Plan for 2005 to 2015. This is aligned to the Community Strategy for the district and all partners in the Local Strategic Partnership have signed up to an agreed vision which focuses on making North Hertfordshire a vibrant place in which to live, work and prosper. The Corporate Plan sets out a mission for the Council, which recognises the Community leadership role and the necessity of working collaboratively with partners to deliver the vision for the district. The plan also sets out six strategic priorities and lists specific actions and some indicative measures of success. It is a short but broad-ranging plan and encompasses many objectives and ongoing activities. It reflects the Council's aims of working in partnership with others to improve North Hertfordshire, and is not therefore wholly focussed on the responsibilities of the district council. The measures of success need to be further developed to ensure they are clear and achievable.

Prioritisation

- 13 The strategic objectives in the Corporate Plan are broad. Actions are split into the short, medium and longer term but there is no explicit prioritisation and non-priorities are not identified. Some managers are concerned that resources do not match such a broad agenda. For 2004-05 the revenue and capital budget-setting process and capital programme does not incorporate explicit policy objectives although financial resources are allocated according to corporate and service priorities. We are aware from subsequent work that a scoring mechanism has been introduced to formalise this process.

Capacity

- 14 The Council has now made progress with some major projects that will increase corporate capacity and address existing weaknesses, such as e-delivery. It is now implementing its access to services review. It has selected a strategic IT partner and its Customer Contact Centre is due for completion in early 2006. Investment has been made in housing systems to achieve affordable housing targets.
- 15 There is overall improvement in performance indicators relating to staff capacity, for example sickness levels, numbers of early retirements, and the number of employees with a disability. However, the Council's performance is not improving in other diversity indicators, such as gender and minority ethnic staff equality.

Performance management

- 16 A strategic approach to performance management is now in place. Thirteen 'high level' performance indicators are being monitored by PARC quarterly. A traffic light system is being used and resource recovery plans are developed for red/failing performance indicators. Action is being identified and taken to improve performance on a strategic basis. Benchmarking takes place at service level but steps should be taken to develop a corporate approach.

Future plans

- 17 A Corporate Plan 2005 to 2015 has been adopted. This is aligned to the Community Strategy and contains the Council's mission 'to work collaboratively with our partners and communities to deliver the vision for the district of North Hertfordshire'. It is underpinned by six strategic objectives, short, medium and long-term actions and measures of success. More detailed actions are set out in service plans.
- 18 There has been a practical and purposeful approach to development of a local development framework (LDF). The local plan and much of the supplementary planning guidance is dated. Aware of this, the Council has progressed work on the LDF as a priority. A local development scheme was agreed in March 2005. Other key LDF documents have recently been issued for consultation.

The Council's performance

- 19 The Council has made overall progress with its performance and capacity over the past two years. However, this has not been uniform. Further work is required to embed and develop the progress already made. Fifty-one per cent of 2004/05 local service performance indicators have improved since 2002/03. There have been improvements in capacity in most aspects of interactions, people and housing benefits. In 2004/05, 36 per cent of local service performance indicators were in the best quartile of national performance and 22 per cent were in the worst quartile.
- 20 Six of the 12 performance indicators that were in the lowest quartile in 2002/03 have improved, although only one (housing searches) has improved its relative (quartile) position. Seven remain in the lowest quartile.
- 21 There have been significant improvements in regulatory service procedures (development control and environmental health) although planning performance indicators remain in the lowest quartile of national performance. (2004/05 data).
- 22 Environment (waste) services have improved in some but not all aspects. Kerbside recycling services have been extended and the percentage of recycled waste has increased from 12 per cent to 20 per cent. However, the amount of waste collected has risen fast and is now in the lowest quartile. (2004/05 data).

- 23 The Council does not have a council housing stock but it still has housing responsibilities. Performance in housing services has shown little improvement. The number of families in bed and breakfast accommodation has been reduced to nil. Performance in reducing the percentage of unfit dwellings and homes remaining vacant are not improving. No progress has been reported in providing any domestic violence refuge places although the Council supports refuge places outside the district in partnership with Stevenage Borough Council.
- 24 There has been a slight improvement in cultural services. Visits to museums have increased, and satisfaction with parks has improved, but other satisfaction performance indicators are unchanged (based on 2003/04 indicators).

Other reviews of the Council's performance

Planning inspection

We have assessed the Council's planning service as a 'fair' service. Our inspection showed that planning application performance had improved significantly, and that the service has promising prospects for improvement. A detailed report was published in February 2006 and can be found on the Audit Commission's website.

- 25 The planning service provided by North Hertfordshire District Council has been assessed as 'fair'. A core of experienced planning officers has enabled the Council to maintain the quality of its planning advice and policy development. As a result the character of the district is being preserved and enhanced, while housing provision is increasing.
- 26 The speed of determining planning applications has improved and is matching, or exceeding the interim targets set for the Council by Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) for the three different categories of planning applications. However these targets are below the national standards and are below the level of performance that is being achieved by some other councils. When compared nationally the Council remained in the lowest quartile for two out of the three categories of applications for the latest full year for which national comparisons can be made (2004/05).
- 27 There are promising prospects for improvement due to the strengthened capacity that has been developed within the service and due to the sustained improvement being achieved during the first half of 2005/06. There is now a full complement of staff. Action taken to develop and retain staff includes training graduates to become qualified planners. New career grades posts have been established and terms and conditions are competitive. The experience of officers who have recently retired or who are due to retire in the next few years is being harnessed through a training programme for new and less experienced planners. This is ensuring effective transfer of knowledge.
- 28 Financial resources are allocated according to corporate and service priorities. This approach ensures that service levels will be maintained and priority issues addressed.

- 29 The track record of performance has been mixed. Although the general trajectory is one of improvement, the rate of improvement has not been consistent across all areas, and has not been sufficient to significantly improve the Council's comparative performance when considered against the achievements of other councils in key areas, such as planning and building control applications handling.
- 30 Weaknesses remain in performance management. There is clarity regarding the main issues to be addressed. However, it is not clear to some staff what individual roles they play in achieving service and corporate objectives.

User focus and diversity

- 31 Included in our 2004/05 Audit and Inspection Plan was a project to review user focus and diversity. This was a joint review across Hertfordshire and was a light-touch assessment based primarily on self-assessment. We facilitated a workshop and the Council assessed itself with a score of 3 (strengths outweighed weaknesses).
- 32 Strengths highlighted in the Council's self-assessment, were in the areas of:
- consultation; specifically on Hitchin Town Centre and Royston Leisure Centre;
 - partnership working; specifically the LSP and Community Safety; and
 - satisfaction ratings - specifically the recycling service and how well-informed the public feels about the Council and its services.
- 33 Development was needed in:
- ensuring views of non-users are captured;
 - making consultation 'smarter', ie more joint consultation and use of intranet; and
 - making approach to change more consistent.
- 34 Overall, we agreed with the Council's self-assessment, although we concluded that it had a lot of detail but with limited evidence of outcomes. From this work we would suggest that the council prioritises key actions in this area and measures the impact of those actions.

e-government

- 35 Our planned review of e-government at the Council was postponed and was carried forward to our 2005/06 Audit Plan. The work started in April 2006.

Accounts and governance

Audit of 2004/05 accounts

We gave an unqualified opinion on the Council's accounts on 31 October 2005.

As part of the 'whole of government accounts' initiative, the accounts deadline will again move forward by one month next year and the Council needs to continue to plan for this.

Matters arising from the final accounts audit

- 36 The published accounts are an essential means by which the Council reports its stewardship of the public funds at its disposal and its financial performance in the use of those resources. Councillors approved the accounts on 26 July 2005.
- 37 Our audit of the accounts covers a review of the Council's core financial processes, and the opinion audit.
- 38 Our work on the Council's core financial processes, which takes place earlier in the year at our interim audit visit, involved a review of the main accounting system, budgetary control procedures and final accounts closedown procedures. Apart from some delays on bank reconciliations in the early part of the year, we found no significant issues from our audit of the main accounting system, budgetary control and final accounts closedown procedures.
- 39 From our work on the opinion audit we identified the following.
 - There were some long outstanding items on year end reconciliations including a difference of £134,000 between the NNDR system and the ledger which had been identified as relating to 2002/03.
 - £1.15 million of Council Tax debt was more than three years old and the bad debt provision for Council Tax was only £630,000. The Council is currently reviewing the method of calculating the bad debt provisions for both Council Tax and NNDR.
- 40 There were no other significant issues identified during the audit of accounts and we gave an unqualified opinion on the Council's accounts on 31 October 2005.

Report to those with responsibility for governance in the Council

- 41 We are required by professional standards to report to those charged with governance, in this case to the Performance, Audit and Review Committee (PARC), certain matters before we give an opinion on the financial statements. There were no matters arising that required such a report to be issued.

Financial standing

- 42 The Council reported an in-year surplus for 2004-05 of £528,000 increasing the general fund balance to £3.6 million. The balance represents just over 6 per cent of gross expenditure and 15 per cent of net operating expenditure. Earmarked reserves fell from £7.1 million to £5.5 million, mainly due to the application of funds to finance capital expenditure. The Council remained within its budget in 2004/05.

General fund spending and balances

- 43 The revised budget for 2004/05 anticipated net expenditure of £15.5 million, with a net contribution from reserves of £0.24 million. The estimated year-end general fund balance was £2.25 million.
- 44 The actual general fund balance at 31 March 2005 was £3.6 million. The increase of £1.35 million was mainly due to some schemes and projects being carried forward where the budget was not fully spent.
- 45 Long-term borrowing reduced from £7.5 million to £6.6 million.
- 46 The table below shows the level of revenue reserves available to the Council at 31 March 2005 compared to previous years.

Table 1 Revenue reserves available to the Council

	31 March 2005 £ million	31 March 2004 £ million	31 March 2003 £ million
General fund balance	3.6	3.1	4.1
Earmarked reserves	5.5	7.2	2.4
HRA reserve	0	0	3.5
Total	9.1	10.3	10.0

Capital programme

- 47 Total capital expenditure in the 2004/05 year was £9.2 million, compared with a budget of £14.8 million (revised budget £11.4 million). The capital expenditure excluding accruals was funded by the following.

Table 2 Funding of capital programme

Source of finance	£ million
Capital receipts	6.4
Borrowing	0.0
Capital grant	0.2
External Contributions	2.0
Total	8.6

Income collection and arrears

- 48 The arrears position on the Collection Fund is as follows.

Table 3 Collection fund arrears position

Collection fund arrears	31 March 2005 £000	31 March 2004 £000
NNDR (Rates) arrears	1,900	2,200
NNDR provision for bad debts	405	495
Council tax arrears	3,200	3,600
Council tax provision for bad debts	630	646

- 49 The Council is currently reviewing the method of calculating the bad debt provisions for both Council Tax and NNDR.

Pensions fund deficit

- 50 The net pension fund deficit as at 31 March 2005 was £29.3 million. The primary cause of the change from an estimated net deficit of £15.2 million at 31 March 2004 is an increase in scheme liabilities. The deficit will be discharged as people retire in future years and will be offset by future contributions. Any change in asset values in the equity markets or changes to actuarial assumptions will change the value of the fund.

Trading services

- 51 The Council's trading services recorded an overall loss of £502,000 in 2004/05. The trading service making the biggest loss in 2004/05 was leisure services, with a loss of £470,000 in addition to the subsidy already given.

2005/06 position

- 52** The third quarter monitoring report for 2005/06 projected a net expenditure of £16.6 million. The latest projected net expenditure is £16.2 million. The projected General Fund Balance will reduce from £3.6 million at 31 March 2005 to £2.5 million at 31 March 2006. Planned use of balances of £2.2 million is projected, less a contribution from the LSVT reserve of £567,000.
- 53** Earmarked reserves are expected to decrease slightly from £5.5 million as at 31 March 2005 to £5.1 million as at 31 March 2006.

Systems of internal financial control

The Council's main financial systems are well-established, although some weaknesses were identified in the payroll system. There were no other matters arising from our work on the Council's arrangements for ensuring proper systems of internal financial control are in place that need to be reported to councillors.

Internal Audit

- 54 Internal Audit plays an important role in reviewing the effectiveness of controls in the Council's key financial systems.
- 55 We have an agreed protocol with Internal Audit that sets out how we will co-operate to ensure the Council receives best value from its total audit resource. We reviewed a sample of their files at our interim visit. Where there was coverage of 2004/05 transactions, we found that we could place reliance on the work.
- 56 There will be more opportunity to work closely with Internal Audit on the audit of grant claims in future years. We have shared good practice guidance with Internal Audit - this details how the work of Internal Audit on grant claims can reduce the amount of testing that external audit will need to do.
- 57 Internal Audit work using data extracted from the Council's payroll system continued to raise concerns about the integrity of data held on this system. The Council is to acquire a replacement HR system, incorporating a new payroll module. The implementation process should address the current weaknesses.

Statement of Internal Control

- 58 Within the statement of accounts approved by members is a Statement of Internal Control (SIC). The SIC informs the user of the accounts how robust the Council's systems of internal control are. It sets out the framework that comprises the system of internal financial control, and the work undertaken by Internal Audit, other managers and external audit in reviewing the effectiveness of the system of internal financial control. In addition, the SIC comments on areas of weakness, and action taken by the Council to address these weaknesses.
- 59 The SIC is signed by the Chief Executive as Head of Paid Service and by the Leader of the Council. We consider and review relevant evidence contained in minutes, standing orders, standing financial instructions, BVPP/corporate plans and relevant internal audit work. We review whether the statement on internal control reflects compliance with CIPFA guidance and we report if the SIC is misleading or inconsistent with other information we are aware of from my audit of the financial statements.
- 60 The SIC was consistent with our cumulative audit knowledge.

- 61 We concluded that as part of the organisational restructuring and future reporting roles for Internal Audit ,the Council needed to develop its own arrangements for assessing internal control and effectiveness throughout the year driven by the monitoring officer and use the role of Internal Audit to independently assess adequacy of statements and arrangements. It was important for the Council to self-assess arrangements in terms of requirements under use of resources/CPA and it is good practice in developing and monitoring corporate governance, performance management and risk management arrangements. There was a risk that Internal Audit was not sufficiently independent to assess adequacy of arrangements when they are a key player in the production of the statement.

Risk management

- 62 The Council continues to build upon the risk management strategy that was introduced at the end of 2002/03 and has provided reports on performance to PARC and cabinet.
- 63 Work on a business continuity strategy has commenced. Key service areas have been identified, a priority order for service continuity established, a master continuity plan for key services to use to develop specific business continuity plans and a business continuity strategy circulated for consultation. To conclude the project, managers of key service areas will develop business continuity plans, training will be undertaken and the processes will be tested.

Other governance issues

- 64 We have not identified any significant weaknesses in your arrangements to prevent and detect fraud and corruption or for ensuring the legality of its significant financial transactions.

Use of resources judgements

- 65 The use of resources assessment is a new assessment which focuses on financial management but links to the strategic management of the Authority. It looks at how the financial management is integrated with strategy and corporate management, supports council priorities and delivers value for money. It will be carried out annually, as part of each council's external audit. We anticipate in future the use of resources judgements will form part of the CPA framework.
- 66 We have assessed the council's arrangements in five areas.

Table 4 Council's arrangements

Element	Assessment
Financial reporting	3 out of 4
Financial management	2 out of 4
Financial standing	2 out of 4
Internal control	2 out of 4
Value for money	2 out of 4
Overall	2 out of 4

(Note: 1 = lowest, 4 = highest)

- 67 In reaching these judgements we have drawn on the above work and supplemented this with a review against specified key lines of enquiry.
- 68 The most significant areas where further development is needed are as follows.
- Financial management; the links between the corporate plan and the medium-term financial strategy (MTFS) are not clearly established. The links between income and expenditure streams over the five years and the specific actions envisaged to be taken to meet corporate plan targets are not clear and are weaker in the later years of the MTFS. The corporate plan and MTFS processes would be strengthened if the corporate plan priorities could be seen to better drive all elements of the MTFS and changes in internal resource allocations.
 - Financial standing; the council needs to consider setting and monitoring targets for income collection and the recovery of arrears, based on the age profile of debt. This monitoring information should evaluate the effectiveness of recovery actions, the associated costs, and the cost of not recovering debt promptly.

- Internal control. The Council was not able evidence that it has procedure notes for all business critical systems, though it is planning to do this under business continuity planning processes it has recently introduced.
- Internal control. The Council does not routinely communicate and publicise its whistle-blowing policy to parties it contracts with. Doing so would improve counter-fraud arrangements.
- Internal control. The Council's risk management process does not specifically require the identification and assessment of risk in partnerships.
- Value for money. While it was assessed the council provides adequate VFM there are a number of high cost areas which suggest there is scope for further improvement after challenge with the right information (benchmarking data). As a priority the council should develop its strategic analysis of its respective costs and their relation to performance. This can then be linked to a more focused programme of best value reviews with clear VFM objectives.

Other work

Grant claims

- 69 In accordance with the principle of Strategic Regulation, the Audit Commission has continued with a more risk-based approach to the certification of grant claims. We have reduced our audit of these claims but our ability to reduce further depends on the adequacy of the Council's control environment.
- 70 There have been some difficulties this year in auditing the grants and returns submitted by the Council.
- 71 At the time of writing, the 2004/05 housing benefits grant return audit was still ongoing. The audit began in October 2005 and was expected to be finished by the end of December. However, the initial testing revealed a large number of errors which resulted in many additional audit tests being necessary, which, under a new Benefits audit regime agreed with the DWP, we had to pass back to the council.
- 72 The council recruited consultants in February 2006 to complete this further testing, and in March we considered their results. There are still many areas of disagreement and we therefore referred the problems to our technical unit who reviewed the work in April 2006. We drafted a qualification letter for the claim at the end of April and asked the council for comments on the letter. We received these in mid-May, with a revised claim. We carried out some further work and found there was no audit trail between the original claim and the revised one. We therefore passed it back to the council, and we are awaiting a further revised claim.
- 73 The council should consider carrying out early testing of the 2005/06 return, to assess if errors identified in 2004/05 are still occurring.
- 74 There were two other small claims which the Council submitted late for audit. In both cases, no late penalty was applicable. However, we will liaise with officers to determine the expected claims for 2005/06, to avoid any late claims, and potential penalties.

National Fraud Initiative

- 75 In 2004/05, the local authority took part in the Audit Commission's National Fraud Initiative (NFI). The NFI, which is undertaken every two years, aims to help identify and reduce fraud by bringing together data from NHS bodies, local authorities and government departments and other agencies, to detect a wide range of frauds against the public sector. These include housing benefit fraud, occupational pension fraud, tenancy fraud and payroll fraud as well as, new for 2004/05, right to buy scheme fraud and providing new contact details for former tenants with arrears in excess of £1,000.

- 76** As a result of work carried out on the NFI2002 exercise the authority achieved savings of £39,000. It is hoped that further savings will also be made as a result of NFI2004. Officers of the council have attended NFI training in 2005 and arrangements are in place to follow up data matches.

Looking forwards

Future audit and inspection work

- 77 We have an agreed plan for 2005/06 and we have reported in this letter those aspects that have already been completed. The remaining elements of that plan, including our audit of the 2005/06 accounts, will be reported in next year's Annual Letter.
- 78 We have sought to ensure, wherever possible, that our work relates to the improvement priorities of the Council. We will continue with this approach when planning our programme of work for 2006/07. We will seek to reconsider, with you, your improvement priorities and develop an agreed programme by 31 March 2006.

Revision to the Code of Audit Practice

- 79 The statutory requirements governing our audit work, are contained in:
- the Audit Commission Act 1998; and
 - the Code of Audit Practice (the Code).
- 80 The Code has been revised with effect from 1 April 2005. Further details are included in our Audit Plan which was agreed with the Performance, Audit and Review Committee on 19 May 2005. The key changes include:
- the requirement to draw a positive conclusion regarding the Council's arrangements for ensuring value for money in its use of resources; and
 - a clearer focus on overall financial and performance management arrangements.

A new CPA framework

- 81 The Audit Commission is currently considering the results of the consultation on the proposals for revising the CPA framework for district councils. The revised framework will be published in the early part of 2006 with implementation from April 2006.

Closing remarks

- 82 This letter has been discussed and agreed with the Chief Executive and Director of Financial and Regulatory Services. A copy of the letter will be presented at PARC on 22 June 2006.
- 83 The Council has taken a positive and constructive approach to our audit and inspection. I would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation for the Council's assistance and co-operation.

Availability of this letter

- 84 This letter will be published on the Audit Commission's website at www.audit-commission.gov.uk and also on the Council's website.

Rob Murray,
District Auditor and Relationship Manager
June 2006

Appendix 1 – Background to this letter

The purpose of this letter

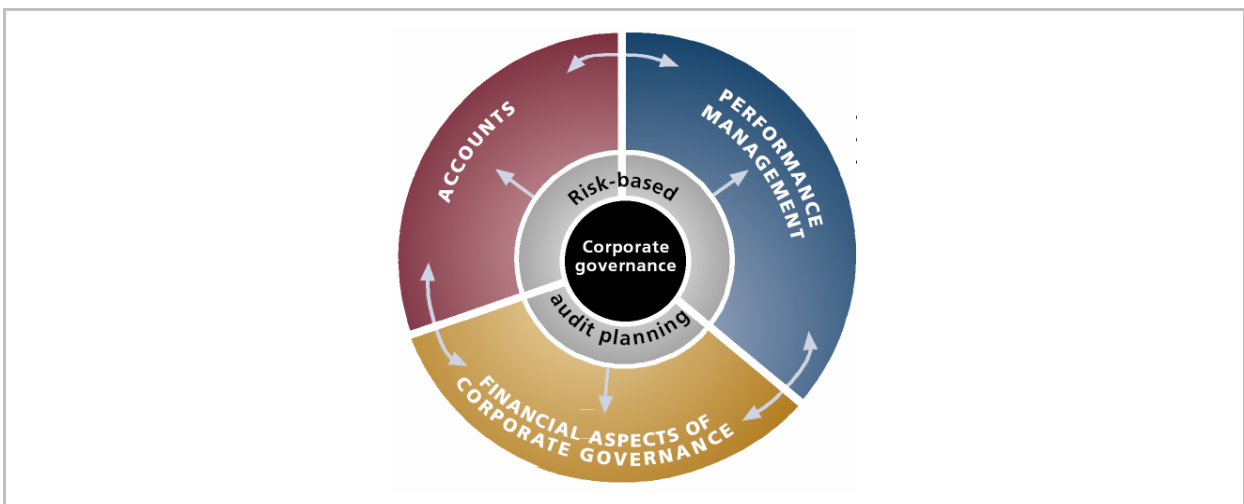
- 1 This is our audit and inspection 'Annual Letter' for members which incorporates the Annual Audit Letter for 2004/05, which is presented by the Council's Relationship Manager and District Auditor. The letter summarises the conclusions and significant issues arising from our recent audit and inspections of the Council.
- 2 We have issued separate reports during the year setting out the findings and conclusions from the specific elements of our programme. These reports are listed at Appendix 2 for information.
- 3 The Audit Commission has circulated to all audited bodies a statement that summarises the key responsibilities of auditors. Our audit has been conducted in accordance with the principles set out in that statement. What we say about the results of our audit should be viewed in the context of that more formal background.
- 4 Appendix 3 provides information about the fee charged for our audit and inspections.

Audit objectives

- 5 Our main objective as your appointed auditor is to plan and carry out an audit that meets the requirements of the Code of Audit Practice. We adopt a risk-based approach to planning our audit, and our audit work has focused on your significant financial and operational risks that are relevant to our audit responsibilities.
- 6 Central to our audit are your corporate governance arrangements. Our audit is then structured around the three elements of our responsibilities as set out in the Code and shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2 Code of Audit Practice

Code of practice responsibilities



Accounts

- Opinion.

Financial aspects of corporate governance

7 Reviewing how effectively the Council ensures:

- financial standing;
- systems of internal financial control;
- standards of financial conduct and the prevention and detection of fraud and corruption; and
- legality of transactions with significant financial consequences.

Performance management

- Use of resources.
- Performance information.
- Best value performance plan.

Inspection objectives

8 Inspection work is based around section 10 of the Local Government Act 1999, which requires us to carry out inspections and deliver reports that will:

- enable the Council and the public to judge whether best value is being delivered;
- enable the Council to assess how well it is doing;
- enable the Government to assess how well its policies are being implemented; and
- identify failing services where remedial action may be necessary.

Appendix 2 – Audit and inspection reports

Table 5 **Audit and inspection reports issued**

Report title	Date issued
Audit Plan 2004/05	July 2004
Audit Plan 2005/06	April 2005
2004/05 Interim Visit and Accounts Visit Memorandum	November 2005
Planning Inspection Report	February 2006
Use of Resources Feedback - included in this letter	May 2006
CPA 'Direction of Travel' report - included in this letter	May 2006

Appendix 3 – Audit and inspection fee

Table 6 Audit fee update

Audit area	Plan 2004/05	Actual 2004/05
Accounts	£39,700	£39,700
Financial aspects of corporate governance	£20,200	£20,200
Performance	£49,300	£49,300
Total fee	£109,200	£109,200

Inspection fee update

The full year inspection fee is £14,600, net of 80 per cent ODPM grant. The work reported in this audit and inspection letter has been funded by an element of the fee covering 2004/05 and by an element of the fee covering 2005/06. In both years the actual fee will be in line with that planned.

TITLE OF REPORT: RISK MANAGEMENT – ANNUAL REPORT – APRIL 2005 TO MARCH 2006**REPORT OF THE HEAD OF FINANCIAL SERVICES****1. SUMMARY**

1.1 To provide Council with an annual report on risk management at NHDC during the financial year 2005 to 2006 as outlined in the Risk Management Strategy dated November 2005.

1.2 This report aims to:

- Confirm the Council's ongoing commitment to the management of risks to Corporate objectives, projects, service delivery and performance management
- Summarise significant changes to the Top Risks in the year
- Advise on progress on Business Continuity Planning
- Report the outcome of the Audit Commission Use of Resources KLoE 4.1 review
- Summarise the outcome of the peer review of risk management
- Detail the proposed action plan for 2006/7 to ensure continuous improvement and embedding of risk management.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 PARC have received reports on the management of the Council's Top Corporate risks at its meetings on 19th May 2005, 24th November 2005 and 2nd March 2006. A separate report on the Top Risk of Promoting Equality and Diversity was presented on 28th July 2005.
- 2.2 The Risk Management Strategy was reviewed in November 2005 to follow recommended best practice in the Audit Commission's Use of Resources Key Lines of Enquiry 4.1. The revised Strategy was approved by Cabinet on 20th December 2005.
- 2.3 The Council has developed a business continuity management strategy to fulfil the requirements of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and this was agreed by Cabinet on 14th June 2005. All of the Council's key services now have business continuity plans.

- 2.4 The Council conducted a self-assessment against the CPA Use of Resources Key Lines of Enquiry (KLoE) in October 2005 and the results of this and an action plan was reported to PARC. This was subsequently reinforced by the Audit Commission's assessment and a number of the actions reported in October 2005 are now underway.
- 2.5 The Audit Commission in its assessment of the Council's self-assessment on the Use of Resources KLoE 4.1 found the Council to be at a level "2" in relation to its management of business risks.
- 2.6 Since the Audit Commissions review a number of actions had been carried out to improve performance and the peer review on risk management that was reported to PARC on 25th May found that the Council was achieving a level "3" against the KLoE.
- 2.7 The Head of Financial Services and Portfolio holder for Finance are now Officer and Member Champions for risk management.
- 2.8 Ensuring the risks arising from and to the Council's key partnerships are now in the process of being identified and recorded. Any required measures to manage these risks will be put in place.
- 2.9 PARC members were provided with risk management training on 26th January 2006. New members will be provided with basic training on induction.

3. SIGNIFICANT CHANGES TO THE TOP CORPORATE RISKS

- 3.1 At each risk management review meeting, PARC are provided with updates on the assessment and management of the Council's Corporate risks ("Top Risks"). The following section summarises the changes that were reported in the past year.

TOP RISKS ADEQUATELY MANAGED

- 3.2 The following risks either relate to completed projects or are now sufficiently managed to no longer be considered as a Corporate risk:
 - Performance Management , Best Value and Performance Indicators.
 - Implementing the Freedom of Information Act
 - Decriminalisation of car parking enforcement
 - IT systems & Support
 - Delivery of Projects to meet the CPA Improvement Plan
 - Royston Leisure Centre
 - Leisure Management Contract
 - Introduction of new licensing legislation.

NEW RISKS

3.3 The following risks have been added to the number of risks to be considered at a Corporate level:

- Implementing the CPA improvement plan into continuous improvement
- Delivery of outcomes from the museum service FSR
- Local Area Agreement

RISKS WITH AMENDED ASSESSMENTS

3.4 The following Top Risks that still remain as Corporate Risks, had reduced impact and probability assessments:-

- Organisational Development
- Full compliance with health and safety legislation
- Community Strategy
- Corporate Plan
- Recruitment & Retention
- Programme management

3.5 The Top Risk of the Community Safety Strategy had an increase in impact and probability assessment.

3.6 The risk of the medium to long-term financial strategy has, as in previous years, increased and decreased assessments. It will change cyclically depending on where the Council is in the service and financial planning and budget setting process in each financial year.

4. RISK APPETITE

4.1 Whether the Council is prepared to accept or reduce a risk is known as its risk appetite. Clearly some risks have to be taken for the Council to be able to develop. Provided any risks to the Corporate Objectives/projects are recorded and mitigated as far as possible, the Council will be more confident about recognising the risks that accompany new objectives and opportunities.

4.2 Generally those risks that have a score of 7 or above on the risk matrix need to be carefully managed. In March 2006, the following Top Risks fell within this category:-

- Medium to long-term financial planning
- Sustainable development of the district
- Service@North-Herts
- Full compliance with health and safety legislation
- Organisational Development
- Hitchin Town Centre Development
- Community Safety Strategy
- Office accommodation and asset management

5. BUSINESS CONTINUITY MANAGEMENT

- 5.1 The Risk Manager was the Lead Officer in delivering the Council's Business Continuity Management Strategy. All key service areas now have business continuity plans that now require testing and ongoing review.
- 5.2 The Use of Resources KLoE 4.2 highlighted the need for our business critical systems to have procedures notes. This is to be developed as part of the business continuity planning process. In addition we have identified this as an ongoing area of weakness in the Statement on Internal Control for 2005/6. Procedure notes are to be developed by the end of October 2006.

6. REVIEWS OF THE RISK MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK AT NHDC

- 6.1 As part of the self-assessment for the Use of Resources KLoE, we assessed where we were in terms of our risk management framework and worked out an action plan to improve. This was initially reported to PARC in October 2005.
- 6.2 Both the Audit Commission through the Use of Resources KLoE and an internal peer group have reviewed the risk management framework at the Council.
- 6.3 The Use of Resources was reported to PARC on 25th May 2006 and improvement actions approved. In addition the peer Group review on risk management was also reported at this PARC meeting. The peer group found no significant areas of weakness in the risk management framework
- 6.4 Both of these reviews and subsequent action plans will form the basis of the work plan for 2006/7 and will ensure continuous development and embedding of risk management at the Council.

7. SIGNIFICANT ACTIONS FOR 2006/7

- 7.1 The peer review resulted in a detailed action plan being drawn up that should ensure the Council attains a level "4" in terms of the Use of Resources KLoE. The following are considered key milestones for the coming year:-

Task	By date
Delivery of risk management training to Cabinet members	Oct 06
Delivery of training to all members (excluding Cabinet)	July 06
Completion of risk management reviews on all key partnerships	Oct 06
Review of Risk Management Strategy and Policy	Nov 06
Review of ongoing Officer and Member risk management training needs	Nov 06

8. RECOMMENDATION

- 8.1 That Cabinet at the meeting to be held on 27 June 2006 notes the continuing development of the risk management framework at NHDC in 2005/6
- 8.2 That Cabinet at the meeting to be held on 27 June 2006 approve the risk treatment measures undertaken in 2005/6 .

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TITLE OF REPORT: RISK MANAGEMENT UPDATE

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF FINANCIAL SERVICES

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 To provide PARC with an update on the management of the Strategic/Corporate risks owned by the Corporate Management Team and Cabinet. The changes to the Cabinet risks should be referred to the Cabinet for approval.

2. FORWARD PLAN

- 2.1 This report does not contain a recommendation on a key decision and has not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 On 2nd March, PARC received its regular report on the Top Corporate/Strategic Risks.
- 3.2 Where possible, the Top Risks have been reviewed by the Lead Officers and the Corporate Management Team. Amendments to the assessment of these risks are summarised in the report.
- 3.3 A peer review on risk management at the Council was reported to PARC on the 25th May 2006. Actions recommended in this report are currently being implemented.
- 3.4 The outcome of the Audit Commission findings on our self-assessment for KLoE 4.1 “how the Council manages its significant business risks” was a level “2”.
- 3.5 The Portfolio Holder for Finance who additionally act as ‘Member Champion’ for risk management, has commented that Cabinet rather than PARC members have a specific responsibility for risk management. Although PARC receive and monitor risk management on a quarterly basis it is the Cabinet members who have ownership of some of the Top Risks and who are actually deciding on risk appetite in relation to service delivery. In view of this a training session will be held for Cabinet members prior to the start of a Cabinet meeting.

4. TOP RISKS

- 4.1 This report does not recommend any amendments to the Top Risk assessments or add any new risks.

- 4.2 At the PARC meeting in March 2006, there was further discussion on the probability score for the Top Risk of Delivery of the Corporate Plan. This had its probability score still remaining as a “1” (the event is likely to occur at least once within the next 12 months).
- 4.3 In the light of the Committee’s comments the Corporate Management Team looked at this assessment on the 16th May 2006 and concluded that the probability score should remain as a “1”.
- 4.4 The PARC member group are working on the format of the monitoring reports on the delivery of the Corporate Plan. If at any time PARC are concerned that the Council is failing to deliver against the Corporate Plan the probability of the risk can be reviewed.

CHANGE IN RISK TITLES

- 4.5 The former “Access to Services” risk has been renamed “Service@North-Herts” and the scope and actions of the risk now summarise the high scoring risks reported to the Project Board. This still remains a high level risk (matrix score of 9) as it is a high value contract and requires a significant change in the Council’s customer interface.
- 4.6 The title of the risk relating to “absence of business continuity plans” has now been changed to “business continuity management” and the lead officer is now the Emergency Planning Officer.

RISK MATRIX

- 4.7 The Risk Matrix illustrating the Top Risks is enclosed in Appendix B. full descriptions of all the risks are found in the Risk Register in the Members room.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 No legal implications arise from Top Risk updates to PARC.

6. FINANCIAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no direct financial implications from this report. However the Top Risks may require some financial resource in the risk mitigation actions. Where applicable this should have been included in service budgets or submitted a growth proposal during the service & financial planning process
- 6.2 The Risk Management Strategy requires PARC to consider regular reports on the Council’s Top Risks.

7. HUMAN RESOURCE AND EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Risk management training for Cabinet Members will be provided in the autumn. PARC members who missed the training session on 26th January 2006 and new members will be invited to attend a risk management training session on 20th July 2006 prior to the PARC meeting.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 The Committee endorses the amendments to the Top Risks.

9. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 The recommendations in paragraph 8 is in accordance with the Council's adopted risk management strategy. These changes have previously been scrutinised by the Corporate Management Team.

10. APPENDICES

10.1 Appendix A – Risk Matrix

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CABINET RISKS - RISK MATRIX MARCH 2006

APPENDIX A

PROBABILITY

3	4	7	<p>9</p> <p>Medium to long-term financial planning</p> <p>Sustainable Development of the District</p> <p>Service@North-Herts</p>
2	2	<p>5</p> <p>Recruitment & Retention</p> <p>Local Area Agreement</p>	<p>Full compliance with health and safety legislation</p> <p>Organisational Development</p> <p>8</p> <p>Hitchin Town Centre Development</p>
1	1	3	<p>6</p> <p>Business Continuity Plans</p> <p>Community Strategy</p> <p>Delivery of the Corporate Plan</p>
	1	2	3

Impact

CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM RISKS - RISK MATRIX JUNE 2006

PROBABILITY

		7	9
3	4		
2	2	<p>Development of Town Centre Strategies</p> <p>5</p> <p>Programme Management</p> <p>Promoting Equality & Diversity</p> <p>Delivery of outcomes from the museum service FSR</p> <p>Procurement</p> <p>Implementing CPA improvement Plan into continuous improvement</p>	<p>8</p> <p>Community Safety Strategy</p> <p>Office Accommodation and Asset Management</p>
1	1	3	6
	1	2	3
		IMPACT	

TITLE OF REPORT: AUDIT AND CONSULTANCY SERVICES - FINAL POSITION AGAINST THE 2005/06 ANNUAL AUDIT PLAN

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF FINANCIAL SERVICES

THE HEAD OF FINANCIAL SERVICES WILL PROVIDE AN UPDATE FOLLOWING THE MEETING OF CMT ON TUESDAY 13 JUNE.

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is for Members of the Performance, Audit and Review Committee to receive and consider:

- Audit and Consultancy Services' opinion on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of North Hertfordshire District Council's internal control environment;
- Audit and Consultancy Services' year end position against the 2005/06 annual audit plan;
- Summaries of internal audit work undertaken during the period 30th January to 31st March 2006; and
- Audit and Consultancy Services' year end performance against the 2005/06 Hertfordshire Audit Partnership Performance Indicators.

2. FORWARD PLAN

2.1 This report does not contain a recommendation on a key decision and has not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 The CIPFA 'Code of Practice for Internal Audit in Local Government in the United Kingdom 2003', requires that the Head of Internal Audit presents a formal annual report to the organisation which includes the following:

- An opinion on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the organisation's internal control environment;
- The disclosure of any qualification to that opinion, together with the reasons for it;
- A summary of the audit work undertaken to formulate the opinion;
- Details of any issues judged to be relevant to the preparation of the Statement on Internal Control;
- A comparison of work actually undertaken against work planned and a summary of performance against agreed internal audit performance indicators; and
- Comment on any other matters of control or internal audit significance.

4. ISSUES

4.1 Opinion on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the internal control environment at North Hertfordshire District Council

Internal Control Environment - a description

4.1.1 The Council's internal control environment comprises the policies, procedures and operations that are in place to:

- a) Establish and monitor the achievement of the Council's objectives;
- b) Identify, assess and manage the risks relating to the achievement of the Council's objectives;
- c) Facilitate policy and decision-making;
- d) Ensure the economical, effective and efficient use of resources and assets;
- e) Ensure compliance with established policies, procedures, laws and regulations;
- f) Secure the financial management of the Council and its financial reporting; and
- g) Provide for performance management and reporting thereon.

4.1.2 Essential to ensuring that the above objectives are achieved are:

- a) Managerial, financial and operational control systems such as policies, objectives and plans, budgetary systems, personnel arrangement and organisational structures etc;
- b) An effective risk management function;
- c) An effective internal audit function;
- d) Effective review of the elements comprising an internal control environment by non-executive management.

An assessment of the Internal Control Environment at NHDC

4.1.3 On completion of an audit assignment, Audit and Consultancy Services assign a level of assurance to the audited area of either: high, medium, low, or no assurance. Detailed definitions currently used can be found in Appendix A.

4.1.4 During the financial year 2005/06, Audit and Consultancy Services scoped and completed twenty-two audits and consultancy projects which resulted in the production of a formal audit report. Of these, eight were assigned a high level of assurance, six a medium to high level of assurance, seven a medium level of assurance, one a medium to low level of assurance and none a low level of assurance. A list of the individual assignments and the level of assurance assigned can be found in Appendix B.

4.1.5 Based on evidence derived from this work, Audit and Consultancy Services conclude that a **medium to high level of assurance** can be gained from the policies, procedures and operations that comprise the internal control environment operating within North Hertfordshire District Council. This is an improvement over the previous year's assessment of medium.

4.1.6 In practical terms this means that in the main, systems are generally well controlled. Key controls exist and are applied consistently and effectively in most areas. There is a largely sound system of control designed to achieve systems objectives, although there are a limited number of exceptions, weaknesses and levels of non-compliance, which put some of the control objectives at risk. There is consequently some risk of negligence, loss, fraud, impropriety or damage to reputation.

4.2 **Disclosure of any qualification and reasons for it**

Based on the audit work undertaken during the 2005/06 year, there are no significant concerns that would give rise to any qualification.

4.3 **A summary of internal audit work undertaken to formulate the opinion**

4.3.1 The opinion on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of NHDC's internal control environment is based in the main on the outcomes of the completed audit work detailed in Appendix B. This work comprises twenty-two planned audits and consultancy projects.

4.3.2 In addition, the audit opinion has been informed by work to date on planned audits in progress as at 31 March 2006. These audits are detailed in Appendix C. A level of assurance has not been assigned to these projects, as given their incomplete nature it is not possible to accurately obtain an overall view of the systems and procedures in place.

4.3.3 Additional support has, where appropriate, been obtained from the six follow-up audits carried out throughout the year, the additional five unplanned consultancy projects undertaken and the seven investigations into alleged improprieties.

4.3.4 During April 2006 the Audit Commission undertook a review and detailed examination of the Internal Audit files for the managed audits undertaken covering the 2005/06 year, including the systems documentation which was required to be produced this year in order to achieve compliance with the new International Standards on Auditing. Their initial assessment is that they are satisfied with the Internal Audit working papers and reports and are able to place reliance on the work undertaken. The Audit Commission will provide their final judgement in the 2005/06 Audit letter, to be reported later in the year.

4.4 **Issues judged relevant for inclusion in the Statement on Internal Control**

4.4.1 Based on the internal audit work undertaken during the 2005/06 year, Audit and Consultancy Services wish to highlight the following issues which are included in the Statement on Internal Control which was reported to PARC on 25th May 2006. (References in brackets refer to the relevant SIC paragraphs).

a) Parking services successfully completed its first year of operation under revised legislation decriminalising parking contraventions. Internal audit found it to be well managed and running to published guidance. (4.7.1)

b) In the 2004/05 Statement on Internal Control it was revealed that further work was required to ensure full compliance with both Health and Safety Legislation and The Money Laundering Regulations 2003. In 2005/6 the risk of full

compliance with Health and Safety legislation has been reduced and in 2006/7 a Health and Safety Strategy with relevant performance indicators will be implemented. With regard to the Money Laundering Regulations the only remaining action for 2006/7 is to ensure relevant staff are given proportionate training on the policy. (4.7.3)

- c) The 2003/04 Statement on Internal Control highlighted the need to embed the requirements of the Data Protection Act across the Authority. In 2005/6 one Notice of Non-Compliance was issued by the Data Protection Officer where a breach was identified. A number of recommendations were completed by 30th April 2006 and the notice has been lifted. A continuing training programme for Data Protection and the Freedom of Information Act remains in place. (4.7.4)
- d) Since the 2005/06 Statement of Internal Control a Business Continuity Strategy Management Strategy has been agreed and all key service areas have produced business continuity plans. In 2006/7 further work needs to be undertaken to test the plans and to ensure that all the key service areas have relevant procedure notes. The completion of the testing may lead to further work being undertaken. The IT Disaster Recovery Contract needs to be reviewed in line with business continuity requirements. (4.8.3)
- e) In the 2004/5 Statement of Internal Control concerns were raised about the Council's Delphi Payroll system. The 2005/6 internal audit of payroll has produced a medium level of assurance and the procurement process of acquiring a replacement HR system that incorporates a payroll module is now underway. It is anticipated that the new system will be implemented before the end of the 2006/7 financial year. (4.8.4)
- f) Work undertaken by officers is generally compliant with the requirements of Financial Regulations and Contract Standing Orders with instances of non-compliance highlighting internal control weaknesses, rather than a breakdown of internal control. At the annual review of Financial Regulations in June 2006 these issues will be addressed. Training continues to be made available through the Corporate Training Programme to ensure that officers gain the relevant competencies in these areas. (4.9.1)
- g) In the 2004/5 Statement of Internal Control, one area where further improvement could be made in procurement was the early involvement of IT professionals in the procurement process to ensure that any potential problems following the acquisition of IT assets are avoided. This has now been resolved and each IT procurement now has to have a completed Project Initiation Document. (4.9.2)

4.5 Annual Audit Plan 2005/06

- 4.5.1 As previously reported to PARC, the 2005/06 audit plan has been modified during the year to reflect changes in circumstances and requests from Heads of Service. Discussions with the appropriate Heads of Service during the planning process have resulted in audit assignments being carried forward to the 2006/07 audit plan.

4.5.2 Not all assignments within the plan relate to discrete projects to be carried out by Audit and Consultancy Services alone. A proportion of the year's planned work includes supporting other groups e.g. audit input into procurement initiatives, or being part of a review team e.g. annual review of Financial Regulations and Contract Standing Orders. Hence, a report/ memo is not generated from each assignment.

4.5.3 The assignments were included in the plan based on one or more of the following criteria:

- An assessment using Audit and Consultancy Services' risk assessment model;
- At the request of the manager of the service area;
- At the request / requirement of the Council's External Auditor.

4.5.4 At 31st March 2006, the final position for 2005/06 was as follows:

a)	Thirty-Two planned audit and consultancy assignments completed, 22 of which resulted in Audit and Consultancy Services issuing a report in their name (Appendix A)
b)	Ten planned audits in progress (Appendix C)
c)	Four planned audit and consultancy projects to be carried forward to 2006/07
d)	Seven special investigations completed
e)	Six ad hoc consultancy projects completed
f)	Six follow-up audits completed

Attached at Appendix D is Audit and Consultancy Services' position on 31 March 2006 against the revised annual plan 2005/06.

4.6 Summary of final position against performance indicators

4.6.1 The performance of Audit and Consultancy Services is measured against three key performance indicators for internal audit developed and agreed by the Hertfordshire Audit Partnership.

4.6.2 At the end of the financial year, Audit and Consultancy Services had exceeded all three of the targets. The most critical indicator, against which the Audit Commission assess the effectiveness of an internal audit function, is that measuring the number of planned projects completed, or in progress at year end, against the total number of projects planned. For the year 2005/06 this was 91.3% against a target of 90%, this represents a substantial improvement on the prior year's figure of 71.5%.

4.7 Any other matters of control or internal audit significance

- 4.7.1 During the last quarter of the year, a significant amount of unplanned work was undertaken as a result of two 'whistle blowing' allegations made under the Council's Confidential Reporting Code. Together, these two investigations accounted for 150 hours of audit time, which has resulted in some slippage of planned work into the 2006/07 year.
- 4.7.2 However, this has not materially affected the progress of managed audit works and of the ten key financial systems/ managed audits for the year 2005/06, only one (debtors) was unavailable for scrutiny by the Audit Commission when they visited the Council in April. Any outstanding works will be examined during their interim visit in July 2006.
- 4.7.3 A review of the format of internal audit reports will be undertaken during the first quarter of the 2006/07 year, in order to make the reports more relevant to management and to accord with the latest best practice and professional guidance. There is also a need to capture a level of assurance for those projects where substantial amounts of time may be expended in audit work, but which do not result in the issue of a formal audit report and hence do not attract a level of assurance.

4.8 Hertfordshire Audit Partnership

- 4.8.1 As previously reported, NHDC Audit and Consultancy Services have been actively seeking a joint working arrangement with other authorities. During the 2005/06 year, an auditor from Welwyn Hatfield District Council undertook work on the payroll system, providing 78 hours of audit time. This was a reciprocal arrangement, following the work undertaken by one of the Principal Auditors at Welwyn Hatfield during the previous year.
- 4.8.2 The option of introducing a shared audit resource with Welwyn Hatfield and Hertsmere Councils has been further progressed. All three Section 151 officers have agreed to the principles of this arrangement. An examination of the on-costs of the respective authorities has revealed that appointment through NHDC provides the most cost-effective option. It is therefore proposed that as the Partnership is not a legal entity, NHDC be the employing authority, with the other partners being recharged their share of the costs. The aim is for the post to provide 90 days (666 hours) of chargeable audit time to each of the partner authorities. This represents an efficiency gain of 120% compared to the cost/productivity of current contracted work through agency staff.
- 4.8.3 The majority of the costs for NHDC's share of this post will come from the agency staff budget which has been used to support the delivery of the annual audit plan. It is anticipated that by sharing this resource, all of the partner authorities will benefit by the quality of work being enhanced and skills and knowledge being retained.
- 4.8.4 During May 2006, a meeting between s.151 officers, audit management and human resources officers from the three authorities took place. A draft Memorandum of Understanding has been produced laying out the basis of the partnership. A job description and personal specification have been agreed and an advert drafted. It is hoped that following receipt of all the necessary approvals, the recruitment process will commence shortly, with a view to having a shared auditor in post for the latter half of the year.

4.9 Management Arrangements

- 4.9.1 During March 2006 the Audit Manager commenced her maternity leave, she is due to return in October. In the interim, the remainder of the Audit staff have been 'acting up' and covering the majority of the manager's duties, which has provided a useful training and development opportunity for the staff involved, as well as saving the Council additional costs in covering for this absence. The Head of Financial Services has been providing line management cover for the section.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Local Government & Housing Act 1989 requires the Council to follow best practice in regard to revenue accounts and accounting for capital expenditure. Regulations made under the Audit Commission Act 1998 include requirements to maintain an adequate and effective system of internal audit of records and control systems and to prepare statements of account in accordance with proper practice. The Local Government Act 2003 contains further requirements for proper practice in regard to capital finance. The Audit Plan is the authorities approach to ensuring that these systems and practices are in place and operating effectively.
- 5.2 With regard to the joint procurement of additional audit resource, the authority will safeguard its position as employing authority by means of a suitable agreement which will be entered into with the other partner authorities, prior to the commencement of the recruitment of a shared auditor.

6. FINANCIAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 By utilising the Audit and Consultancy budget for agency staff, together with some salary savings, the Council's contribution towards the costs of a shared auditor can be contained within existing budgets.
- 6.2 Audit and Consultancy Services has a risk assessment model to assess the level of risk for each audit area, this is used in conjunction with an examination of the Corporate Risk Register as part of the audit planning process. As part of the risk based audit approach, key risks for each service area are identified and an assessment is made of systems in place to manage these risks. If necessary, recommendations are made to strengthen the control environment and the Risk Register is updated where required.

7. HUMAN RESOURCE AND EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The recruitment and appointment of a shared auditor will be carried out in accordance with all relevant Council policies and will be supported by Human Resources.

8. CONSULTATION WITH EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS AND WARD MEMBERS

- 8.1 No consultation required.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that members of the Performance, Audit and Review Committee:

- 9.1 Note the opinion of Audit and Consultancy Services of a medium to high level of assurance on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the internal control environment at North Hertfordshire District Council;
- 9.2 Note the issues judged relevant for inclusion in the Statement on Internal Control;
- 9.3 Note Audit and Consultancy Services' year end position against the 2005/06 annual audit plan;
- 9.4 Note Audit and Consultancy Services' year end performance against the 2005/06 Hertfordshire Audit Partnership Performance Indicators; and
- 9.5 Note the progress made towards the appointment of a shared auditor.

10. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 Recommendations 9.1 and 9.2 have been made to ensure that North Hertfordshire District Council complies with the requirements of the Code of Practice for Internal Audit in Local Government 2003.

11. APPENDICES

- Appendix A Levels of assurance - a description
- Appendix B Audit and consultancy assignments completed during the financial year 2005/06
- Appendix C Work in progress as at 31st March 2005
- Appendix D Year end position against the annual audit plan 2005/06
- Appendix E Year end position against the Hertfordshire Audit Partnership Performance Indicators
- Appendix F Summaries of audit work carried out between 30th January and 31st March 2006

12. CONTACT OFFICERS

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14. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Code of Practice for Internal Audit in Local Government 2003

LEVELS OF ASSURANCE - A DESCRIPTION

High Level of Assurance

The system is well controlled. Key controls exist and are applied consistently and effectively. There is a sound system of control designed to achieve the system objectives.

Medium Level of Assurance

The system is adequately controlled. Key controls exist but there is evidence that they are not applied consistently or effectively. Compensating controls have been identified in some instances, which provide a degree of reassurance regarding the effective operation of the system.

While there is basically a sound system of control, there are weaknesses and levels of non-compliance, which put some of the control objectives at risk. There is some risk of negligence, loss, fraud, impropriety or damage to reputation.

Low Level of Assurance

The system is inadequately controlled. Key controls exist but they are not applied / there is significant evidence that they are not applied consistently and effectively. There are weaknesses and levels of non-compliance, which put the control objectives at risk. There is a high risk / probability of negligence, loss, fraud, impropriety or damage to reputation.

No Assurance

The system is uncontrolled. Key controls are minimal or do not exist. Weaknesses and levels of non-compliance leave the system open to significant error or abuse. There is a very high risk / probability of negligence, loss, fraud, impropriety or damage to reputation.

APPENDIX B

AUDIT AND CONSULTANCY ASSIGNMENTS COMPLETED DURING THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2005/06 RESULTING IN THE ISSUE OF AN ASSURANCE LEVEL

Audit Assignment	Level of Assurance
Treasury Management	High
Performance Management	High
Budgeting and Budgetary Control including the Capital Strategy 0405	High
Recovery 0405	High
Equipment and vehicle leasing	High
Complaints procedure	High
Parking Services	High
RIPA	High
Council Tax Benefits and Rent Allowances 0506	Medium to High
Council Tax Benefits and Rent Allowances 0405	Medium to High
Creditors 0405	Medium to High
Cash and banking	Medium to High
Council Tax 0506	Medium to High
Payroll 0506	Medium to High
Payroll 0405	Medium
Asset management	Medium
BACSTEL	Medium
PIR – Scout System	Medium
Grounds maintenance	Medium
Markets	Medium
NNDR	Medium
Property Services	Medium to Low

APPENDIX C**WORK IN PROGRESS AS AT 31 MARCH 2006**

Audit Assignment	Status	Action post 31 March 2006
Recruitment and Retention	80% complete	
Business Continuity	25% complete	
Budgeting and Budgetary Control inc Capital Strategy	10% complete.	Draft report issued
Creditors	90% complete	Draft report issued
Debtors	25% complete	
Recovery	40% complete	
Strategic partnerships inc Community Strategy	75% complete	
Consultants	75% complete	
Income Systems	85% complete	
Benefits Investigations	75% complete	Draft report issued

YEAR END POSITION AGAINST THE ANNUAL AUDIT PLAN 2005/06

Audit File Ref.	Audit Title	Status as at 31.03.06
126	Recruitment and Retention	80% complete
128	Performance Management	100% complete
130	Compliance with Health & Safety Legislation	100% complete
	Freedom of Information Act	c/f 2006/07
211	Business Continuity	25% complete
169	Introduction of new licensing legislation	c/f 2006/07
	Social Inclusion/ Equalities	c/f 2006/07
TOTAL HOURS – CORPORATE RISK AREAS		228
001	Budgeting and Budgetary Control inc. Capital Strategy	100% complete
003	Council Tax Benefit & Rent Allowances	100% complete
005	Creditors	100% complete
006	Payroll	100% complete
114	Recovery	100% complete
TOTAL HOURS - MANAGED AUDIT 0405		453
001	Budgeting and Budgetary Control inc. Capital Strategy	10% complete
002	Council Tax	100% complete
003	Council Tax Benefit & Rent Allowances	100% complete
004	NNDR	100% complete
005	Creditors	90% complete
006	Payroll	100% complete
007	Debtors	25%complete
104	Income Cash and Banking inc. Petty Cash	85% complete
114	Recovery	40% complete
115	Treasury Management	100% complete
TOTAL HOURS - MANAGED AUDIT 0506		1099
107	Equipment and Vehicle Leasing	100% complete
110	Benefit Investigations	75% complete
113	Asset Management -income, expenditure, acquisition and disposal	100% complete
TOTAL HOURS - FINANCIAL & REGULATORY		208
Systems Audit - Chief Executive		
121	Election Expenses	100% complete
127	Strategic Partnerships	75% complete

TOTAL HOURS - CHIEF EXECUTIVE		109
Systems Audit - Customer Services		
130	Complaints Procedure	100% complete
141	Markets	100% complete
151	Grants	100% complete
154	Halls	100% complete
163	Parking	100% complete
TOTAL HOURS - CUSTOMER SERVICES		320
Non Audit - Chargeable Work		
IT Audit		
	IT Audit Needs Assessment	100% complete
	BACSTEL	100% complete
	PIR - Scout System	100% complete
TOTAL HOURS - IT		126
Contract System Audit		
300	Pre-contract procedures including tendering and contract formation	80% of budget spent
301.1	Grounds Maintenance	100% complete
301.2	Waste Management	c/f 2006/07
301.3	Leisure Management Contract	100% complete
301.4	Consultants	75% complete
301.5	Property Services	100% complete
302.1	Kennedy Gardens - Post contract review	100% complete
TOTAL HOURS - CONTRACT		480
Tender Openings		
	Tender Opening - Customer Services	
	Tender Opening - Financial and Regulatory Services	
TOTAL HOURS - TENDER OPENINGS		12
Corporate Governance		
405	Risk Management Process	
406	Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act	100% complete
408	Financial Regulations & CSOs	100% complete
412	Fraud and Whistle blowing Review	100% complete
413	Corporate Governance	
414	Statement of Internal Control	100% complete
415	Audit Committee	
	Conflicts of Interest	
	CPA	
TOTAL HOURS - CORPORATE GOVERNANCE		625
Working Groups		
590	Access to services (IT SSSC Contract)	
591	Procurement and Contracts	
592	Data Protection	
593	Hertfordshire Audit Partnership Groups	

594	Enforcement Forum	
595	Risk Management Group	
	Governance and Risk Group	
TOTAL HOURS WORKING GROUPS		301
Financial Evaluations		
601	Financial & Regulatory Services	
602	Customer Services	
TOTAL HOURS - FINANCIAL EVALUATIONS		33
Ad hoc Advice		
700	Chief Executive	
701	Financial & Regulatory Services	
702	Customer Services	
TOTAL HOURS - AD HOC ADVICE		257
Ad-hoc consultancy		
	Cash Collection Contract	100% complete
	Leisure Contract Handover	100% complete
	Procurement	42% of budget spent
	Money Laundering	100% complete
	Postal Voting Procedures	100% complete
	Post-project review - Pay Review	100% complete
TOTAL HOURS - AD HOC CONSULTANCY		184
Follow-up Audits		
	Homelessness	100% complete
	Private Sector Housing Grants	100% complete
	Housing Association Support & Liaison	100% complete
	Meals Service	100% complete
	Car Parks	100% complete
	Data Protection & FOI	100% complete
TOTAL HOURS - FOLLOW UP		60
Special Investigations		
	Investigation 1	100% complete
	Investigation 2	100% complete
	Investigation 3	100% complete
	Investigation 4	100% complete
	Investigation 5	100% complete
	CRC 1	100% complete
	CRC 2	100% complete
TOTAL HOURS - SPECIAL INVESTIGATIONS		220

TOTAL CHARGEABLE HOURS	4715

TOTAL HOURS - NON-CHARGEABLE	1024
TOTAL HOURS - OUT OF OFFICE	1548
TOTAL HOURS	7287

APPENDIX E

AUDIT AND CONSULTANCY SERVICES PERFORMANCE FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2006
AGAINST THE HERTFORDSHIRE AUDIT PARTNERSHIP PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

	<u>Definition</u>	<u>calculation</u>	<u>Target</u>	<u>Qtrs. 1 and 2</u>	<u>Qtrs. 1, 2 and 3</u>	<u>Year 2005/06</u>
KPI 01	Total number of actual chargeable hours to date as a percentage of total planned annual chargeable hours	4715 actual chargeable hours to date / 4823 annual planned chargeable hours = 97.8 %	90% cumulative	51.6%	80.7%	97.8%
KPI 02	The number of audit projects completed/ partially completed to date as a percentage of the total annual number of planned projects	42 completed and partially completed projects / 46 annual planned projects = 91.3%	90% cumulative	46.5%	80.1%	91.3%
KPI 03	Actual chargeable hours to date as a percentage of available hours to date	4715 chargeable hours to date / 5739 available hours to date = 82.2%	80% cumulative	82.5%	81.4%	82.2%

APPENDIX F

SUMMARIES OF AUDIT WORK CARRIED OUT BETWEEN 30TH JANUARY AND 31ST MARCH 2006

Title of Audit: Payroll System

Audit Opinion:

<p>Potential key risks identified prior to Audit</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Financial loss may be incurred due to fraudulent claims for expenses and mileage. b) Financial loss may be incurred due to the incorrect calculation and payment of additional payments / non-basic pay elements such as lump sums, market forces payments, standby payments, honoraria, overtime, etc. c) There may be ghost employees recorded on the payroll system, or leavers may be retained on the payroll system following cessation of employment. d) Penalties may be incurred where formal returns to HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) and other statutory / regulatory bodies are not submitted on a timely basis. e) There may be a lack of separation of duties and collusion between officers. f) There may not be adequate staffing structures and cover arrangements for absences, additional workload demands and unforeseen circumstances. g) The payroll system may not support and uphold statutory (Data Protection Act), regulatory (HMRC) and corporate requirements. h) The payroll system may not be populated with accurate data and may provide inaccurate or invalid outputs and management information.
<p>Assurance statement</p>	<p>Based on the work conducted and evidence viewed, Audit and Consultancy Services have concluded that a Medium level of assurance can be gained from the system of controls in operation over the Payroll system.</p> <p>The Payroll system is adequately controlled. While there is a basically sound system of controls, there are weaknesses and levels of non-compliance, which put some of the control objectives at risk.</p>
<p>Number of recommendations made in relation to key risks</p>	<p>The report has identified ten findings and recommendations designed to introduce new controls and procedures or to enhance and strengthen existing controls. One recommendation has been prioritised as High, eight have been prioritised as Medium and one has been prioritised as Low.</p>

Key risks are being managed by:

- A control framework is built into the Payroll system to ensure that it complies with all relevant Tax, National Insurance and Pension rates. The Authority can be certain that pay is generated accurately in accordance with requirements;
- Payments are made to HM Customs and Revenue on time;
- Deductions to pay were found to have been administered correctly in accordance with instruction and with correct payments made to the HM Revenues and Customs (HMRC) where appropriate;
- Maternity payments had been made correctly in accordance with HMRC rules and payments were shown correctly on the employee's payslip;
- a high-level review is now undertaken consistently by the Shared Services Manager who is also now fully trained to undertake the processing run to cover absence;
- reconciliations are performed in a timely way

Key internal controls to be strengthened by:

- Starters and Leavers forms are to be completed in full and actioned by authorised officers only;
- Expenses claim forms are to be completed in full;
- Additional Responsibility Payments are to be made in line with Policy and include a performance review following the period of additional responsibility payment;
- Market Forces Payment applications will only be accepted with an accompanying business case and are to be reviewed annually;
- The Authorised Signatory listing will be updated to ensure the Shared Services Manager can approve Payroll payments on BACSTEL;
- The Head of Human Resources is to be set up as a BACSTEL user to provide cover for absence to ensure separation of duties is maintained;

Title of Audit: Markets

Audit Opinion:

Potential key risks identified prior to Audit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Income collection, banking and reconciliation procedures may not comply with Financial Regulations and may not be operated in accordance with established and recommended best practice. Ordering and authorisation for payment of goods and services and petty cash may not comply with Financial Regulations. There may be no procedures for the issue of licences to market traders and allocation of stalls, or they may be inadequately applied. There may also be inadequate procedures for the registration of casual traders, the checking and recording of new traders' identification and the inspection of traders' insurance documentation. Petty cash imprests may be improperly used and maintained, and not reconciled on a regular basis. There may be no methodology for the consistent and fair management and control of commodities on the markets.
Assurance statement	Based on the work conducted and evidence viewed, Audit and Consultancy Services have concluded that a Medium level of assurance can be gained from the system of controls in operation over the Markets System.
Number of recommendations made in relation to key risks	This report has identified nine findings and recommendations designed to introduce new controls and procedures or to enhance and strengthen existing controls. Four recommendations have been prioritised as High, three have been prioritised as Medium and two have been prioritised as Low.

Key risks are being managed by:

- New market traders are required to complete an application pack and provide proof of identity and insurance cover prior to permission being granted to trade on the market. (Exceptions noted in Audit Report.)
- Full time traders are required to sign an annual License Agreement to trade on the Council's markets. (Exceptions noted in Audit Report.)
- The collection, recording and banking of income is generally well managed. (Exceptions noted in Final Audit Report.)
- The ordering of goods and services and payment of suppliers' invoices has shown improved compliance with the requirements of Financial Regulations. (Exceptions noted in Final Audit Report.)
- Contractual obligations with Firthdene are in the process of being formalised.
- The level of market traders debt has declined as a result of effective monitoring and recovery.

- Access controls to the Markets System have been strengthened and the Markets System is compacted and backed up on magnetic tape on a daily basis.

Key internal controls to be strengthened by:

- Explanations entered into the General Comments boxes on the Markets System will provide useful, additional explanation of Overs and Unders and not simply restate existing information, and regular systems reports will be run to monitor this.
- Every effort will be made, within current staff constraints, to secure the involvement of two officers in the cashing up process to reduce human error and potential negligence.
- Amendments will be made to the banking process to strengthen controls and rationalise paperwork.
- Integra orders will be raised prior to the receipt of suppliers invoices and purchase requisitions will be utilised and authorised to prompt the raising of the Integra order.
- License Agreements will be signed by the Head of Leisure and Environmental Services and / or Markets Manager as soon as possible following signing by the Market Trader and two forms of identification will be obtained and annotated for all new traders commencing trade on the Markets.

Title of Audit: Housing and Council Tax Benefits

Audit Opinion:

Potential key risks identified prior to Audit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-compliance with Statutory requirements; • System failure preventing the timely calculation and payment of benefit claims; • Benefit claims being incorrectly calculated, overpaid or duplicated; • Benefits being awarded to those lacking entitlement (fraudulent applicant or wrong person); and • Incorrect accounting and reconciliation.
Assurance statement	Based on the work conducted and evidence viewed, Audit and Consultancy Services have concluded that a Medium to High level of assurance can be gained from the system of controls in operation over Housing and Council Tax Benefits. This is the same level of assurance achieved in 2004/2005.
Number of recommendations made in relation to key risks	This report has identified five findings and recommendations designed to introduce new controls and procedures or to enhance and strengthen existing controls. Four recommendations have been prioritised as High and one has been prioritised as Medium. None have been prioritised as Low.

Key risks are being managed by:

- The Council operates in accordance with the Verification Framework and Housing and Council Tax Benefit Regulations.
- Benefits staff have access to and undertake formal and informal training in technical and professional skills relevant to personal and team requirements.
- Access to Systems parameter files and responsibility for the annual systems updating is allocated with an appropriate separation of duties and due consideration of training and skill levels.
- Claimant data is only entered onto the Benefits System following a thorough checking process in terms of the Verification Framework of the signed claim form and supporting information provided by the claimant and a variety of external agencies.
- Benefit entitlement is automatically calculated by the Benefits Module of the SX3 I-World System and electronically linked directly to the Council Tax Module, consequently reducing error and saving time.
- The Technical Team conducts regular, sample based quality control assessments and checks on Benefits Decision Notices prior to posting to claimants. The Technical Team also conducts quarterly accuracy / correctness checks in terms of BVPI 79a. Both checks are conducted to fulfil DWP requirements. (Exceptions noted in Final Audit Report.)
- Recovery of Benefits Overpayments is strictly pursued in terms of internal Quality Management Procedures and Work Instructions by a dedicated Overpayments Officer and the Recovery Team.

- A comprehensive set of Benefits performance standards is maintained and monitored by Benefits Management and reported on a quarterly basis to the Performance, Audit and Review Committee.
- The Benefits System is subject to rigorous external and internal scrutiny from the Audit Commission, Audit and Consultancy Services and others.

Key internal controls to be strengthened by:

- Monthly management checks of Benefits post opening procedures will now be undertaken by the Benefits Manager, and the signing sheet will be held with the Pre-Assessment Officers in the post room book.
- The Benefits Manager will reiterate the need, at the next team meeting, for Benefits assessment and calculation will only be undertaken utilising 'current' or the most recent Claim Forms. (This is usually the case.)
- Efforts will continue to resolve variances on the Private Tenants Subsidy Reconciliation and Private Tenants Housing Benefit Reconciliation, correct historic SX3 Benefits Systems failings in this regard and obtain the necessary subsidy-related training.
- Quality Management System Procedures will be developed for the BACS Payment Review Process.
- The Senior Benefits Officers have assumed responsibility for the 4% Quality Checks to alleviate pressures on the Technical Team. This has been the case since 4th April 2006.

Title of Audit: Council Tax

Audit Opinion:

<p>Potential key risks identified prior to Audit</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There may be non-compliance with statutory requirements such as the Local Government Finance Act, Council Tax Orders and Council Tax Regulations. • Council Tax liability may be incorrectly determined and calculated. • Council Tax payers may not be charged, or may be charged the incorrect amount. • Council Tax may not be collected or it may be incorrectly accounted for / allocated to the incorrect account. • There may be no separation of duties between administration and collection. • Council Tax debit may not be reconciled to the valuation list and District Valuer amendment. • Amendments to the valuation list and claims for discounts may not be correct. • Collections may not be posted daily to personal and suspense accounts and agreed to the main accounting system. • Unidentified items posted to suspense may not be subject to prompt investigation, monitoring and adequate authorisation when posted to personal accounts. • Collection rates may not be regularly monitored. • The Council Tax and main accounting system may not be reconciled at year end.
<p>Assurance statement</p>	<p>Based on the work conducted and evidence viewed, Audit and Consultancy Services have concluded that a Medium to High level of assurance can be gained from the system of controls in operation over and Council Tax.</p>
<p>Number of recommendations made in relation to key risks</p>	<p>This report has identified four findings and recommendations designed to introduce new controls and procedures or to enhance and strengthen existing controls. One recommendation has been prioritised as High and three have been prioritised as Medium. None have been prioritised as Low.</p>

Key risks are being managed by:

- Officers responsible for Council Tax systems have access to and operate in compliance with:
 - a) Statute such as the Local Government Finance Act;
 - b) Internal Quality Management Systems and Administration Procedures;
 - c) Regulations and guidelines from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, Valuation Office Agency (V.O.A.) and Inland Revenue;

- d) Service Partnership Agreements with the Group Valuation Officer; and
- e) Systems advice, guidance and procedures from the SX3 database software providers.
- The Council Tax system complies with all statutory requirements in respect of Valuation, Liability, Billing and Collection. All updates to the Valuation List are carried out promptly and are supported by V.O.A. schedules.
- There is generally documentary evidence or proof to support all billing transactions. All bills are raised and despatched promptly and income is collected and recorded promptly and accurately.
- The SX3 Council Tax system and Main Accounting System (Integra) are formally reconciled on a regular basis.

Key internal controls to be strengthened by:

- The suppressed accounts report will be reviewed quarterly to identify accounts that have an extended suppression period, to confirm that the suppression is still valid and that it should not be 'unsuppressed'.
- All domestic properties that are identified as composite from the V.O. listings are being correctly categorised as such on the SX3 system and the appropriate cross-reference is also being entered to ensure completeness between the Council Tax and NNDR Systems.
- An approved timetable of events and processes required to achieve, monitor and manage the setting and billing of the annual council tax billing run will be documented in future as part of a Project Plan and involve all key staff.

Title of Audit: NNDR (Business Rates)
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Audit Opinion:

<p>Potential key risks identified prior to Audit</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There may be non-compliance with statutory requirements such as the Local Government Finance Act, NNDR Orders and NNDR Regulations. • NNDR liability may be incorrectly determined and calculated. • NNDR rate payers may not be charged, or may be charged the incorrect amount. • NNDR may not be collected or it may be incorrectly accounted for / allocated to the incorrect account. • There may be no separation of duties between administration and collection. • Rateable value may not be reconciled to the valuation list. • The appropriate multiplier may not be used. • Convenient methods of payment may not be available. • Amendments to the valuation list and claims for discounts may not be made correctly. • Suspense accounts may not be subject to prompt investigation and regular monitoring. • Collection rates may not be regularly monitored. • The NNDR system and main accounting system may not be reconciled at year end.
<p>Assurance statement</p>	<p>Based on the work conducted and evidence viewed, Audit and Consultancy Services have concluded that a Medium to High level of assurance can be gained from the system of controls in operation over NNDR (Business Rates).</p>
<p>Number of recommendations made in relation to key risks</p>	<p>This report has identified four findings and recommendations designed to introduce new controls and procedures or to enhance and strengthen existing controls. One recommendations has been prioritised as High, two have been prioritised as Medium and one has been prioritised as Low.</p>

Key risks are being managed by:

- Officers responsible for NNDR systems have access to and operate in compliance with:
 - a) Statute such as the Local Government Finance Act;
 - b) Internal Quality Management Systems and Administration Procedures;
 - c) Regulations and guidelines from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, Valuation Office Agency (V.O.A.) and Inland Revenue;
 - d) Service Partnership Agreements with the Group Valuation Officer; and
 - e) Systems advice, guidance and procedures from the SX3 database software providers.

- The NNDR system complies with all statutory requirements in respect of Valuation, Liability, Billing and Collection. All updates to the Valuation List are carried out promptly and are supported by V.O.A. schedules.
- The granting of Discretionary Rate Relief is authorised in accordance with Government and Council policy.
- There is documentary evidence or proof to support all billing transactions. All bills are raised and despatched promptly.

Key internal controls to be strengthened by:

- An approved timetable of events and processes required to achieve, monitor and manage the setting and billing of the annual council tax billing run will be documented in future as part of a Project Plan and involve all key staff.
- All composite properties are being correctly recorded as such and cross-referenced to the relevant 'other half' to ensure that the system accurately reflects the status of each property and prevents anomalies occurring.
- All account suppressions will have adequate notes added to the account to explain why the action has been taken, when and by whom. The notes will be clear and precise to provide sufficient information to any other staff reviewing the account. This will be communicated to relevant staff.

Title of Audit: Treasury Management
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Audit Opinion:

Potential key risks identified prior to Audit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cash may not be available when needed. (Liquidity Risk) • Fluctuations in the levels of interest rates or exchange rates may create an unbudgeted burden on the Council's finances. (Interest Rate Risk and Exchange Rate Risk) • Default by a third party to meet its contractual obligations to the Council may result in loss. • Maturing borrowings may not be refinanced on terms that reflect the provisions made by the Council. • The Council or a third party may not act in compliance with its legal powers or regulatory requirements, leading to loss. • The Council may not identify the circumstances in which it may be exposed to the risk of loss through fraud, error, corruption or other eventualities in its treasury management dealings and may fail to employ suitable systems and procedures and maintain effective contingency management arrangements to these ends. • There may be a loss of reputation due to losses or errors made by the Council or through unethical actions by a counterparty.
Assurance statement	Based on the work conducted and evidence viewed, Audit and Consultancy Services have concluded that a High level of assurance can be gained from the system of controls in operation over Treasury Management.
Number of recommendations made in relation to key risks	This report has identified seven findings and recommendations designed to introduce new controls and procedures or to enhance and strengthen existing controls. Six recommendations have been prioritised as Medium and one as Low.

Key risks are being managed by:

- The Treasury Management Strategy and Policy documents are subject to review and amendment, prior to annual approval by Cabinet and full Council.
- The development of detailed Treasury Management Practice documents, which comply with best practice as identified by CIPFA, has assisted in providing detailed guidance to officers involved in the Treasury Management function. (See exception reported in Audit Report.)
- A robust quarterly reporting structure has been implemented.
- Risk Management has been embedded within the Treasury Management Practices in accordance with the CIPFA Code of Practice.
- Access to the Hexagon System is fairly strictly controlled. (See exception in Audit Report.)
- Robust audit trails evidence the authorisation, review, documentation and reconciliation of daily fund management and investment activity (See exceptions reported in Audit Report.)

- External brokers are used to acquire specialist investment skills and resources, obtain best value and benchmark Council investment performance.
- Treasury management procedures are further strengthened through the inclusion within the Council's Financial Regulations of the requirement to act in accordance with the CIPFA Code of Practice and to report annually on Treasury Policy and Strategy to Council.

Key internal controls to be strengthened by:

- Treasury Management Practices and accompanying schedules will be reviewed and appropriate amendments and updates made.
- A review is to be conducted of the required Anti-Money Laundering Policy training and an appropriate method of delivery will be determined. This will be merged with overall training on Anti-Fraud and Corruption.
- Revised access controls for the Hexagon System will be introduced with the new banking software.
- An review of the monthly reconciliation of investment transactions to the General Ledger will be conducted by an officer independent of the investment process.
- An evaluation of External Cash / Fund Managers will take place as part of the Service and Financial Planning Process for 2007/2008 budgets.

Title of the Audit: Confidential Reporting Code Investigation (CRC1)

The Council's Monitoring Officer instructed Audit and Consultancy Services to undertake an investigation into a written complaint made under the Council's Confidential Reporting Policy.

The complaint alleged that personnel records are being maintained which appear to contravene the Council's policies and procedures and may be been in breach of the Data Protection Act.

Work was undertaken through interviews and examination of locally held personnel files of the officer named in the complaint.

Recommendations were made to ensure that personnel data is held in accordance with the Data Protection Act. In particular that:

- All information relating to past employees and all original documentation is held on the central personnel file.
- Following disciplinary and grievance action, all papers relating to cases are returned to the Human Resources Section.
- Guidance is provided to officers with line management responsibility on the maintenance of staff files, drawing to their attention that management files need to comply with the principles of the Data Protection Act. This relates in particular to the need to only maintain relevant information for as long as it is needed.
- Where management issues with members of staff arise, managers and employees liaise with Human Resources to ensure that appropriate and reasonable action is taken.
- The Council's Retention Schedule, is reviewed in relation to the maintenance of personal information to ensure that the schedule complies with best practice and this Authority's specific requirements. This task would fall under the responsibility of the Data Protection Liaison Group, Audit and Consultancy Services and the Information Unit.
- Data Protection training is reviewed to confirm that managers and staff have been trained and are aware of the requirements of the Data Protection Act.

Title of the Audit: Confidential Reporting Code Investigation (CRC2)

The Monitoring Officer and the Strategic Director of Financial and Regulatory Services instructed Audit and Consultancy Services to undertake an investigation into a written complaint made under the Council's Confidential Reporting Policy. The majority of the complaints were connected with alleged breaches of Health and Safety legislation and of the Council's Contract Standing Orders.

It was identified that some of the concerns raised would be more properly dealt with under the Council's Dignity at Work Policy; an investigation into issues raised under this policy was conducted concurrently with the Confidential Reporting investigation.

The remaining issues were considered to be potentially serious enough breaches of legislation, or Contract Standing Orders to warrant investigation under the Policy. Twenty separate issues were identified as requiring investigation, the purpose of which was to determine whether the allegations could be substantiated and if so, what further action needed to be taken.

A substantial amount of work was undertaken, which included conducting interviews with a number of Council officers, detailed examination of documentation and computer systems and research on legislative requirements.

It was concluded that the majority of the allegations contained within the statement submitted under the Council's Confidential Reporting Code were unfounded or unproven.

However, there were several areas in which recommendations were necessary in order to address shortcomings in procedure, these included:

- Risk Assessments and Method Statements should be produced in all instances where necessary. Works should not commence until suitable and sufficient risk assessments have been undertaken.
- The Asbestos Declaration on the in house order requisition must be completed by the ordering officer in all instances. When the Integra system is upgraded, the possibility of incorporating a standard notification to contractors alerting them to the possibility of asbestos existing should be examined.
- The appointment of a consultant employed by the Council needs to be regularised to ensure compliance with Contract Standing Orders.
- Responsibility for traffic management issues when works are carried out at car parks and other similar necessary instances, need to be clarified and clearly stated on any orders issued to contractors.

The final report was submitted to the Council's Monitoring Officer and Strategic Director of Financial and Regulatory Services.

Title of the Audit: Scheduled Consultancy Work

(It should be noted that unscheduled ad hoc consultancy work and financial evaluations were performed during the period under review. Time has been allocated in the 2005/2006 Audit Plan for work of this nature.)

Introduction:

Scheduled Consultancy work was conducted in the following areas as part of the 2005/2006 Audit Plan:

1. Cash Collection Contract

The Principal Auditor continues to provide advice involved with procedures following the closure of the cash office, and with assisting the Head of Revenue Services and Chief Engineer in reviewing the possibility of outsourcing the collection of car park coin to an outside supplier.

2. Revision of Financial Regulations and Contract Standing Orders

Audit & Consultancy Services have been involved in the annual review and revision of the Council's Financial Regulations and Contract Standing Orders.

3. Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy

The Principal Auditor undertook the annual revision of the Council's Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy which was presented to the Corporate Governance Group and Staff Consultation Forum.

4. Pest Control Payments

The Principal Auditor has provided advice to enable Pest Control Payments to be collected electronically in advance by the Council's Contractor.

5. Procurement Strategy

The Principal Auditor has continued to be a key member of the Procurement and Contracts Group and has contributed to the further development of strategy, policy and procedures in this area. Particular issues currently under development include the Herts e-marketplace and the introduction of purchasing cards.

6. Financial Evaluations

Financial evaluations were carried out on companies under consideration for the supply of electoral registration software and for the provision of a new payroll/HR system.

1. Two financial evaluations of external companies were performed on behalf of IT Services as part of procurement processes being undertaken.
2. Three companies being considered for the supply of a new electoral management system.
3. Six companies being considered for the supply of a new integrated HR / Payroll system.
4. Three companies under consideration for strategic flood risk assessment works.

7. Electoral Services Software

Advice was given to the Democratic Services Manager regarding the procurement of new electoral registration software, in particular the development of a pre-qualification questionnaire.

8. Payroll Software

Advice was given to the Shared Services Manager regarding the best practice regarding the procurement of the above system and in achieving compliance with the Council's Contract Standing orders.

9. PACIF Grants

Advice was provided to the Community Facilities Manager regarding procedures surrounding the Parish Amenity Capital Improvement Fund awards for the year 2005/06.

10. Contracts

Advice and assistance has been provide to officers across the Council on contractual issues on a variety of schemes including: Public Conveniences, Growth Area Fund 2, Grounds Maintenance, Leisure Management, Wilbury Hills Cemetery, Grange Central planning consultants and Howard Gardens.

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

AGENDA ITEM No.

12

HIGH LEVEL PERFORMANCE INDICATORS – PERFORMANCE TARGETS FOR WASTE ARISINGS AND COMPOSTING

PRESENTATION BY THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND WASTE MANAGEMENT

Please refer to the briefing note overleaf.

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**PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND WASTE MANAGEMENT
PRESENTATION TO PARC
22nd June 2006**

PROPOSED TARGETS FOR PERFORMANCE INDICATOR 2006 to 2009.

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 At the meeting of the Performance, Audit and Review Committee on 2nd March 2006, Members considered a report on the Proposed Targets for Indicators 2006 to 2009.
- 1.2 Members resolved that the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Waste Management be invited to the meeting of PARC on 22nd June 2006 to give a presentation on the targets set for waste arisings, collections, composting i.e. BVPI 82a (i), BVPI 82a (ii), BVPI 82b (i), BVPI 82b (ii), BVPI 84a, and BVPI 84b.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The target set for BVPI 82a (i) shows a reduction in the percentage of recycling while the target set for BVPI 82a (ii) shows a small increase in the tonnage of household waste sent for recycling.
- 2.2 The target set for BVPI 82b (i) shows an increase in the percentage of composting, the target set for BVPI 82b (ii) also shows an increase in the tonnage of household waste sent for composting.
- 2.3 The target set for BVPI 84a shows an increase in the kilograms of household waste collected per head of population.
- 2.4 The target for BVPI 84b shows an increase in the percentage change from the previous financial year in the kilograms of household waste collected per head of population.
- 2.5 The statutory target set by the ODPM is a combination of BVPI 82a and BVPI 82b and the 2005/6 level set for NHDC was 24%.
- 2.6 NHDCs recycling rate for 2005/6, after adjustments to include recycled fridges and televisions, was 26.72%

3. REASONS FOR LEVELS OF TARGETS SET

- 3.1 **BVPI 82a (i)** The method determined by the ODPM for calculating the percentage of household waste sent for recycling requires the figure returned to be expressed as a percentage of the total waste arisings.
The total waste arisings figure includes residual waste, recycling tonnages, and compost tonnages, this figure increased significantly in 2005/6 due to the additional compost tonnages collected as a result of the expansion of the compost scheme. Therefore although the amount of recycling is increasing, the percentage against total waste arising is expected to decrease until 2007/8 when the impact of rising compost collections will level out.

- 3.2 **BVPI 82a (ii)** The targets set reflect an increase in the tonnage collected which is anticipated as a result of continuing publicity and promotions, and the introduction of plastic and can recycling in 2007/8.
- 3.2 **BVPI 84a, and BVPI 84b** Both targets reflect the anticipated increase in compost tonnages collected in 2005/6 and 2006/7 as a result of the expansion of our compost collection scheme. The small drop forecast for 2007/8 and 2008/9 is anticipated as a result of continuing publicity and promotions. At this stage no allowance has been made for the impact of introducing the fortnightly collection of residual waste in 2007/8 or 2008/9.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 That this Committee notes the reasons given for the levels set for BVPI 82a (i), BVPI 82a (ii), BVPI 82b (i), BVPI 82b (ii), BVPI 84a, and BVPI 84b.
- 4.2 That this Committee notes that the levels set for BVPI 82a (i), BVPI 82a (ii), BVPI 82b (i), BVPI 82b (ii), BVPI 84a, and BVPI 84b will need to be re-visited when a date has been confirmed for the introduction of the fortnightly collection of residual waste .

5.0 REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 The target levels set for BVPI 82a (i), BVPI 82a (ii), BVPI 82b (i), BVPI 82b (ii), BVPI 84a, and BVPI 84b are challenging but realistic.
- 5.2 The introduction of the fortnightly collection of residual waste is expected to affect the level of waste produced by each household, as residents become more waste conscious, and the participation rates for recycling and composting schemes can be expected to increase.

5.0 CONTACT OFFICERS

- 5.1 Tony Clampton
Service Manager- Waste Management
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**TITLE OF REPORT: PERFORMANCE INFORMATION MANAGEMENT REPORT
APRIL 2005 – MARCH 2006**

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF POLICY, PARTNERSHIPS & PERFORMANCE

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 To report year-end performance results for the period April 2005 – March 2006 (Appendix A, circulated as a separate document).

2. FORWARD PLAN

- 2.1 This report does not recommend a key decision and has not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 This is the fourth and final Performance Information Management report of the financial year 2005/06.
- 3.2 This report incorporates performance information on all the high level indicators and therefore precludes the need for a separate report on March High Level Indicators.
- 3.3 All information has been presented to DMT's and CMT for scrutiny and discussion prior to presentation to PARC.
- 3.4 All the performance data and commentary detailed in Appendix A will be included in the Best Value Performance Plan to be published before 30 June 2006. The data will also be submitted to the Audit Commission for validation before it is published on the ODPM website for comparison with other local authorities in England.

4. ISSUES

- 4.1 **UPDATE ON BV183b**
September 2005 PARC requested details on BV183b be updated on a quarterly basis. This can be seen at Appendix B.
- 4.2 **BV218 – ABANDONED VEHICLES**
Appendix C details a number of issues relating to performance indicators BV218a and BV218b.
- 4.3 **AMENDMENT TO TARGETS**
Based on completing the year-end data officers have requested to amend the following targets.
For reference the commentaries for all approved targets can be seen at Appendix E.

PI	Actual Data 2005/06	Approved/ Proposed target 2006/07	Approved/ Proposed target 2007/08	Approved/ Proposed target 2008/09
BV2b The quality of an Authority's Race Equality Scheme (19 point checklist)	84%	79% / 84%	79% / 84%	79% / 84%
Following an internal audit the year-end figure has been amended from 79% to 84%. We therefore need to increase the target for 2006/07.				
BV11a The % of the top paid 5% staff who are women.	35.49%	28% / 35.49%	29% / 35.49%	30% / 35.49%
The proposed target of 35.49% is based on 7 female staff. The small number of staff at director and head of service level will mean little movement over the next few years. Future targets will be reviewed, based on the performance achieved during 2006/07.				
BV84b The percentage change from the previous financial year in the no. of kg of waste collected per head of the population.	4.53%	6.69% / 8.67%	No change	No change
The approved target was set based on an estimated and projected value of kg per head of population. The actual 2005/06 return showed a slightly lower level overall of household waste arisings. Whilst representing a good performance for 2005/06 this means that calculations for this PI for 2006/07 has to be measured against a lower than anticipated base level. 6.69% based on: 517.44 kg estimated target for 2006/07 and 485kg projected for 2005/06 8.67% based on: 511.2kg target for 2006/07 and 470.4kg actual for 2005/06				
BV170a No. of visits/usage's of museums per 1000 population.	490	470 / 500	475 / 500	480 / 500
Following an internal audit the year-end figure has been amended from 591.42 to 490. We therefore need to increase the target for 2006/07 to ensure continuous improvement. Future targets will be reviewed, based on the performance achieved during 2006/07.				
BV170c No. of school visits to museums.	3626	2550 / 3200	2600 / 3650	2650 / 3650
Following an internal audit the year-end figure has been amended to 3626. We therefore need to increase the target for 2006/07. We do not expect to match the visits made in 2005/06 as we will not have a learning officer in post for the first two terms of 2006. Future targets will be reviewed, based on the performance achieved during 2006/07.				
BV226b The % of monies spent on advice and guidance services to organisations with a Quality Mark.	84.71%	68% / 84.71%	68% / 84.71%	68% / 84.71%
Following an internal audit the year-end figure has been amended from 68% to 84.71%. We therefore need to increase the target for next year to maintain the same level. The % of organisations holding the quality mark is unlikely to change over the next 3 years.				
LC15 The number of swims and other leisure visits per 1000 population.	7137	7743 / 7300	7800 / 7400	7800 / 7400
Following a discussion at DMT and the year-end data being received officers have requested to amend the targets.				
PE32 Percentage of customers satisfied with the environmental health service.	81.98%	65% / 83%	67% / 83.5%	70% / 84%
Following the production of the year-end data, officers believe a more challenging target figure needs to be set. Target figures of 83.50% (2007/08) and 84.00% (2008/09) are proposed for subsequent years, to reflect the expected increase in customer satisfaction. However, these future targets will be reviewed, based on the performance achieved during 2006/07.				

4.4 SURVEY TARGETS

The following targets have been set for the BVPI Surveys to be carried out during 2006/07. They were not included in the original target setting report as we were waiting for clarification from the ODPM regarding the content of these surveys.

The targets for BV80 Benefits Survey have already been approved. (PARC 2.3.06)

BVPI	Description	2003/04 Actual Data	2006/07 Proposed targets
BV3	The percentage of citizens satisfied with the overall services provided by their authority.	54.20	72.00
BV4	The percentage of those making complaints satisfied with the handling of those complaints.	32.10	45.00
BV89	The % people satisfied with the cleanliness standard in their area.	62.50	73.00
BV90	a) The % people satisfied with household waste collection.	89.20	91.00
	b) The % people satisfied with waste recycling.	63.70	65.00
BV111	% of planning applicants satisfied with the service received.	83.00	85.00
BV119	The % residents satisfied with the Local Authority Cultural services		
	a) sports and leisure facilities	50.80	54.00
	b) libraries	71.40	-
	c) museums	48.80	49.00
	d) art activities and venues	45.50	-
	e) parks and open spaces	71.50	72.00

4.5 PERFORMANCE DATA

A breakdown of the performance indicators collected is as follows:

Directorate	Total PIs (or parts thereof)			*Colour status N/A	Green	Amber	Red
	BVPI	Local	Total				
Financial & Reg Services	40	14	54	4	28	12	10
Customer Services	29	14	43	2	19	15	7
Chief Executive's	10	2	12	8	4	0	0
TOTAL	79	30	109	14	51	27	17
April – March 2006					54%	28%	18%
April – March 2005					48%	30%	22%

*N/A – indicators that are for information only and therefore a colour status is not applicable.

The table above shows good progress. Compared to last year there is a 6% increase in indicators with a green traffic light status.

4.6 COMPARATIVE DATA

The comparative data tables (circulated as a separate document Appendix D for new members only) shows the performance of NHDC against 11 of our 'nearest neighbours' and other Hertfordshire authorities. The data is based on 2004/05 audited data. Audited data for 2005/06 will be available from the Audit Commission in December 2006.

This information was previously circulated to PARC in March 2006 with the 'Performance Information Management Report April 2005-December 2005'.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 None.

6. FINANCIAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

6.1 None.

7. HUMAN RESOURCE AND EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

7.1 None.

8. CONSULTATION WITH EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS AND WARD MEMBERS (If appropriate)

8.1 Not applicable.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 To monitor performance April 2005 – March 2006 and to note the performance information which will be published in the BVPP 2006/07.

9.2 To note areas of under-achievement as well as good performance.

9.3 To note the progress made on BV183b.

9.4 To approve the change in targets as detailed in the table at para 4.3.

9.5 To approve the targets set for the survey BVPI's to be carried out during 2006/07.

9.6 To note the situation regarding BV218.

10. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 The recommendation(s) contained within paragraph 9 are made in accordance with the declared policy of the Council.

11. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

11.1 Not applicable.

12. APPENDICES

- 12.1 Appendix A – Performance Information Management Report, April 2005 to March 2006 – presented as a supplement to the main agenda.
- 12.2 Appendix B – Progress report on BV183b.
- 12.3 Appendix C – BV218 – Abandoned Vehicles.
- 12.4 Appendix D – Comparative data tables for new members
- 12.5 Appendix E – Commentary for the targets set – for reference

13. CONTACT OFFICERS

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14. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 14.1 Performance Information Files 2000 to date - available from the Policy, Partnerships & Performance Library, 1st Floor, Council Offices, Gernon Road, Letchworth.



Performance Information Management Report

**April 2005 –
March 2006**

Performance Management

What are Best Value Performance Indicators?

Since 1992 the Audit Commission has provided annual direction for local authorities specifying a set of performance measures against key service areas. When the duty of Best Value came into effect under Local Government Act 1999, departments in central government produced a complete set of BVPI. The Audit Commission ceased to set ACPI in 2001. ODPM now sets them all.

BVPIs help the public and local and central government to monitor, analyse and compare the achievements of local authorities. This analysis and comparison serves three main purposes:

- To enable central Government to monitor progress over a period of time;
- To allow authorities to compare their performance against that of their peers; and
- To provide residents with information about the performance of their local authority.

Performance Management at North Hertfordshire District Council

The council's performance management system was introduced in October 2000, to ensure that we set and achieved challenging targets in the services we provide. It has been recognised by the District Audit as an example of notable practice, helping us to 'collect accurate, comprehensive and comparable data on performance, providing a good foundation from which to improve services'.

What is reported and to whom?

During 2005/06 we have monitored our performance against 79 Best Value Performance Indicators, including subsections set by the Government. We have also monitored performance against 30 locally set indicators.

These have been reported quarterly to Corporate Management Team and the Performance Audit & Review Committee (PARC).

Performance on a selection of 'high level' indicators has also been considered on a monthly basis. The criteria used for identifying which indicators should be designated as 'high level' included:

- Results appear in bottom two quartiles when compared to other local authorities in England
- Qualification in previous internal or external audits
- Consistent poor performance
- Cross-cutting or significant corporate health implications
- High public visibility
- Cost effective for monthly monitoring

Performance Management

Where can I view other authorities data

www.bvpi.gov.uk

Here you can view the audited data for other Authorities or make comparisons with other Authorities on individual Performance Indicators.

The 2004/05 audited data became available in January 2006. The Performance team have produced a booklet comparing our performance with our 'nearest neighbours' and other authorities in the county area (audited 2004/05 PI data).

The North Herts data has been colour coded to show which quartile we are in when our performance is compared to the PI results of all authorities in England. You can view this booklet on the G Drive at: G/Performance management/Comparative Data/2004-05 or obtain a hard copy from the Performance team.

Performance Targets and Standards

Targets specify desired levels of achievement, with deadlines and should aim for continuous improvement. They act as a guide to staff as to what they should be aiming to achieve. They aim to show local people what service improvements they can reasonably expect.

The targets on some BVPIs are set by the Government by analysing national and regional averages to predict the future performance across local government.

- a) 'performance standards' These must be met by the Authority. Failure to meet a performance standard will normally be judged as a failure to meet Best Value for that particular service
The following BVPIs have performance standards set:
BV 109a, BV 109b, BV 109c, BV 82a, BV 82b.

- b) 'top-quartile targets' Local authorities should aim to reach the performance level of the top quartile of performers in the previous financial year's outturns.
Top-quartile targets have been set for the following BVPIs:
BV 9, BV 10, BV 12, BV 14, BV 15.

Responsible Officers set all other targets in January/February of each year using comparative data and previous results.

The targets were challenged and subsequently approved by CMT and PARC.

District Council Performance Indicators 2005/06

What's new, and why the changes?

A formal consultation between authorities and ODPM ran from 6th July 2004 to 31st August 2004. Over 500 replies were received to the document. These replies helped inform amendments to existing and newly proposed BVPIs.

The new and amended PIs were then piloted. This was the first year that piloting was employed. Piloting authorities were asked to assess the new and amended PIs against eleven criteria. After the consultation and pilot, 10 new BVPIs have been added and 26 have been amended.

New BVPI

New BVPI	Description	Responsible Officer	Portfolio Holder
BV 213	No. of homelessness cases prevented	Andy Godman	Cllr Ashley
BV 214	Repeat homelessness	Andy Godman	Cllr Ashley
BV 217	Pollution control	Andy Godman	Cllr Ashley
BV 218	Abandoned vehicles	Andy Godman	Cllr Ashley
BV 216	Contaminated land	Andy Godman	Cllr Thake
BV 219	Conservation areas	David Scholes	Cllr Thake

Amended BVPI

Amended BVPI	Description	Comments
BV 11c	Top 5% of earners that have a disability	A new part of BV11
BV 79b	Accuracy of recovering overpayments	Collected in 3 parts BV79b i), ii), iii)
BV 82a	Household waste recycled	Requires total tonnage as well as %
BV 82b	Household waste composted	Requires total tonnage as well as %
BV 84	Household waste per head	BV84b collects % change from previous yr
BV 91	Residents served by kerbside recycling	BV91b requires collection of 2 recyclables
BV 199	Levels of street cleanliness, graffiti, fly-posting and fly-tipping	Now a 4 part PI
BV 200	Plan making	Local Development Scheme – submission and meeting milestones
BV126	Domestic Burglaries	Detection rate removed
BV 127	Violent Crime & Robberies	Parts a-d amalgamated into a. b Robberies
BV 128	Vehicle crimes	Detection rate removed
BV 225 (176)	Actions against Domestic Violence	An 11 point checklist
BV 226 (177)	Percentage of authority expenditure on Community Legal Services	
BV 170	Number of visits to museums	Now a 3 part PI Now includes part funded museums

Deleted BVPI

Deleted BVPI	Description
BV 1	Community Strategies
BV 180	Energy consumption
BV 62	Private sector dwellings made fit

Quarterly Performance Information Management Report

KEY

This report lists all the Performance Indicators (PI) both national and local collected by North Herts District Council to measure performance. The PI's are listed by directorate. Each PI has the following information:

- **Reference number** (shaded PI denotes 'High Level' – monitored monthly)
- **Brief description of the definition**
- **Polarity statement - AIM** This shows whether authorities should be aiming for a high or low outturn figure.
 - ↑ Good performance = high outturn figure
 - ↓ Good performance = low outturn figure
 - **N/A** Outturn is not numerical
- **Actual for 02/03, 03/04, 04/05**
- **Top Quartile data** The top 25% of English authorities are achieving this performance or better, updated with 04/05 data.
- **Targets we aim to achieve**
- **Current Performance**
- **A 'traffic light' status** North Hertfordshire operates a 'traffic light system'. PI's are allocated a colour code to show their 'year to date' performance.
 - Green Target achieved or exceeded
 - Amber 15% below set target
 - Red More than 15% below target
- **Comments for Amber and Red status**
- **Portfolio holder** This information has previously been provided in a separate appendix and is now included in the table of results.

Population: This report uses the rounded population estimates for mid 2004.

Population Estimates	Rounded to nearest 100	Actual	PI data
Mid 2004	119,900	119,929	2005/06
Mid 2003	119,100	119,093	2004/05
Mid 2002	118,300	118,292	2003/04
Mid 2001	117,100		2002/03

Households:

The ODPM states that we use the last statement received before the beginning of the financial year for 'Statement of Numbers and bands of all Properties shown in the Valuation List for the Billing Authority area'.

Year	Number of households
2005/06	52428
2004/05	51929
2003/04	51442
2002/03	48810

BVPI	Description	Aim	Actual 2002/03 2003/04 2004/05	Top Quartile Data (All England) 2003/04 audited 2004/05 audited	@ 30 June 05	@ 30 Sept 05	@ 31 Dec 05	@ 31.Mar 06	Target 2005/06	April 2005– March 2006	See Commentary on Pages 23-30	Portfolio Holder
Financial and Regulatory Services Directorate												
BV8	The percentage of invoices for commercial goods & services paid by the authority within 30 days of receipt or within the agreed payment terms.	↑	92.56% 96.73% 98.44%	95.90% 95.97%	G	G	G	G	98.25%	99.03% (15262/15411)	No	Cllr T Hone
BV9	The percentage of council tax collected by the authority in the year.	↑	98.40% 99.06% 99.31%	98.29% 98.30%	G	G	G	G	98.80%	99.50%	No	Cllr T Hone
BV10	The percentage of non-domestic rates collected.	↑	97.96% 99.48% 99.66%	99.10% 99.14%	G	G	G	G	99.10%	99.30%	No	Cllr T Hone
BV64	The number of non-local authority-owned vacant dwellings returned to occupation or demolished during the financial year as a direct result of action by the local authority.	↑	1 2.6 2	No Data 56.25	R	R	R	R	10 properties	2	Yes	Cllr Mrs A E Ashley
BV76a	The number of housing benefit claimants in the local authority area visited, per 1,000 caseload.	↑	- 156.79 218.6	310.45 282.16	R	A	R	R	310.00	214.45	Yes	Cllr T Hone
BV76b	The number of fraud investigators employed by the local authority, per 1,000 caseload.	↑	- 0.40 0.38	0.44 No Data	A	A	A	A	0.43	0.41	Yes	Cllr T Hone
BV76c	The number of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit (HB/CTB) fraud investigations carried out by the local authority per year, per 1,000 caseload.	↑	- 42.64 32.10	52.61 53.40	R	R	R	R	65.00	27.80	Yes	Cllr T Hone

BVPI	Description	Aim	Actual 2002/03 2003/04 2004/05	Top Quartile Data (All England) 2003/04 audited 2004/05 audited	@ 30 June 05	@ 30 Sept 05	@ 31 Dec 05	@ 31. Mar 06	Target 2005/06	April 2005– March 2006	See Commentary on Pages 23-30	Portfolio Holder
Financial and Regulatory Services Directorate												
BV76d	The number of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit (HB/CTB) prosecutions and sanctions, per year, per 1,000 caseload, in the local authority area.	↑	- 3.10 4.37	4.84 5.31	G	G	G	G	5.50	6.74	No	Cllr T Hone
BV78a	The average processing time taken for all new Housing and Council Tax Benefit (HB/CTB) claims submitted to the local authority, for which the date of decision is within the financial year being reported.	↓	22.01 26.67 26.88	32 days 29.4 days	R	R	R	A	25.0 days	28.7 days	Yes	Cllr T Hone
BV78b	The average processing time taken for all written notifications to the local authority of changes to a claimant's circumstance that require a new decision on behalf of the authority.	↓	7.55 8.54 5.93	7.7 days 7.4 days	R	R	R	R	8.5 days	24.9 days	Yes	Cllr T Hone
BV79a	The percentage of cases within a random sample for which the authority's calculation of Housing and Council Tax Benefit (HB/CTB) is found to be correct.	↑	96.02% 98.40% 98.40%	98.80% 99.00%	A	G	A	A	98.60%	97.00%	Yes	Cllr T Hone
BV79b (i)	The amount of Housing Benefit (HB) overpayments recovered during the period being reported on as a percentage of all HB overpayments during that period.	↑	Amended definition for 2005/06	No Data No Data	No Targets	G	A	G	48.00%	68.41%	No	Cllr T Hone

BVPI	Description	Aim	Actual 2002/03 2003/04 2004/05	Top Quartile Data (All England) 2003/04 audited 2004/05 audited	@ 30 June 05	@ 30 Sept 05	@ 31 Dec 05	@ 31.Mar 06	Target 2005/06	April 2005– March 2006	See Commentary on Pages 23-30	Portfolio Holder
Financial and Regulatory Services Directorate												
BV79b (ii)	Housing Benefit (HB) overpayments recovered during the period as a percentage of the total amount of HB overpayment debt outstanding at the start of the period plus amount of HB overpayments identified during the period.	↑	Amended definition for 2005/06	No Data No Data	No Targets	G	G	G	22.00%	34.42%	No	Cllr T Hone
BV79b (iii)	Housing Benefit (HB) overpayments written off during the period as a percentage of the total amount of HB overpayment debt outstanding at the start of the period, plus amount of HB overpayments identified during the period.	N/A	Amended definition for 2005/06	No Data No Data					3.00%	5.46%	Yes	Cllr T Hone
BV106	The percentage of new homes built on previously developed land.	↑	50.80% 58.50% 55.15%	93.50% 94.00%	G	G	G	G	45.00%	53.25%	No	Cllr RAC Thake
BV109a	The percentage of major applications determined within 13 weeks.	↑	30% 51.72% 58.97%	63.64% 68.90%	A	G	G	G	60.00%	70.59% (36/51)	No	Cllr RAC Thake
BV109b	The percentage of minor applications determined within 8 weeks.	↑	34.92% 39.78% 57.18%	70.78% 75.40%	G	G	G	G	63.00%	71.97% (267/371)	No	Cllr RAC Thake

BVPI	Description	Aim	Actual 2002/03 2003/04 2004/05	Top Quartile Data (All England) 2003/04 audited 2004/05 audited	@ 30 June 05	@ 30 Sept 05	@ 31 Dec 05	@ 31.Mar 06	Target 2005/06	April 2005– March 2006	See Commentary on Pages 23-30	Portfolio Holder
Financial and Regulatory Services Directorate												
BV109c	The percentage of 'other' applications determined within 8 weeks.	↑	49.81% 59.88% 75.49%	85.00% 88.00%	G	G	G	G	75.00%	83.81% (880/1050)	No	Cllr RAC Thake
BV156	The percentage of authority buildings open to the public in which all public areas are suitable for, and accessible to, disabled people.	↑	50% 66.60% 70.30%	64.83% No Data	G	G	A	A	85.2% (85.19% to 2 decimal places)	77.77%	Yes	Cllr T Hone
BV166	The local authority's score against a checklist of best practice for environmental health.	↑	38.30% 58.30% 100%	90.0% 97.0%	G	G	G	R	100.0%	82.0%	Yes	Cllr Mrs A E Ashley
BV183a	The average length of stay in bed and breakfast accommodation of households that are unintentionally homeless and in priority need.	↓	3 3 0	1.21 weeks 1 week	G	G	G	G	0.00 weeks	0.00 weeks	No	Cllr Mrs A E Ashley
BV183b	The average length of stay in hostel accommodation of households that are unintentionally homeless and in priority need.	↓	31 41 44.6	0 weeks 0 weeks	R	R	R	A	35.00 weeks	36.89 weeks	Please refer to Appendix B	Cllr Mrs A E Ashley
BV199d	The year-on-year reduction in total number of incidents and increase in total number of enforcement actions taken to deal with 'fly-tipping'.	↓	Amended definition for 2005/06	No Data No Data					3 (good)	First grade will not be produced until 2007	Yes	Cllr W M Davidson
BV200a	Did the local planning authority submit the Local Development Scheme (LDS) by 28th March 2005 and thereafter maintain a 3-year rolling programme?	N/A	Amended definition for 2005/06	No Data No Data	G	G	G	G	Yes	Yes	No	Cllr RAC Thake

BVPI	Description	Aim	Actual 2002/03 2003/04 2004/05	Top Quartile Data (All England) 2003/04 audited 2004/05 audited	@ 30 June 05	@ 30 Sept 05	@ 31 Dec 05	@ 31.Mar 06	Target 2005/06	April 2005– March 2006	See Commentary on Pages 23-30	Portfolio Holder
Financial and Regulatory Services Directorate												
BV200b	Has the local planning authority met the milestones which the current Local Development Scheme (LDS) sets out?	N/A	Amended definition for 2005/06	No Data No Data	G	G	G	G	Yes	Yes	No	Cllr RAC Thake
BV200c	Did the local planning authority publish an annual report by 31 st December each year?	N/A	Amended definition for 2005/06	No Data No Data			G	G	Yes	Yes	No	Cllr RAC Thake
BV202	The number of people sleeping rough on a single night within the area of the authority.	↓	- 0	No Data No Data	G	G	G	G	0	0	No	Cllr Mrs A E Ashley
BV203	The percentage change in the average number of families placed in temporary accommodation.	↓	- -11.57%	No Data -6.94%	R	G	G	R	A 5.30% reduction on the previous year	-3.82%	Yes	Cllr Mrs A E Ashley
BV204	The number of planning appeal decisions allowed against the authority's decision to refuse on planning applications, as a percentage of the total number of planning appeals against refusals of planning applications.	↓	- 40%	No Data 25.0%	G	G	G	G	30.0%	25.0% (9/36)	No	Cllr RAC Thake
BV205	The local authority's score against a 'quality of planning services' checklist.	↑	- 94.44%	No Data 88.9%	G	G	G	G	94.44%	94.44% (will be reported to 1 decimal place in the BVPP)	No	Cllr RAC Thake

BVPI	Description	Aim	Actual 2002/03 2003/04 2004/05	Top Quartile Data (All England) 2003/04 audited 2004/05 audited	@ 30 June 05	@ 30 Sept 05	@ 31 Dec 05	@ 31.Mar 06	Target 2005/06	April 2005– March 2006	See Commentary on Pages 23-30	Portfolio Holder
Financial and Regulatory Services Directorate												
BV213	The number of households who considered themselves as homeless, who approached the local housing authority's housing advice service, and for whom housing advice casework intervention resolved their situation.	↑	New for 2005/06	No Data No Data	A	R	A	G	1 per 1,000 households	1 per 1,000 households	No	Cllr Mrs A E Ashley
BV214	The proportion of households accepted as statutorily homeless who were accepted as statutorily homeless by the same authority within the last two years.	↓	New for 2005/06	No Data No Data	G	G	G	G	0.00%	0.00%	No	Cllr Mrs A E Ashley
BV216a	The number of 'sites of potential concern' [within the local authority area], with respect to land contamination.	N/A	New for 2005/06	No Data No Data					665	647	No	Cllr RAC Thake
BV216b	The number of sites for which sufficient detailed information is available to decide whether remediation of the land is necessary, as a percentage of all 'sites of potential concern'.	↑	New for 2005/06	No Data No Data				R	3.5%	2.4% (will be reported to 0 decimal places in the BVPP)	Yes	Cllr RAC Thake
BV217	The percentage of pollution control improvements to existing installations completed on time.	↑	New for 2005/06	No Data No Data				G	90%	100%	No	Cllr Mrs A E Ashley
BV218a	The percentage of new reports of abandoned vehicles investigated within 24hrs of notification.	↑	New for 2005/06	No Data No Data	R	R	R	A	100.00%	86.32%	Please refer to Appendix C (to follow)	Cllr Mrs A E Ashley

BVPI	Description	Aim	Actual 2002/03 2003/04 2004/05	Top Quartile Data (All England) 2003/04 audited 2004/05 audited	@ 30 June 05	@ 30 Sept 05	@ 31 Dec 05	@ 31.Mar 06	Target 2005/06	April 2005– March 2006	See Commentary on Pages 23-30	Portfolio Holder
Financial and Regulatory Services Directorate												
BV218b	The percentage of abandoned vehicles removed within 24 hours from the point at which the authority is legally entitled to remove the vehicle.	↑	New for 2005/06	No Data No Data	R	A	A	A	80.00%	70.86%	Please refer to Appendix C (to follow)	Cllr Mrs A E Ashley
BV219a	The total number of conservation areas in the local authority area.	N/A	New for 2005/06	No Data No Data					40	40	No	Cllr RAC Thake
BV219b	The percentage of conservation areas in the local authority area with an up-to-date character appraisal.	↑	New for 2005/06	No Data No Data				R	7.50%	5.00%	Yes	Cllr RAC Thake
BV219c	The percentage of conservation areas with published management proposals.	↑	New for 2005/06	No Data No Data				R	2.50%	0.00%	Yes	Cllr RAC Thake
H1a	The number of placements at end of period in bed and breakfast accommodation.	↓	- 0 0	No Data No Data	G	G	G	G	0	0	No	Cllr Mrs A E Ashley
H1b	The number of placements at end of period in other temporary accommodation.	↓	- 118 109	No Data No Data	R	A	A	A	100	114	Yes	Cllr Mrs A E Ashley
H2	The percentage of applications for the housing register to receive a decision within 5 working days once all information is received.	↑	- 98% 89.3%	No Data No Data	R	A	A	A	94.00%	88.00%	Yes	Cllr Mrs A E Ashley

BVPI	Description	Aim	Actual 2002/03 2003/04 2004/05	Top Quartile Data (All England) 2003/04 audited 2004/05 audited	@ 30 June 05	@ 30 Sept 05	@ 31 Dec 05	@ 31.Mar 06	Target 2005/06	April 2005– March 2006	See Commentary on Pages 23-30	Portfolio Holder
Financial and Regulatory Services Directorate												
H3	New housing in social sector.	↑	- 102 168	No Data No Data				A	170	149	Yes	Cllr Mrs A E Ashley
H4	Homeless decisions made within 33 days.	↑	- 83.60% 80.62%	No Data No Data	R	R	R	A	92.50%	78.80%	Yes	Cllr Mrs A E Ashley
H5	The percentage of nominations made within 3 working days.	↑	- - 87.57%	No Data No Data	A	A	A	A	96.00%	86.80%	Yes	Cllr Mrs A E Ashley
H6	The number of reported incidences of rough sleeping in the district.	↓	New for 2005/06	No Data No Data	G	G	G	G	10	1	Yes	Cllr Mrs A E Ashley
PE14	The target time set by the authority for responding to all environmental health requests for services.	↑	91% 87.89% 89.53%	No Data No Data	A	G	G	G	92.00% within 3 days	94.15% (2045/2172) within 3 days	No	Cllr Mrs A E Ashley
PE24	The percentage of high risk premises programmed for inspection that were actually inspected by year end.	↑	100% 100% 100%	No Data No Data	R	G	G	G	100.00%	100.00%	No	Cllr Mrs A E Ashley

BVPI	Description	Aim	Actual 2002/03 2003/04 2004/05	Top Quartile Data (All England) 2003/04 audited 2004/05 audited	@ 30 June 05	@ 30 Sept 05	@ 31 Dec 05	@ 31.Mar 06	Target 2005/06	April 2005– March 2006	See Commentary on Pages 23-30	Portfolio Holder
Financial and Regulatory Services Directorate												
PE25	The percentage of other risk premises programmed for inspection that were actually inspected by year end.	↑	95.71% 87.69% 95.70%	No Data No Data	R	A	G	R	95.00%	78.87%	Yes	Cllr Mrs A E Ashley
PE30	Building control quality and performance matrix score.	↑	- 79.50%	No Data No Data				G	81.0%	81.5%	No	Cllr RAC Thake
PE32	Percentage of customers satisfied with the environmental health service.	↑	- 83.47%	No Data No Data				G	65.00%	81.98% (91/111)	No	Cllr Mrs A E Ashley
PE33	Environmental health quality matrix score.	↑	- 69.35%	No Data No Data	G	G	G	G	70.00%	70.16%	No	Cllr Mrs A E Ashley
PE34	The percentage of annual bus permit renewals issued by the 15 th of April.	↑	- 100%	No Data No Data	G	G	G	G	98.00%	100.00%	No	Cllr RAC Thake

BVPI	Description	Aim	Actual 2002/03 2003/04 2004/05	Top Quartile Data 2003/04 audited 2004/05 audited	@ 30 June 05	@ 30 Sept 05	@ 31 Dec 05	@ 31 Mar 06	Target 2005/06	April 2005– March 2006	See Commentary on Pages 23-30	Portfolio Holder
Chief Executive Directorate												
BV2a	The level of the Equality Standard for Local Government to which the Authority conforms in respect of gender, race and disability.	↑	level 2 level 2 level 3	No Data No Data				G	Level 4 Level 3	Level 3	Yes	Cllr A D Young
BV2b	The quality of an Authority's Race Equality Scheme (RES) and the improvements resulting from its application.	↑	- 74% 78.9%	63% 72%				G	78.9%	84%	Yes	Cllr A D Young
BV126	Domestic Burglaries per year, per 1000 households in the Local Authority area	↓	10.18 11.35 10.63	No Data 6.90					10.71	8.0	No	Cllr Mrs P Gibbs
BV127a	Violent crime per year per 1,000 population in the Local Authority area	↓	Amended definition for 2005/06	No Data No Data					15.15	15.6	No	Cllr Mrs P Gibbs
BV127b	Robberies per year per 1,000 population in the Local Authority area	↓	Amended definition for 2005/06	No Data No Data					0.67	0.9	No	Cllr Mrs P Gibbs
BV128	The number of vehicle crimes per year, per 1,000 population in the Local Authority area	↓	11.5 12.15 8.87	No Data 7.77					8.62	9.5	No	Cllr Mrs P Gibbs
BV174	The number of racial incidents reported to the Local Authority, and subsequently recorded, per 100,000 population	N/A	0.85 3.38 4.19	No Data No Data					4.19 (5 actual)	0	Yes	Cllr Mrs P Gibbs
BV175	The percentage of racial incidents reported to the Local Authority that resulted in further action.	↑	100% 100% 100%	100% No Data					100%	N/A	No	Cllr Mrs P Gibbs

BVPI	Description	Aim	Actual 2002/03 2003/04 2004/05	Top Quartile Data 2003/04 audited 2004/05 audited	@ 30 June 05	@ 30 Sept 05	@ 31 Dec 05	@ 31 Mar 06	Target 2005/06	April 2005– March 2006	See Commentary on Pages 23-30	Portfolio Holder
Chief Executive Directorate												
BV179	The percentage of standard searches carried out in 10 working days	↑	53.12% 100% 99.91%	100% 100%	G	G	G	G	100%	100%	Yes	Cllr F J Smith
BV225 (BV176)	Actions against domestic violence. The percentage of questions from a list of 11 to which the local authority can answer yes.	↑	New for 2005/06	No Data No Data				G	72.7%	90.91%	No	Cllr Mrs A E Ashley
L24	The percentage of letters responded to within 4 working days	↑	-	No Data No Data					90% or greater combined	No Data	Yes	Cllr Mrs P Gibbs
L25	The percentage of letters acknowledged within 4 days and given a full reply within 10 working days	↑	92.01% 93.48%	No Data No Data								

BVPI	Description	Aim	Actual 2002/03 2003/04 2004/05	Top Quartile Data 2003/04 audited 2004/05 audited	@ 30 June 05	@ 30 Sept 05	@ 31 Dec 05	@ 31 Mar 06	Target 2005/06	April 2005– March 2006	See Commentary on Pages 23-30	Portfolio Holder
Customer Services Directorate												
BV11a	The percentage of the top paid 5% of local authority staff who are women	↑	26.32% 26.09% 21.74%	39.05% 40.23%	G	G	G	G	28%	35.49%	No	Cllr FJ Smith
BV11b	The percentage of the top paid 5% of local authority staff who are from an ethnic minority	↑	0% 4.35% 0	3.70% 3.48%	R	R	R	R	6%	0%	Yes	Cllr FJ Smith
BV11c	The percentage of the top paid 5% of local authority staff who have a disability.	↑	New for 2005/06	No Data No Data	R	R	R	R	1%	0%	Yes	Cllr FJ Smith
BV12	The number of working days/shifts lost to the local authority due to sickness absence per employee	↓	9.60 days 10.10 days 9.48 days	8.90 days 8.40 days	G	G		A	8 days	9.09 days	Yes	Cllr FJ Smith
BV14	The percentage of employees retiring early (excluding ill health retirements) as a percentage of the total work force.	↓	0.19% 1.36% 0.77%	0.17% 0.16%	R	R	R	R	0.17%	1.04%	Yes	Cllr FJ Smith
BV15	The percentage of local authority employees retiring on grounds of ill health as a percentage of the total work force	↓	0.75% 0.27% 0.26%	0.17% 0.12%	G	G	G	R	0.17%	0.26%	Yes	Cllr FJ Smith
BV16a	The percentage of local authority employees with a disability	↑	2.78% 3.9% 3.43%	No Data 3.73%	A	R	R	A	4%	3.75%	Yes	Cllr FJ Smith
BV16b	The percentage of the economically active population in the local authority area who have a disability	N/A	10.23% 10.23% 10.23%	No Data No Data					No targets required	10.23%	Yes	Cllr FJ Smith

BVPI	Description	Aim	Actual 2002/03 2003/04 2004/05	Top Quartile Data 2003/04 audited 2004/05 audited	@ 30 June 05	@ 30 Sept 05	@ 31 Dec 05	@ 31 Mar 06	Target 2005/06	April 2005– March 2006	See Commentary on Pages 23-30	Portfolio Holder
Customer Services Directorate												
BV17a	The percentage of the local authority employees from ethnic minority communities	↑	5.42% 4.64% 4.71%	No Data 4.6%	R	A	A	A	6%	5.52%	Yes	Cllr FJ Smith
BV17b	The percentage of the economically active (persons aged 18-65) population from ethnic minority communities in the local authority area	N/A	6.70% 6.70% 6.70%	No Data No Data					No targets required	6.70%	No	Cllr FJ Smith
BV82a i)	The percentage of household waste arising which have been sent by the authority for recycling	↑	10% 15.63% 14.60%	16% 17.89%	A	G	A	G	14.1%	15.34%	No	Cllr W M Davidson
BV82a ii)	Total tonnage of household waste arising which have been sent by the authority for recycling	↑	New for 2005/06	No Data No Data	G	G	G	G	7937 tonnes	8600.80	No	Cllr W M Davidson
BV82b i)	The percentage of household waste sent by the authority for composting or treatment by anaerobic digestion	↑	1.53% 2.36% 5.29%	6.01% 9.80%	G	A	G	A	11.45%	11.40%	No	Cllr W M Davidson
BV82b ii)	The tonnage of household waste sent in by the authority for composting or treatment by anaerobic digestion	↑	New for 2005/06	No Data No Data	G	G	G	A	6446 tonnes	6427.42	No	Cllr W M Davidson
BV84a	The number of kilograms of household waste collected per head of the population	↓	432.53 427.57 450	390 kg 397.7kg	G	G	A	A	435 kg	470.4kg	Yes	Cllr W M Davidson

BVPI	Description	Aim	Actual 2002/03 2003/04 2004/05	Top Quartile Data 2003/04 audited 2004/05 audited	@ 30 June 05	@ 30 Sept 05	@ 31 Dec 05	@ 31 Mar 06	Target 2005/06	April 2005– March 2006	See Commentary on Pages 23-30	Portfolio Holder
Customer Services Directorate												
BV84b	The percentage change from the previous financial year in the number of kilograms of household waste collected per head of the population	↓	New for 2005/06	No Data No Data				R	3%	4.53%	Yes	Cllr W M Davidson
BV86	The cost of household waste collection per household	↓	£36.76 £41.00 £44.19	No Data £35.31				G	£56.46	£47.51	-	Cllr W M Davidson
BV91a	The percentage of households resident in the authority's area served by kerbside collection of recyclables	↑	100% 100% 100%	100% 100%	G	G	G	G	100%	100%	No	Cllr W M Davidson
BV91b	The percentage of households resident in the authority's area served by kerbside collection of at least two recyclables	↓	New for 2005/06	No Data No Data	G	G	G	G	100%	100%	No	Cllr W M Davidson
BV157	The number of types of interactions that are enabled for electronic delivery as a percentage of the types of interactions that are legally permissible for electronic delivery	↑	40.44% 42.04% 38.72%	74% 87.50%				G	77%	80.04%	Yes	Cllr I J Knighton
BV170a	The number of visits to/usage's of local authority funded or part-funded museums/galleries per 1,000 population	↑	390.79 422.34 495.6	771 877	G	G	G	G	445	490		Cllr I J Knighton

BVPI	Description	Aim	Actual 2002/03 2003/04 2004/05	Top Quartile Data 2003/04 audited 2004/05 audited	@ 30 June 05	@ 30 Sept 05	@ 31 Dec 05	@ 31 Mar 06	Target 2005/06	April 2005– March 2006	See Commentary on Pages 23-30	Portfolio Holder
Customer Services Directorate												
BV170b	The number of those visits to local authority funded, or part funded museums/galleries that were in person, per 1,000 population	↑	333.07 319.94 352	513 514	A	A	A	A	321	295		Cllr I J Knighton
BV170c	The number of pupils visiting museums and galleries in organised school groups	↑	2851 2493 2242	7294 7031	G	G	G	G	2500	3626		Cllr I J Knighton
BV199a	The proportion of relevant land and highways (expressed as a %) that is assessed as having combined deposits of litter and detritus that fall below an acceptable level	↓	Amended definition for 2005/06	No Data No Data		G	G	G	20% (06/07 target – 11%)	8%	Survey 1 April – July 11% 2% 0% Survey 2 August – November 3% 1% 0% Survey 3 Dec – March 11% 0% 0%	Cllr W M Davidson
BV199b	The proportion of relevant land & highways (expressed as a %) from which unacceptable levels of graffiti are visible.	↓	Amended definition for 2005/06	No Data No Data		G	G	G	20% (06/07 target – 3%)	1%		Cllr W M Davidson
BV199c	The proportion of relevant land and highways (expressed as a percentage) from which unacceptable levels of fly-posting are visible	↓	Amended definition for 2005/06	No Data No Data		G	G	G	20% (06/07 target – 3%)	0%		Cllr W M Davidson
BV226a (BV177)	The total amount spent by the local authority on advice and guidance services provided by external organisations	N/A	Amended definition for 2005/06	No Data No Data				A	£330,000	£296,353	No	Cllr Mrs P Gibbs

BVPI	Description	Aim	Actual 2002/03 2003/04 2004/05	Top Quartile Data 2003/04 audited 2004/05 audited	@ 30 June 05	@ 30 Sept 05	@ 31 Dec 05	@ 31 Mar 06	Target 2005/06	April 2005– March 2006	See Commentary on Pages 23-30	Portfolio Holder
Customer Services Directorate												
BV226b (BV177)	The percentage of monies spent on advice and guidance services provision which was given to organisations holding the CLS Quality Mark at 'General Help' level and above.	↑	Amended definition for 2005/06	No Data No Data				G	68%	84.71%	No	Cllr Mrs P Gibbs
BV226c (BV177)	The total amount spent on advice and guidance in the areas of housing, welfare benefits and consumer matters which is provided directly by the authority to the public	N/A	Amended definition for 2005/06	No Data No Data				A	£293,283	£293,200	No	Cllr Mrs P Gibbs
LC4	The percentage of market stalls hired as a percentage of stalls available	↑	67% 70% 58%	No Data No Data	A	A	A	A	59%	54.04%	Yes	Cllr I J Knighton
LC5	The percentage of emergency calls to Care-line answered in under 30 seconds	↑	87.76% 87.86% 88.33%	No Data No Data	G	A	A	A	88%	83.41%	Yes	Cllr Mrs A E Ashley
LC7a	The total number of hot meals served to Meals on Wheels, hostels and in luncheon clubs	↑	125,668 119,352 107,673	No Data No Data	G	G	G	G	104,030	109,657	No	Cllr Mrs A E Ashley

BVPI	Description	Aim	Actual 2002/03 2003/04 2004/05	Top Quartile Data 2003/04 audited 2004/05 audited	@ 30 June 05	@ 30 Sept 05	@ 31 Dec 05	@ 31 Mar 06	Target 2005/06	April 2005– March 2006	See Commentary on Pages 23-30	Portfolio Holder
Customer Services Directorate												
LC7b	The total number of frozen meals delivered by Wiltshire Farm Foods	↑	- - 2,385	No Data No Data	G	G	G	G	3,000 4,600	5,255	No	Cllr Mrs A E Ashley
LC8	The percentage of allotment plots let	↑	78% 84% 89.6%	No Data No Data	G	G	G	G	86%	91%	No	Cllr I J Knighton
LC10	The percentage of play scheme places utilised	↑	76% 67.10% 84%	No Data No Data		A	A	A	82%	73%	Yes	Cllr I J Knighton
LC15	The number of swims and other leisure visits per 1000 population	↑	7,939 7,642 7,424	No Data No Data	No Data	A	R	R	8,745	7,137	Yes	Cllr I J Knighton
L52	The number of days lost due to accident / injury in the workplace per employee	↓	- 0.27% 2.23%	No Data No Data	A	A	A	A	0	0.02	Yes	Cllr FJ Smith
L59	The percentage of staff receiving appraisal and have a training plan	↑	- 77.5% 83.70%	No Data No Data	R	R	A	A	94%	92.23%	Yes	Cllr FJ Smith

BVPI	Description	Aim	Actual 2002/03 2003/04 2004/05	Top Quartile Data 2003/04 audited 2004/05 audited	@ 30 June 05	@ 30 Sept 05	@ 31 Dec 05	@ 31 Mar 06	Target 2005/06	April 2005– March 2006	See Commentary on Pages 23-30	Portfolio Holder
Customer Services Directorate												
L61	The percentage of new staff that have attended the half-day induction within 3 days of joining NHDC	↑	New for 05/06	No Data No Data	A	R	R	R	100%	68.97%	Yes	Cllr FJ Smith
PE1	The number of collections missed per 100,000 collections of household waste	↓	43.39 60.96 28.89	No Data No Data	G	G	G	G	36 per 100,000	23.55 per 100,000	No	Cllr W M Davidson
PE2	The percentage of missed collections put right within allowed time-scale	↑	98.92% 96.38% 99.09%	No Data No Data	G	G	A	A	99%	98.35%	No	Cllr W M Davidson
PE29	The total net spending per head of population on street cleaning	↓	- £6.09 £7.31	No Data No Data				G	£7.78	£7.18	-	Cllr W M Davidson
PE31	The percentage of racist / obscene graffiti removed within 24 hours of verification on NHDC property.	↑	- - 100%	No Data No Data	No incidents	G	G	G	100%	100%	No	Cllr W M Davidson

Action proposed for indicators allocated amber or red status (What we will achieve and by when)

Financial & Regulatory Services

BV64 – The number of non-local authority-owned vacant dwellings returned to occupation or demolished during the financial year as a direct result of action by the local authority

The annual target for 2005/06 of 10 properties has not been achieved, although the level of performance for 2004/05 has been maintained. Evaluation in December 2005 indicated that a total of 418 properties within the district have been empty for longer than six months. Of these properties, only 178 have been on the list since December 2004. The recent assessment against a stock level of approximately 53,000 properties in the district, indicates that the long-term empty properties represent approximately one third of a per cent of all properties. The target figure of 10 homes was therefore unrealistic.

A benchmarking exercise is currently underway with Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire authorities to consider the issue of vacant dwellings and a co-ordinated approach regarding the implementation of new legislation (Empty Dwelling Management Order). A more realistic target of three properties has been set for 2006/07, with targets in subsequent years reflecting the year on year improvements that are expected.

BV76a – The number of housing benefit claimants in the local authority area visited, per 1,000 caseload

There were three main factors that affected this indicator:

- Significant changes in working practices, reducing home visits and increasing electronic information handling.
- With the introduction of mobile working, it will be easier to absorb the effects of staff absence, which affected performance this year.
- The increase in the live caseload (by approximately 800 cases) made the target more difficult to achieve.

BV76b – The number of fraud investigators employed by the local authority, per 1,000 caseload

At North Herts, variations in this indicator are purely down to fluctuations in the live caseload, which has increased in recent years. Despite this, the team achieved both a record-breaking number of prosecutions and sanctions during 2005/06 and record levels of prosecutions and sanctions subsidy.

BV76c – The number of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit (HB/CTB) fraud investigations carried out by the local authority per year, per 1,000 caseload

New procedures were introduced to ensure that a number of referrals from the Housing Benefits Matching Service, which were clearly not fraudulent, were filtered out by Assessment Officers prior to being referred to the Fraud Team. This allowed the Fraud Team to target cases where a prosecution or sanction was more likely to be successful, thereby increasing the number of prosecutions and sanctions overall; this success is evidenced by performance indicator BV76d, showing that, whilst the number of investigations reduced, the number of prosecutions and sanctions increased.

BV78a – The average processing time taken for all new Housing and Council Tax Benefit (HB/CTB) claims submitted to the local authority, for which the date of decision is within the financial year being reported

Despite the number of new claims increasing by over 50 per cent compared with the previous year, performance for this indicator has improved steadily throughout the year. It is expected that the year-end result of 28.7 days will be around top quartile performance.

BV78b – The average processing time taken for all written notifications to the local authority of changes to a claimant's circumstance that require a new decision on behalf of the authority

The Department for Works and Pensions (DWP) issued new guidelines for this indicator stating that changes notified electronically in bulk by landlords should no longer be included. In the past, this would have allowed the authority to process up to 4,500 changes in one day, thereby substantially reducing the overall figure. The DWP recognised that this, and other significant changes in working practices, would impact on performance which they now expect to be around 19/20 days. Changes in procedures saw results for the last quarter of 2005/06 reduce to 10 days, but it was not possible to recover from the poor start to the year. The individual figure for the first month of 2006/07 is under 10 days, indicating that the changes are having the desired effect.

BV79a – The percentage of cases within a random sample for which the authority's calculation of Housing and Council Tax Benefit (HB/CTB) is found to be correct

This indicator measures the accuracy of 125 randomly selected claims each quarter. The check is made against any current claim regardless of whether there has been a calculation carried out in the previous quarter. Errors detected in the samples were historic and mostly in areas where procedure or system changes had already been put in place to prevent a recurrence.

BV79biii – Housing Benefit (HB) overpayments written off during the period as a percentage of the total amount of HB overpayment debt outstanding at the start of the period, plus amount of HB overpayments identified during the period

This was a new indicator for 2005/06 and the target was therefore set with little historical data. It would appear that the target was unrealistic given the nature of housing benefit overpayments and the high risk of debtors absconding. It is difficult to conclude how good the year-end result is, until comparative data from other authorities is available.

BV156 – The percentage of authority buildings open to the public in which all public areas are suitable for, and accessible to, disabled people

The year-end return of 77.77 per cent is lower than the target figure of 85.2 per cent. Contracts for work at Letchworth and Hitchin cemeteries were tendered and awarded to the same contractor in March. A 28-day notice to the Health & Safety Executive was required prior to demolition of the toilet block in Hitchin which meant that the work could not be completed in 2005/06. However, as the contracts have been awarded, the necessary work will now be completed within the first quarter of the current financial year.

BV166a – The local authority's score against a checklist of best practice for environmental health

As a result of the significant changes across the Environmental Health service in 2005/06, a number of aspects of enforcement reporting and communication became outdated and the scores for these activities therefore declined. An action plan has been developed to ensure that this indicator improves back to 100 per cent during 2006/07.

BV183b – The average length of stay in hostel accommodation of households that are unintentionally homeless and in priority need

The year-end result for this performance indicator has improved significantly compared to the 2004/05 return. During 2005/06, 105 households moved out of hostel accommodation. The target figure of 35 weeks was not achieved due to the extended length of stay of some families. This was caused either by families selecting limited areas and types of property or by clients having poor tenancy records. The targeted efforts at those in hostel accommodation will continue throughout 2006/07, with the aim of helping families into permanent housing as soon as possible. This year also sees the introduction of a more preventative approach to homelessness, which will reduce the need for temporary accommodation in the future.

BV199d – The year-on-year reduction in total number of incidents and increase in total number of enforcement actions taken to deal with ‘fly-tipping’

Local authority data submitted monthly between April 2005 and March 2006 will form the baseline for comparison against 2006/07 data, so the authority will not get a performance grade until 2007, and is not required to report the indicator in the Best Value Performance Plan. The return for this performance indicator will be calculated by Defra and sent automatically to the Audit Commission.

BV203 – The percentage change in the average number of families placed in temporary accommodation

Although the average number of families placed in temporary accommodation decreased, compared to the 2004/05 figure, the authority did not achieve the predicted target. This year (2006/07) will see the introduction of a more proactive approach to homelessness. This will include the promotion of housing options: family mediation to enable people to remain at home; an enhanced allocation scheme; and the deposit guarantee scheme, which will help clients access the private sector. This approach will reduce the need for temporary accommodation in line with government targets and will help families move into permanent housing as soon as possible.

BV216b – The number of sites for which sufficient detailed information is available to decide whether remediation of the land is necessary, as a percentage of all ‘sites of potential concern’

This performance indicator was introduced in 2005/06 and the target figure of 3.5 per cent was estimated based on the anticipated rate of progress in collecting sufficient detailed information (SDI) via the following three processes:

- i) Contaminated Land Strategy work.
- ii) Planning work for applications that were in place prior to 2005/06, which had no SDI in place.
- iii) Planning work for anticipated applications during 2005/06.

An explanation of differences between the anticipated progression to SDI and the actual progression achieved is shown below:

- i) The number of Contaminated Land Strategy sites dealt with (7) was above the number estimated.
- ii) The actual number of sites that progressed was 7.5, compared to the minimum prediction of 9.3. The nature of progression of these sites is that each site owner and developer determines the rate of progression unless a site happens to be at the top of the Contaminated Land Strategy risk prioritisation list.
- iii) The actual number of sites that progressed was 1.15, compared to the minimum prediction of 6. As with ii) above, it is each site owner and developer who determines the rate of progression.

BV218a – The percentage of new reports of abandoned vehicles investigated within 24 hours of notification

The Council has identified that the year-end return of 86.32 per cent was not fully compliant with the published government definition. The figure represents the percentage of vehicles initially investigated by the close of business on the working day following notification. This was not completely aligned with the government requirement to measure the percentage of vehicles determined to be abandoned or not within a strict 24-hour period from the time and date of notification. The Council has now developed an improved and more robust system to ensure that the indicator is reported accurately in 2006/07.

BV218b – The percentage of abandoned vehicles removed within 24 hours from the point at which the authority is legally entitled to removed the vehicle

The Council has identified that the year-end return of 70.86 per cent was not fully compliant with the published government definition. The figure represents the percentage of abandoned vehicles removed by the Council's contractor by the close of business on the working day following a request for removal. This was not in accordance with the government requirement to measure the percentage of abandoned vehicles removed within a strict 24-hour period from the time and date the Council was legally entitled to remove them. An improved and more robust system has now been developed to ensure that the indicator is reported accurately in 2006/07.

BV219b – The percentage of conservation areas in the local authority areas with an up-to-date character appraisal

The target to complete the character appraisal for Royston was not achieved. However, this will be completed, along with a full character appraisal of a further conservation area, during 2006/07.

BV219c – The percentage of conservation areas with published management proposals

The target to complete the management proposals for Royston was not achieved. However, this will be completed, along with an appraisal and publication of management proposals for a further conservation area, during 2006/07.

H1b – The number of placements at end of period in other temporary accommodation

There has been a slight increase in the number of placements in other temporary accommodation compared to the same period last year (the 2004/05 year-end figure of 109 increased by 4.59 per cent) due to the number of homelessness presentations made to the Council. However, further improved options have now been launched (see BV203 above).

H2 – The percentage of applications for the housing register to receive a decision within 5 working days once all information is received

Although the performance of this indicator continually improved throughout 2005/06, the year-end target figure of 94 per cent of applications receiving a decision within five working days, was not achieved. This was due to the high volume of applications for assistance, which surpassed the authority's expectations. The performance figure of 88 per cent was a 1.46 per cent reduction compared to the 2004/05 year-end result of 89.3 per cent. A target of 90 per cent has been set for 2006/07, which will prove challenging to achieve and will ensure quality customer service is delivered.

H3 – New housing in social sector

The authority committed itself to funding eight schemes in 2005/06, as well as supporting schemes receiving other public subsidy. Progress in getting the larger developments on site had been slower than anticipated due to a variety of planning and legal issues. This had a significant impact on the achievement of the Council's target figure of 170.

The authority has so far committed itself to providing funding for a further seven schemes that will start on site in 2006/07 and is in a position to fund at least a further eight schemes, for which proposals are currently being developed. A target figure of 190 affordable housing units has been set for 2006/07, which if achieved, will represent a 27.52 per cent increase on the 2005/06 year-end figure of 149.

H4 - Homeless decisions made within 33 days

Although the performance of this indicator continually improved throughout 2005/06, the year-end target figure of 92.5 per cent of homeless decisions made within 33 working days, was not achieved. The performance figure of 78.8 per cent was a 2.26 per cent reduction compared to the 2004/05 year-end result of 80.62 per cent. This performance indicator will be replaced in 2006/07 with a more meaningful measure; the Council will now report the percentage of homelessness applications on which a decision is made and notified to the applicant within 21 working days. A target of 80 per cent has been set for 2006/07, which represents a high and challenging level of service delivery.

H5 – The percentage of nominations made with 3 working days

The performance of this indicator decreased throughout 2005/06 and the year-end target figure of 96 per cent of nominations made within three working days was not achieved, due to the authority receiving a high volume of housing applications. However, the performance figure of 86.8 per cent was only a 0.88 per cent reduction compared to the 2004/05 year-end result of 87.57 per cent.

H6 – The number of reported incidences of rough sleeping in the district

The Council introduced local performance indicator H6 to complement statutory indicator BV202. It records sightings of people sleeping rough in the district. H6 is a more meaningful measure than the government indicator as it enables the authority to gain a more accurate picture of the local situation than the very prescriptive methodology used for BV202 currently allows.

PE25 – The percentage of other risk premises programmed for inspection that were actually inspected by year end

The annual target figure of 95 per cent was not achieved. Priority was given to the inspection of high-risk premises, in line with the recommendation of the Council's Performance, Audit and Review Committee (PARC), and 100 per cent of high-risk premises were inspected in 2005/06.

Chief Executive

BV2a – The level of the Equality Standard for Local Government to which the Authority conforms in respect of gender, race and disability
NHDC had originally set itself a target of achieving Level 4 by March 2006. However, it is evident that more time will be needed for new monitoring to 'bed in' with both NHDC and its partners. Hence, achieving level 4 by March 2007 is seen as a more realistic target and as agreed by the Performance, Audit and Review Committee (PARC) in November 2005.

BV174 – The number of racial incidents reported to the Local Authority, and subsequently recorded, per 100,000 population
The target for BV 174 has been revised to zero baseline to reflect that we would expect complaints against the Authority to reduce, given that we have raised awareness of service areas' responsibility with regard to equalities and diversity. Mechanisms are in place to encourage third party reporting and we would expect to receive a complaint directly or otherwise if an individual/group felt that they had been unfairly treated. This is in line with BV 175, in that 100% of any complaints received would be actioned.

BV179 - The percentage of standard searches carried out in 10 working days
We have maintained a high standard of 100% turnaround during this year.

L24/L25 The percentage of letters responded to within 4 working days and The percentage of letters acknowledged within 4 days and given a full reply within 10 working days
This report does not include any data for L24 and L25 'Letter Monitoring'. The collection of this data has been inconsistent throughout the authority and therefore a year-end percentage is not available. Officers are seeking to ensure the new Document Management System will measure our response performance to letters received by the Council.

Customer Services

BV11b – The percentage of the top paid 5% of local authority staff who are from an ethnic minority

0% is a continuation from the end of 2004/05, as no individuals with ethnic minority backgrounds have been appointed to senior positions during 2005/06. Turnover in this group is low.

BV11c – The percentage of the top paid 5% of local authority staff who have a disability

No individuals employed in senior positions have declared disabilities and turnover in this group is extremely low.

BV12 – The number of working days / shifts lost to the local authority due to sickness absence

Although sickness absence is reducing year on year, for the civic year 2005/06 we are 13% above target. Long-term absence is firmly controlled, however the severe winter impacted against short-term absence levels.

BV14 – The percentage of employees retiring early (excluding ill health retirements) as a percentage of the total work force

The target has been exceeded due to people retiring early as a result of the Council's restructure. This should settle during 2006/7.

BV15 – The percentage of local authority employees retiring on grounds of ill health as a percentage of the total work force

During 2005/06 there was only 1 ill-health retirement, which equates to 0.26%.

BV16a and BV16b – The percentage of local authority employees with a disability and The percentage of the economically active population in the local authority area who have a disability

We have continued to improve year on year in relation to BV16a and with similar improvements in 2006/07 expect to meet our new targets. This information for BV16b is taken from the 2001 Census. The actual question asked 'Do you have any long-term illness, health problem or disability which limits your daily activities or the work you can do? (include problems, which are due to old age)'. The question asked to local authority staff on the employment application form is 'Do you consider yourself to have a disability?'; this is the question which has been asked over a number of years and so provides useful comparative information and has therefore not been changed to reflect the Census question. As this is not a direct comparison BV16b should only be used as a guide.

BV17a – The percentage of the local authority employees from ethnic minority communities

We have continued to improve year on year and with similar improvements in 2006/07 we expect to meet our new targets.

BV84a and b – (a) The number of kilograms of household waste collected per head of the population and (b) The percentage change from the previous financial year in the number of kilograms of household waste collected per head of the population

Overall waste 'arising' have been adversely affected due to the amount of waste collected by the expansion of the green waste scheme, which effectively increases the tonnage.

BV157 – The number of types of interactions that are enabled for electronic delivery as a percentage of the types of interactions that are legally permissible for electronic delivery

The achievement of BV157 was integrated into the service@north-herts programme, which commenced in September 2005. The Authority was required to achieve a 15% improvement in BV157 by the end of March 2006.

LC4 – The percentage of market stalls hired as a percentage of stalls available

Market utilisation has continued to decline against last year's figures, mainly affecting Hitchin and Baldock. Officers are working closely with the market traders to investigate ways to improve the current situation.

LC5 – The percentage of emergency calls to Care-line answered in under 30 seconds

A new call handling system was introduced in September 2005, initially slowing call response times and resulting in a year end performance 5% below target. Careline did, however, exceed the Telecare Services Association mandatory target of 80% of emergency calls answered in 30 seconds or under.

LC10 – The percentage of play scheme places utilised

Nationally, 'closed access' playschemes such as these are decreasing in popularity due to changing family needs, a reduction in the numbers of children of qualifying age, and an increase in alternative activities on offer. In 2006, NHDC also offered a sixth playscheme in Baldock.

LC15 – The number of swims and other leisure visits per 1000 population

The results show lower usage figures for North Herts Leisure Centre and Royston Leisure Centre (RLC) than initially predicted. Although the RLC Council targets have not been achieved, the targets that the Leisure Operator predicted have been met.

A breakdown of the visits (per 1000 population) is as follows:

North Herts Leisure Centre	3223.45
Fearnhill	142.68
Letchworth Outdoor Pool (June – Sept)	177.06
Hitchin Swim Centre	2149.28
Archers	529.02
Royston Leisure Centre (Sept – March)	832.87
Royston Outdoor Pool (June – Sept)	83.03

L52 – The number of days lost due to accident/injury in the workplace per employee

0.02 days equates to 3 employees taking a total of 7 days. From 2006/07 new measures are being investigated for reporting health and safety issues.

L59 - The percentage of staff receiving appraisal and have a training plan

Although appraisals have been completed the indicator is satisfied only once paperwork has been received by Learning & Development. Measures have been taken to alleviate this in future appraisal cycles.

L61 – The percentage of new staff that have attended the half-day induction within 3 days of joining NHDC

Until October 2005 'First Day Welcome' was held fortnightly meaning some new starters missed the session. This induction course is now held on a weekly basis and we have seen an improvement in this indicator as a result.

BV183b**2005/06 Year-end Update**

Performance indicator BV183b measures the average length of stay in shared hostels of families who have children or are pregnant, and only includes households that have actually left temporary accommodation.

The target figure for 2005/06 was an average of 35 weeks and the actual year-end return achieved was 36.89 weeks. This resulted in the indicator having an amber traffic light status.

The end of year result is a significant improvement on the monthly returns that have previously been reported throughout the year.

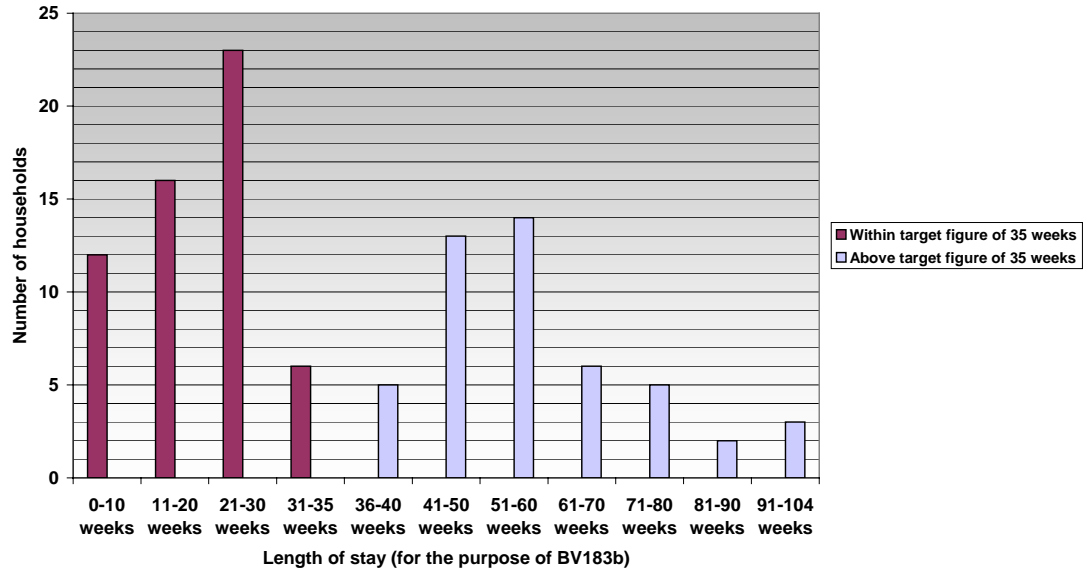
This is partly due to recent guidance from the Audit Commission, received in May 2006, advising that any time spent in hostel accommodation prior to 1 April 2004 (the date from which the homelessness (suitability of accommodation) (England) order 2003 took effect) should be excluded from the calculation. In all previous calculations, time spent in hostel accommodation prior to 1 April 2004 had been included.

Measures introduced as part of the BV183b action plan also helped to reduce the turnaround throughout the year. This included working more closely with clients and landlords on issues that were preventing offers from being made, such as rent arrears. It also included providing advice on other potential areas and property types, in order to increase the chances of clients being offered permanent housing.

The result for BV183b should be viewed alongside the result for BV183a (the average length of stay in bed and breakfast accommodation). The result for BV183a was 0 weeks, which is top-quartile performance. The fact that this authority does not use bed and breakfast accommodation can have an adverse affect on the result of BV183b, especially when comparing performance against authorities that do utilise bed and breakfast accommodation.

Illustrated on the next page are the lengths of stay, recorded for the purpose of BV183b, of the 105 households that left temporary accommodation during 2005/06. In line with the revised guidance from the Audit Commission, the maximum length of stay that could be recorded was 104 weeks. This means that in some instances, the length of stay recorded for the purpose of the indicator will not be a true representation of the length of time a household actually spent in hostel accommodation.

Households that left hostel accommodation during 2005/06



Out of the total number of 105 households, 57 (54.3 per cent) moved out of hostel accommodation within the target period of 35 weeks.

When households leave hostel accommodation in to permanent housing, the average figure for this performance indicator will be adversely affected if they have had an excessive length of stay.

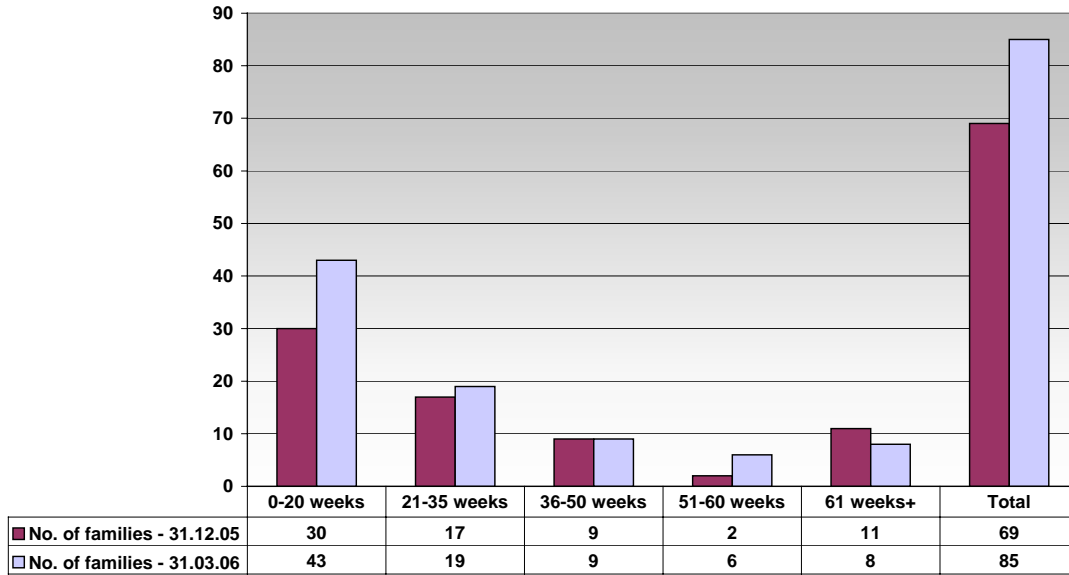
The year-end return for BV183b was affected by a number of key issues that contributed to families remaining in temporary accommodation for significant periods of time. These key issues will also have an impact on the 2006/07 performance returns.

1. Many families had a history of rent arrears and as a result, could not be offered permanent housing.
2. Many area and property choices of clients were very restricted, meaning that the chances of being offered accommodation were slim.

Officers targeted families in order to assist wherever possible, by providing advice on tenancy matters, providing further details on availability of accommodation in additional areas and by implementing surgeries at hostels. This work will continue throughout 2006/07 to ensure that families receive the necessary assistance and advice.

The graph on the following page illustrates the number of families still in temporary accommodation at the end of March 2006, along with details of the respective lengths of stay. The number at the end of December 2005 is also included for comparison.

Length of stay of all households in hostel accommodation



The number of families in hostel accommodation as at 31 March 2006 was 85, an increase of 16 compared to the figure of 69 families detailed in the previous update. This increase reflects the fact that the number of families requiring assistance is constantly changing.

The January to March quarter is traditionally busy, due to the Christmas and New Year period when there is an increase in relationship breakdown. There was also a short-term increase in the volume of homelessness presentations during the last quarter of 2005/06, which also had an impact on the usage of temporary accommodation.

These families are housed in hostel units with some form of shared element. They are based in Hitchin, Knebworth, Letchworth, Royston or Baldock and are managed by Aldwyck Housing Association, North Hertfordshire Homes or Life Housing.

The targeted efforts at those in hostel accommodation will continue throughout 2006/07, with the aim of helping families into permanent housing as soon as possible. This year also sees the introduction of a more preventative approach to homelessness. This will include the promotion of housing options, including initiatives such as: family mediation, which will enable people to remain at home; an enhanced allocation scheme; and the deposit guarantee scheme, which will help clients access the private sector. This new approach will reduce the need for temporary accommodation in the future.

BV218 – Abandoned Vehicles (Page 1 of 7)

The performance figures for indicators BV218a and BV218b that are detailed in Appendix A, are not fully compliant with the published definitions. It is proposed that these figures will still be published in the Best Value Performance Plan, together with an explanation of what the figures actually represent and details of how the Council's procedures have been improved to accurately report both of the indicators throughout 2006/07. The figures will also be submitted to the Audit Commission.

BV218a – Percentage of new reports of abandoned vehicles investigated within 24 hours of notification.

At the end of 2005/06, it was identified that the figures produced and reported throughout the year for BV218a were not fully compliant with the published definition.

The definition requires the authority to measure and report the percentage of reported vehicles that were determined to be abandoned or not within a strict 24-hour period from the time and date of notification.

The figure of 86.32 per cent quoted in the end of year performance report actually represents the percentage of vehicles reported to the authority that were *initially investigated by the close of business on the following working day*. Although details of the initial investigation were recorded and not details of actual determination, in the majority of cases the same date would have applied to both.

This year-end figure cannot be retrospectively corrected, as the details required were not recorded throughout the year. So, although the figure produced gives the public a good indication of how quickly the authority investigated reports of abandoned vehicles in 2005/06 by working days, it does not fully comply with the published definition.

As a result, the Council has now developed an improved and more robust system; the time and date of the initial notification will now be recorded, along with the time and date of the authority's determination of whether or not a vehicle is actually abandoned. For the purpose of reporting the performance indicator, determinations made within a strict 24-hour period from the time and date of notification will be recorded as successes. This revised system is currently being audited, using the figures produced for April 2006, to ensure that it fully complies with the published definition.

In line with the authority's compliance with this indicator, a new target figure for 2006/07 is required. At present, a target of 100 per cent has been agreed. Work is currently underway to determine a new target level, which will reflect the shorter, stricter timeframe, and the need to have clearly determined a vehicle as abandoned, in order to count it as a success.

The target will also reflect current staff shortages in the Council's Licensing and Enforcement Team. At present, there is only one officer covering all enforcement matters, as one post is vacant. Although a recruitment process has been successful, the new officer will not actually be in post until the second quarter of 2006/07.

It is proposed to publish the previously agreed target figures in the Best Value Performance Plan, even though these targets will subsequently be revised.

BV218 – Abandoned Vehicles (Page 2 of 7)**BV218b – Percentage of abandoned vehicles removed within 24 hours from the point at which the authority is legally entitled to remove the vehicle.**

A similar problem also exists for the figures produced and reported for BV218b. Again it was identified that they were not compliant with the published definition.

The definition requires the authority to measure and report the percentage of abandoned vehicles removed within a strict 24-hour period from the time and date the authority was legally entitled to remove them. The purpose of this performance measure is to encourage the quick removal of abandoned vehicles from the public realm.

The figure of 70.86 per cent quoted in the end of year performance report actually represents the percentage of abandoned vehicles removed by the authority's contractor by the close of business on the working day following the Council's request for removal. The contractor also serves eight other authorities in the Hertfordshire consortium. In effect, the authority has only measured and reported the performance of the contractor and has not identified how quickly vehicles are removed, from the point the Council is legally entitled to do so.

As a result, the Council has now developed an improved and more robust system; the time and date when the authority is legally entitled to remove an abandoned vehicle will now be recorded, along with the time and date of removal by the contractor. For the purpose of reporting the performance indicator, abandoned vehicles removed within a strict 24-hour period from the time and date the authority was legally entitled to remove them will be recorded as successes. This revised system is currently being audited, using the figures produced for April 2006, to ensure that it fully complies with the published definition.

As with BV218a, the compliance with this indicator now means that a revised target figure is needed for 2006/07. At present, a target of 80 per cent has been agreed. Work is currently underway to determine a new target level, and it is expected to decrease. A full explanation of why a lower target figure may be proposed is detailed below.

The Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 came in to force in October 2005. This legislation empowers the authority to remove certain abandoned vehicles without notice. Although the published definition has not yet been updated to reflect these changes, the new system developed by the authority for reporting BV218b does.

In the definition, "legally entitled to remove a vehicle", is defined as the point at which the authority can remove it, which will vary according to the vehicle and where it is abandoned. Once the authorised officer has investigated an abandoned vehicle and a decision has been made on the status of the vehicle, under the new legislation the notification period required is:

- Vehicle on a public highway and only fit for destruction (e.g. wrecked, burnt out) – no notice period.
- Vehicle on a public highway and not only fit for destruction (e.g. untaxed, with no current vehicle keeper on the DVLA record) – no notice period.
- Vehicle not on a public highway – 15 day notice to the "occupier" of the land, although if the "occupier" gives the local authority permission to remove the vehicle, the notice lapses and the vehicle can be removed immediately.

BV218 – Abandoned Vehicles (Page 3 of 7)

However, the authority's current policy for dealing with abandoned vehicles is not fully aligned with these, or the previous, legal entitlements. The majority of abandoned vehicles on a public highway in North Hertfordshire are served a seven-day notice (attached to the vehicle) prior to any further action being initiated. This is to allow the owner of the vehicle sufficient time to remove the vehicle, without the Council incurring removal and storage costs. As a result, any removals authorised on the expiration of a seven-day notice will fall well outside of the performance indicator's 24-hour notice period.

The only abandoned vehicles that will be removed immediately are wrecked or burnt out vehicles. However, even in these situations, removal may not actually take place within the strict 24-hour period from the time and date the authority was legally entitled to remove them.

This is due to the current arrangement with the contractor, which commenced prior to the introduction of this performance indicator, in 2003.

At the present time, all collection requests forwarded to the contractor by 13.00 hours on a working day will be scheduled for collection by "close of play" on the following working day. Any collection requests received by the contractor after 13.00 hours on a working day will be scheduled for collection by "close of play" on the subsequent working day.

In view of this, the revised target figure will take in to account the relatively low number of vehicles that the authority would currently request to be removed as soon as it was legally entitled to do so (wrecked, burnt out, expiration of a 15-day notice). It will also take in to account that there is no guarantee from the contractor that any of these vehicles would actually be removed within a 24-hour period. The only guarantee is that they would be removed by the "close of play" on the following working day or the subsequent working day.

Due to the fact that accurate baseline data was not collected and reported during 2005/06, the proposed targets will still only be the authority's best estimate. Targets for subsequent years will be revised based on the performance information produced in 2006/07. For the purpose of this year's Best Value Performance Plan, it is proposed to publish the previously agreed target figures for each year (2006 – 2009).

In order to achieve a significantly higher percentage result for this performance indicator, the authority would need to amend the current procedures for dealing with abandoned vehicles (e.g. requesting removal as soon as the authority is legally entitled to do so). It would also need to amend the arrangements currently agreed with the contractor (e.g. abandoned vehicles to be collected by the contractor within 24-hours from the time and date of request).

As well as revising the target figures for both of the indicators, work is also underway to establish the implications of changing the current working practices. The outcome of this review will be reported alongside the amended target figures.

Detailed below are the proposed commentaries for both of the performance indicators, for inclusion in this year's Best Value Performance Plan.

BV218a The Council has identified that the year-end return of 86.32 per cent was not fully compliant with the published government definition. The figure represents the percentage of vehicles initially investigated by the close of business on the working

BV218 – Abandoned Vehicles (Page 4 of 7)

day following notification. This was not completely aligned with the government requirement to measure the percentage of vehicles determined to be abandoned or not within a strict 24-hour period from the time and date of notification. The Council has now developed an improved and more robust system to ensure that the indicator is reported accurately in 2006/07.

BV218b The Council has identified that the year-end return of 70.86 per cent was not fully compliant with the published government definition. The figure represents the percentage of abandoned vehicles removed by the Council's contractor by the close of business on the working day following a request for removal. This was not in accordance with the government requirement to measure the percentage of abandoned vehicles removed within a strict 24-hour period from the time and date the Council was legally entitled to remove them. An improved and more robust system has now been developed to ensure that the indicator is reported accurately in 2006/07.

BV218 – Abandoned Vehicles (Page 5 of 7)

BV 218a Introduced 2005/06 Good Performance ↑			
Title	Abandoned Vehicles		
Description	Percentage of new reports of abandoned vehicles investigated within 24hrs of notification.		
Purpose/aim	<p>To encourage quick investigation of reports of abandoned vehicles. Abandoned vehicles add to fear of crime as well as being a hazard.</p> <p>The returns from this BVPI will be used to establish a baseline figure to inform us how many abandoned vehicle reports are being investigated within this time period.</p>		
Definition	<p>‘Notification’ means either: the point from which a Local Authority receives a report of a suspected abandoned vehicle from a member of the public, or other authority; or a member of staff suspects a vehicle is abandoned.</p> <p>‘Investigation’ means that the Local Authority authorised officer will make enquiries into the status of the vehicle to confirm whether in their opinion it is abandoned. The 24hr target is met at the point when the authority has determined whether, in their opinion, the vehicle is abandoned, and is in a position to remove it or put a notice on it.</p> <p>The 24-hour period in the title of this BVPI excludes weekends and bank holidays, but does include other hours outside of the normal working day.</p>		
Formula/ Worked Eg.	$N = (a / b) \times 100$ <p>Where: a = number of reports of abandoned vehicles investigated within 24 hours b = total number of abandoned vehicles reported</p>		
Measurement Period	Current financial year	Data Source (if external)	N/A
Return Format	%	Decimal Places	2
Further Guidance	N/A		
Target Setting	Local		

BV218 – Abandoned Vehicles (Page 6 of 7)

BV 218a Introduced 2005/06 Good Performance ↑	
Scope	Metropolitan Councils, London Boroughs, Unitary Councils, District Councils, Council of the Isles of Scilly, Common Council of the City of London.

BV 218b Introduced 2005/06 Good Performance ↑	
Title	Abandoned Vehicles - removal
Description	Percentage of abandoned vehicles removed within 24 hours from the point at which the authority is legally entitled to remove the vehicle.
Purpose/aim	<p>To encourage quick removal of abandoned vehicles from the public realm. Abandoned vehicles add to fear of crime as well as being a hazard.</p> <p>The returns from this BVPI will be used to establish a baseline figure to inform us how many abandoned vehicles are being removed within this time period.</p>
Definition	<p>'Vehicle' is any motor vehicle or trailer, or anything which forms part of a motor vehicle or trailer, including any item contained within it, as per the Refuse Disposal (Amenity) Act 1978</p> <p>An 'abandoned vehicle' is one which: appears to a local authority to have been abandoned without lawful authority, and the authorised officer at the local authority decides that it is abandoned.</p> <p>'Legally entitled to remove the vehicle' is defined as the point at which the authority can remove the vehicle, which will vary according to the vehicle and where it is abandoned. Once the report of an abandoned vehicle has been investigated by the authorised officer and a decision made on the status of the vehicle, under current legislation the notification period is:</p> <p>Vehicle on public highway and only fit for destruction Notice period: 24 hours (Section 10 of RDV Regulations 1986) Period before removal from confirmation the vehicle is abandoned: 48</p>

BV218 – Abandoned Vehicles (Page 7 of 7)

BV 218b Introduced 2005/06 Good Performance ↑			
	<p>hrs</p> <p>Vehicle on public highway and not only fit for destruction Notice period: None (Section 3 of RDA Act 1978) Period before removal from confirmation the vehicle is abandoned: 24 hrs</p> <p>Vehicle not on public highway Notice period: 15 days (Section 8 of RDV Regulations 1986) Period before removal from point at which confirmation the vehicle is abandoned: 16 days</p> <p>Whether the vehicle is fit for destruction is down to the discretion of the local authority officer involved.</p> <p>The 24-hour period in the title of this BVPI excludes weekends and bank holidays, but should include other hours outside of the normal working day.</p>		
Formula/ Worked Eg.	<p>$N = (a/b) \times 100$, where:</p> <p>a = Number of vehicles which are in the opinion of the local authority officer to be abandoned which are removed within 24 hours</p> <p>b = Total number of abandoned vehicles removed.</p>		
Measurement Period	Current financial year	Data Source (if external)	N/A
Return Format	%	Decimal Places	2
Further Guidance	N/A		
Target Setting	Local		
Scope	Metropolitan Councils, London Boroughs, Unitary Councils, District Councils, Council of the Isles of Scilly, Common Council of the City of London.		

Written justification for targets

Financial and Regulatory Services	
BV8	99% is the achievable top-end figure. With the implementation of electronic ordering and invoicing, this should be achievable with the minimum of staff time, thereby making non-cash efficiency gains.
BV9	Performance in recent years has been exceptionally high, amongst the best in the Country. Expecting some reduction as the council introduces new technology to allow officers to deal with increasing workloads (the number of new properties continues to rise steadily) without the need to increase resources. Expect performance to be in the upper quartile whilst the authority implements these changes. The target of 99% is significantly above the 2004/2005 top quartile figure of 98.30% and further improvement above this is unlikely without increasing resources.
BV10	Performance in recent years has been exceptionally high, amongst the best in the Country. Expecting some reduction as the council introduces new technology to allow officers to deal with increasing workloads without the need to increase resources. National non-domestic rates (NNDR) is a very small operation, where major changes can have a high impact. Expect performance to be in the upper quartile whilst the authority implements these changes. The target of 99.20% is above the 2004/2005 top quartile figure of 99.14% and further improvement above this is unlikely without increasing resources.
BV64	<p>Evaluation of the council tax information received in December 2005 indicates a total of 418 properties have been empty for longer than 6 months. Of this figure, only 178 have been on the list since December 2004. There appears to be a large number of properties that take between 6 to 12 months to resolve their future use/ownership i.e. through probate or building alteration works. The above information, together with the known stock level of 53,000 properties in the district, show's that the truly empty properties represent one third of a percent of all properties.</p> <p>The proposed year on year increase that has previously been set for this indicator is therefore unrealistic for the number of properties vacant in the district.</p> <p>Contact with the owners of vacant properties continues via letters (2 or 3 times a year) and telephone conversations are made by the empty homes officer. A benchmarking exercise is currently underway with Herts, Beds and Bucks authorities to consider this issue; it is hoped to complete the work in the next 4 months.</p> <p>It is difficult to evaluate the action taken by the authority, if after taking on board comments/issues raised by the empty homes officer, owners complete work as they see fit but do not make any further contact with the council.</p> <p>New legislation i.e. the EDMO (Empty Dwelling Management Order) due to be implemented in April 2006 will enable the authority to take action over the owners of the properties to provide affordable housing for an agreed period of time e.g. 5 years. The implementation of this legislation will enable the targets to be improved once the system is in place.</p>
BV76a	This target has been revised downward due to an increasing caseload and major changes in the way benefit fraud is now investigated. Visits are now almost exclusively intervention visits to review existing cases. Very few fraud visits are now carried out as intelligence is mainly gathered electronically.
BV76b	The team has 3.5 investigators and it is not envisaged that this will change. Any variations in this indicator will be brought about by fluctuations in the live caseload.

BV76c	This target has been revised downward. The caseload is increasing and new procedures have been introduced to streamline the process, so that a number of referrals from the housing benefits matching service, which are clearly not fraudulent, are filtered out by assessment officers prior to being referred to the fraud team. This allows the fraud team to concentrate on cases where a prosecution or sanction is more likely to be successful, thereby increasing the number of prosecutions and sanctions overall.
BV76d	The number of prosecutions and sanctions has increased from 34 in 2004/2005 to a predicted 44 in 2005/2006. The target has been reduced because the caseload has increased and continues to do so.
BV78a	The benefit caseload continues to increase and resources have been reduced. New technology is being introduced to address this, which will take time to fully implement and change working practices around this. Expect that this will affect performance in the short term but will then lead to an improvement back into the upper quartile.
BV78b	The Department for Works and Pensions (DWP) has changed the definition for this indicator during the course of 2005/2006. Their view is that they will now be expecting the upper quartile figure to be around 20 days. The caseload continues to increase and resources have been reduced. Expect that the introduction of new technology will enable the council to reach the target predicted.
BV79a	This indicator is assessed from a quarterly random sample of 126 cases, or 504 cases per annum. The 2006/2007 target is set at eight errors, reducing by one in each subsequent year.
BV79bi	This is an amended indicator, with little historical data on which to base a target. The target of 50.00% for 2006/2007 is based on an improvement in the prediction for 2005/2006 of 48.00%. This is a difficult indicator for the authority as it is very pro-active in identifying overpayments, thereby making it more difficult to achieve high performance in this indicator.
BV79bii	This is an amended indicator, with little historical data on which to base a target. The target of 23.00% for 2006/2007 is based on an improvement in the prediction for 2005/2006 of 22.00%. This is a difficult indicator for the authority as it is very pro-active in identifying overpayments, thereby making it more difficult to achieve high performance in this indicator.
BV79biii	This is an amended indicator, with little historical data on which to base a target. The target of 2.90% for 2006/2007 is based on an improvement in the prediction for 2005/2006 of 3.00%. This is a difficult indicator for the authority as it is very pro-active in identifying overpayments, thereby making it more difficult to achieve high performance in this indicator.
BV80	The authority is looking for a gradual improvement in all categories with the exception of b) (service in the office), in which the benefit service scored very highly at the last survey and which the service is hoping to maintain.
BV106	Strategic housing targets for North Hertfordshire, from the draft East of England Plan, remain high. With historical allocations on greenfield sites that predate PPG3 and BV106 still to be built out over the next five years, this has the effect of reducing the percentage of previously developed land (PDL) sites, despite high numbers of housing units being developed on PDL sites. There is also the possibility of the Secretary of State granting permission on land West of Stevenage, later this year. In these circumstances, it would be unlikely that NHDC would meet the Government's 60% target of new homes built on previously developed land. However, if such greenfield allocations were excluded then the council would far exceed the national target.
BV109a	The target for this indicator is nationally set.
BV109b	The target for this indicator is nationally set.
BV109c	The target for this indicator is nationally set.
BV111	Target setting pro-forma was issued to the responsible officer on 02/02/06. This was delayed while certain elements of the survey consultation were clarified.

BV156	By the 31/03/06, all essential DDA improvements will have been completed in all of the council's public buildings with the exception of those buildings where the completion of such works is not a practicable proposition. The projected figure for 2006/2007 will therefore be the same as for 2005/2006 (85.2% to 1 decimal place/85.19% to the required 2 decimal places) because the inclusion of the DDA compliant Royston Leisure Centre will be offset by the exclusion of the compliant Royston open air pool, which has been closed and handed back to its owners. For 2007/2008 and 2008/2009 however, there will be a slight year on year increase in overall performance due to the anticipated disposal and/or refurbishment of Hitchin Town Hall and Baldock Town Hall. Decisions about the future of these non-DDA compliant buildings are still to be made but, regardless of whether or not they are retained and refurbished or disposed of for other uses, the overall effect on our performance figures will be a slight improvement.
BV166	The key challenge for this indicator is to maintain current performance having regard for the need to continuously update policies and procedures arising from changes in legislation, case law and best practice.
BV183a	Targets have been provided for the years 2006/2007 and 2007/2008, although the target setting pro-forma has not yet been returned. The target for 2008/2009 and the written justification still need to be confirmed.
BV183b	Targets have been provided for the years 2006/2007 and 2007/2008, although the target setting pro-forma has not yet been returned. The target for 2008/2009 and the written justification still need to be confirmed.
BV199d	It is anticipated that the number of incidents will continue to increase, as well as the number of enforcement actions increasing, which rates the authority as '3' or 'good' according to the guidance and advice from the Audit Commission. Expect the number of incidents to increase due to local waste minimisation policies and the impact of increased disposal costs. 2005/2006 was a benchmarking year, and the council will set future targets in line with the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act (CNEA) and to reflect possible future changes in the enforcement section and changes in their responsibilities within the council.
BV200a	It is a statutory requirement that this target is met within the agreed timescale.
BV200b	It is a statutory requirement that this target is met within the agreed timescale.
BV200c	It is a statutory requirement that this target is met within the agreed timescale.
BV202	Targets have been provided for the years 2006/2007 and 2007/2008, although the target setting pro-forma has not yet been returned. The target for 2008/2009 and the written justification still need to be confirmed.
BV203	Targets have been provided for the years 2006/2007 and 2007/2008, although the target setting pro-forma has not yet been returned. The target for 2008/2009 and the written justification still need to be confirmed.
BV204	This broadly accords with the national average for appeals allowed and is an achievable target.
BV205	It is anticipated that with the further development of the council's website to be completed during the coming year, the full Pendleton score will be achieved and the quality of service will reach the maximum of 100%.
BV213	This indicator was introduced in 2005/2006. The agreed target figure of 50 related to the total number of households for whom housing advice casework intervention resolved their situation during 2005/2006. Subsequent guidance now states that the indicator needs to be reported as the number of households for whom housing advice casework intervention resolved their situation per 1000 households in the local authority area. This results in the target figure being amended from 50 to 1. The targets for 2006/2007 onwards have been set in accordance with the new definition. Targets have been provided for the years 2006/2007 and 2007/2008, although the target setting pro-forma has not yet been returned. The target for 2008/2009 and the written justification still need to be confirmed.
BV214	Targets have been provided for the years 2006/2007 and 2007/2008, although the target setting pro-forma has not yet been returned. The target for 2008/2009 and the written justification still need to be confirmed.

BV216a	<p>This indicator reflects, at any one time, the total number of sites of potential concern and therefore represents a balance between the number of sites where a determination can be made as regards the need for remediation and the number of new sites coming to the attention of the authority. The latter is a function of some new planning applications and the receipt of additional information relating to certain polluting processes.</p> <p>The above targets are based on limited historic data and reflect the current rate of redevelopment of brownfield sites.</p>
BV216b	<p>As this indicator was introduced in 2005/2006 little comparative data exists concerning the performance of local authorities in England and Wales. Current estimates are that this authority will deliver an outturn figure of 2.7% for this indicator in 2005/2006 against the target of 3.5%. Targets for future years reflect a more realistic evaluation of the pace of contaminated land investigation via both the development control process and the retrospective interventions required by Part IIA of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.</p>
BV217	<p>The future targets for this indicator are largely a factor of upgrading programmes mandated by DEFRA that relate to specific processes already regulated by this authority. Accordingly, it is difficult to predict future demands of this indicator relative to other authorities as there is considerable variation between authorities as regards i) the number of regulated processes, and ii) the type of processes that have upgrading targets set by DEFRA.</p> <p>However, the above future targets reflect the relatively small number of processes permitted by the authority and the likely impact of DEFRA upgrading programmes.</p>
BV218a	<p>The enforcement team currently has enough resources to ensure that 100% of new reports about abandoned vehicles are responded to within 24 hours of notification. The general trend is that the number of abandoned vehicles reported to the authority is going down since the responsibility transferred over to the enforcement team in 2002. The authority will set future targets in line with the CNEA (Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act) and to reflect possible future changes in the enforcement section and changes in their responsibilities within the council.</p>
BV218b	<p>The authority has set a target of 80% for BV218b as performance is reliant on a contractor that serves eight other authorities in the Hertfordshire consortium, and the other demands that are made on their time and workload. This figure will be reviewed annually; however if the trend continues showing a decrease in the number of abandoned vehicles then the result for this indicator should improve accordingly. The contract for collection, storage and disposal of vehicles abandoned or voluntarily surrendered in Hertfordshire runs from 2003 to 2008; therefore the target set for 2008/2009 is subject to the contract being reviewed.</p>
BV219a	<p>There are no proposals to increase the number of conservation areas within the district.</p>
BV219b	<p>It is intended to complete the character assessment for the Royston conservation area by 31st March 2006. Dependent on staff recruitment and resources the targets set are realistic and achievable.</p>
BV219c	<p>It is intended to complete the Royston management proposals for 2006/2007 and the targets set for future years are dependent on staff resources and recruitment. However, these targets are realistic and achievable.</p>
H1a	<p>Targets have been provided for the years 2006/2007 and 2007/2008, although the target setting pro-forma has not yet been returned. The target for 2008/2009 and the written justification still need to be confirmed.</p>
H1b	<p>Targets have been provided for the years 2006/2007 and 2007/2008, although the target setting pro-forma has not yet been returned. The target for 2008/2009 and the written justification still need to be confirmed.</p>
H2	<p>Targets have been provided for the years 2006/2007 and 2007/2008, although the target setting pro-forma has not yet been returned. The target for 2008/2009 and the written justification still need to be confirmed.</p>

H3	<p>Subject to appropriate funding being available the indicated targets will be achieved. The supply of affordable housing is going to be close to the target figure that has previously been discussed. The level of future affordable housing on private and housing association sites shows there is potential to complete over 250 units in year 2007/2008. However, the funding is going to be of concern in the future.</p> <p>The authority will complete the 5-year promise from stock transfer date March 2002, providing in the region of 800 affordable housing properties, 300 over the promised figure of 500 units. Funding for affordable housing from 2008/2009 will be restricted to the partnership working arrangement i.e. funding from the community benefit funds set up from stock transfer.</p> <p>There will be additional possibilities to secure future funding from the Housing Corporation; however this will be tied to growth and regeneration themes set by the Housing Corporation (against future schemes such as the West of the A1 (M)), which will have implications regarding the nominations to the schemes.</p> <p>The figure of 150 units for the year 2008/2009 is a current estimate for the development potential possible from the known sites. This figure is flexible and will be subject to the usual conditions such as land acquisition and planning approvals.</p>
H4	<p>Details relating to the amendment of this indicator in 2006/2007 and the proposed targets for the period 2006/2009 will be included in the report being presented to PARC on 06/04/06 covering the review of local performance indicators.</p>
H5	<p>Details relating to the deletion of this indicator in 2006/2007 will be included in the report being presented to PARC on 06/04/06 covering the review of local performance indicators.</p>
H6	<p>Targets have been provided for the years 2006/2007 and 2007/2008, although the target setting pro-forma has not yet been returned. The target for 2008/2009 and the written justification still need to be confirmed.</p>
PE14	<p>Recent performance data has indicated that this is a challenging objective to deliver consistently. However, future improvements in performance may be occasioned by the introduction of service@north-herts in 2006/2007 that should streamline customer access to environmental health services and improve the method in which these services are delivered.</p>
PE24	<p>Priority is given to the inspection of high-risk food premises (there being approximately 70 in North Herts) and it is expected that they will all be visited in accordance with the inspection programme. The number of premises in this category changes during the year with new premises opening, businesses closing and some changing category following inspection.</p>
PE25	<p>Businesses falling in this category vary from very low-risk (greengrocers, confectioners etc.) to larger premises selling high-risk foods where at the last inspection conditions were found to be good. Approximately 850 premises fall in this category. A significant number of premises in this category are dealt with by the alternative inspection strategy and no longer receive routine visits, details of the nature of the business being obtained by questionnaire.</p> <p>Some businesses of a seasonal or part-time nature may not receive an inspection due to difficulties in gaining access.</p>
PE30	<p>Service delivery and productivity will be intrinsically improved by 2006/2007 with the implementation of IT initiatives and projects. A further small target improvement is set for 2007/2008 but further improvement or gain is not predictable at this stage.</p>
PE32	<p>Consistent data has been difficult to collect for this relatively new indicator. Future customer satisfaction will, in part, be influenced by a new first point of contact in 2006/2007 via service@north-herts. The contact centre, employing Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software, should provide a sound basis on which to remodel service delivery and thereby provide enhanced customer satisfaction.</p>
PE33	<p>Details relating to the deletion of this indicator in 2006/2007 will be included in the report being presented to PARC on 06/04/06 covering the review of local performance indicators.</p>
PE34	<p>Details relating to the deletion of this indicator in 2006/2007 will be included in the report being presented to PARC on 06/04/06 covering the review of local performance indicators.</p>

Chief Executive's Directorate	
BV2a	Before moving forward to Level 4 we must consolidate Level 3 actions and ensure that they are part of the NHDC culture. Areas to be improved are monitoring of equality indicators by NHDC contractors and a refinement to the equality training programme. Targets for Level 4 need to be based on statistics from Level 3 indicators enabling Level 4 achievement by March 2007. Adjustment of this target was agreed by PARC in November 2005 and will be endorsed by Cabinet in February 2006.
BV2b	No change to the targets as we are focusing on consolidation. (15/19 questions)
BV3 BV4	Waiting for confirmation from ODPM on collection of survey data
BV126 BV127a BV127b BV128	These targets have been set by Herts Constabulary.
BV174	The target for BV 174 has been revised to zero baseline to reflect that we would expect complaints against the Authority to reduce from the former increasing target. Given that we have raised awareness of service areas responsibility with regard to equalities and diversity, it would be considered a failure of our processes for residents to experience discrimination based on race. Mechanisms are in place to encourage reporting and we would expect to receive a complaint directly or otherwise if an individual/group felt that they had been unfairly treated. This is in line with BV 175 in that, 100% of any complaints received would be actioned.'
BV175	
BV179	We have consistently reached 100% target through streamlining processes and a full compliment of staff. We envisage sustaining this target in the future.
BV225 (BV176)	This target is a percentage based on 11 criteria. By the end of 2005/06 we will be able to answer yes to 10 of the 11. It is unlikely we will achieve 100% as we are required to have 12 available domestic refuge places, but consideration of the establishment of a Sunflower Project refuge in North Herts could help to deliver this particular strand of the target.
L24/25	No targets have been set for this local PI. Collection of the data for this PI has not been consistent throughout the authority and results have not been reported this year. It is suggested that the collection of this indicator is delayed until the CRM is in place in approximately 12 months time.
Customer Services Directorate	
BV11a BV11b BV11c	Low turnover in senior positions makes these PI's a difficult target to impact upon. The smaller numbers of directors and heads of service will mean little movement over the next few years. The target of 4% currently equates to one person at senior level.
BV12	Eight days is a stretching target for a local authority and is a realistic one against the last few years actual rates of absence. Firm processes are now in place for dealing with absence. These processes are likely to maintain levels. Once absence levels have been maintained at a lower rate further incentives could be explored.
BV14	ODPM suggest a 'top quartile' target of 0.16% is set, however, for NHDC this equates to less than 1 person. At NHDC, 0.26% = 1 person and we believe this is a more realistic target. In 2005/06, up to December 2005, seven staff retired early as part of the restructure.

BV15	ODPM suggest a 'top quartile' target of 0.12% is set, however, for NHDC this equates to less than 1 person. At NHDC, 0.26% = 1 person and we believe this is a more realistic target. A very small number of employees can be expected to develop health problems which may mean they need to retire on health grounds. It remains an exception.
BV16a	Our historical performance from 2002 (2.78%, 3.9% and currently 3.43%) shows the gap between the economically active disabled in our community (10.23%) and what we actually achieve. We anticipate that performance will be improved by collecting the data for existing staff for this PI through the staff survey rather than relying on application forms that may become out of date. If so, we will be able to set more stretching targets in the future. At the end of December 2005, our performance is 3.12% equating to 14 employees. A target of 4% equates to 18 employees. The economically active disabled in our community (10.23%) is from the census question, 'Do you have any long-term illness, health problem or disability which limits your daily activities or the work you can do (including problems due to old age)'. It is not directly comparable to the NHDC application form question 'Do you consider yourself to have a disability'.
BV17a	A stretching target is needed but needs to be realistic in comparison to the actual figures for previous years. The targets set previously have risen quickly over the last two years and made it difficult to achieve.
BV82ai	As compost has increased, total waste arisings will increase so although we estimate a higher tonnage of recycling it will appear as a lower percentage of the increased waste arisings.
BV82aii	The target from 2007 reflects the addition of cans and plastics to be collected.
BV82bi	Estimates agreed in conjunction with Service-team based on historical returns per bin and number of bins in service. 2007/08 reflects addition of cardboard and kitchen waste.
BV82bii	Estimates agreed in consultation with Serviceteam based on historical returns per bin and number of bins in service. From 2007 the target reflects the addition of cardboard and kitchen waste collection.
BV84a	The aim is to maintain current performance despite the anticipated national forecast of a 3% increase in waste arisings and the anticipated increase in recycling and composting through education and promotion. However, the impact of increased tonnage from compost will create an initial rise that will fall when alternate weekly collections commence. Around 4% of this increase in 2006/07 will be due to increased compost tonnages. The decrease in 2007/08 accounts for half a year of alternate weekly collections.
BV84b	As for BV84a. Approximately 4% of this increase will be due to increased compost tonnages.
BV86	Draft budget for 2006/07 onwards, not including inflation. 2006/07 reflects the expansion of the brown bins, 2007/08 increase reflects the addition of cans and plastic to kerbside and 2008/09 reflects the savings from alternate weekly collections.
BV89	Waiting for confirmation from ODPM on collection of survey data
BV90a/b	Waiting for confirmation from ODPM on collection of survey data.
BV91a/b	All households currently receive service for at least paper and glass.
BV119	Waiting for confirmation from ODPM on collection of survey data.
BV157	Agreement with ODPM via contact from IDEA.
BV170a	We anticipate more web-hits due to web-site improvements. We cannot expect to reach top quartile without opening 7 days a week. The museum FRS will not impact as the first improvement project is mainly improved storage and is not scheduled for completion until 2009/10
BV170b	Visits are unlikely to increase without investment into museums. No disabled access to 1 st floor Letchworth and no toilet facilities at Hitchin which puts off school groups
BV170c	Nationally schools are finding it harder to make museum visits because of cost. Hub museums such as Luton can offer incentives for cheap or free visits.

BV199a	Set in line with top quartile audited data 2004/05. Based on achievements 2007/08, 2008/09 will be reviewed
BV199b/c	These subsections were introduced this year. We now have the first 2 survey returns on which to base targets
BV226a	The financial increase represents a notional annual inflationary allowance.
BV226b	The percentage of organisations holding the CLS Quality Mark is unlikely to change during the next 3 years.
LC4	The National Association of British Market Authorities have identified a national decline in markets, specifically those that are outdoor general markets. The aim is to stabilise the markets with improved communication with traders and public and instil confidence in their long-term viability and retain existing levels of utilisation.
LC5	A systems upgrade in September 2005 has resulted in a slower rate than had previously been achieved as staff are becoming more accustomed to the new system. However the future years targets have been set to reflect the expected increase in call volumes and also the increased monitoring of more complicated Telecare sensors, which are beginning to be introduced to support independent living. Careline will still expect to meet and exceed the minimum calls response time of 80% of emergency calls in under 30 seconds, however response time performance is closely linked to staffing levels, so targets have been set to achieve maximum value for money within the service.
LC7a	The Beechridge hostel will be closing in April 2007 and the demand for this service is expected to reduce by 25%. Targets have been based on actual performance up to the end of December 2005.
LC7b	The frozen meals service should see a 10% increase each year. Promotion of the service has been extended but the main focus remains on the hot meal service.
LC8	The forecast for 2005/06 is 92% but an increase of charges to £40 for 2006/07 is expected to reduce demand.
LC15	For the last few years the targets have been over ambitious. The new targets reflect more closely actual trends, these figures remain stretched. Contractor's usage and finance figures are being more closely monitored. The reason why the target has been reduced is because the North Herts Leisure Centre figures have been significantly down against last year, however the income has only been slightly down. The Council Audit department has undertaken an audit at the leisure centre and is satisfied with the figures that are being produced. On 28.02.06 the target was amended to 7743 to be tabled at PARC 02.03.06 for approval.
L52	It must remain a firm target to completely maintain a zero target for accidents at work.
L59	DMTs are notified on a monthly basis of the outstanding appraisals. Working together will ensure the appraisals and paperwork are completed on time to achieve this years 100% target.
L61	Firm plans are now in place to offer the half-day induction on a weekly basis.
PE1	The Waste Management Contract requires a 10% improvement per annum. Targets are set in contract documentation with 50 set as baseline.
PE2	The Waste Management Contract conditions require 100% achievement.
PE29	Based on draft budget.
PE31	Waste Management Contract conditions require 100% of graffiti removal.

TITLE OF REPORT: BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE PLAN (BVPP) 2006/07**REPORT OF THE HEAD OF POLICY, PARTNERSHIPS AND PERFORMANCE****1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 This report presents the Best Value Performance Plan 2006/07 (see Appendix A) for PARC's approval.

2. FORWARD PLAN

- 2.1 This report contains a recommendation on a key decision and has been referred to in the Forward Plan.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 A draft version of the Best Value Performance Plan (BVPP) for 2006/07 was presented to PARC in April, to Cabinet on 25th April, and to Full Council on 16th May; in order to achieve this sequence, the draft report was issued to PARC members in advance of their 26th April meeting in order to provide their comments for Cabinet.
- 3.2 At the request of Council (minute 18 refers, meeting 16/5/06) the final version of the BVPP is presented to PARC tonight for approval. The report is referred back to PARC from Council as the final version was not available at the time of the full Council meeting. In addition, the year end performance data was not available at that time, and some requests for changes to targets were requested once the year end performance data had been received. The year end performance data and proposed changes to targets were presented earlier in tonight's agenda and subject to PARC approval will be included in the final document.
- 3.3 The Local Government Act 1999 requires all Best Value Authorities to prepare an annual Best Value Performance Plan. North Herts District Council has a statutory requirement to produce this by 30 June each year, by which time the published document should be available in reception areas and public libraries.
- 3.4 The statutory requirement to prepare a Performance Plan provides an opportunity for authorities to articulate their proposals for improvement in the coming year, including how weaknesses will be addressed, opportunities exploited and better outcomes delivered for local people.
- 3.5 It is important therefore that the BVPP is not developed in isolation from the Authority's overall business planning, and must therefore contain references to the Corporate Plan and Service and Financial Planning processes.

4. BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE PLAN

- 4.1 The BVPP will be in the A4 format used in previous years. The front and rear covers of this report will follow the corporate format of the BVPP summary recently published.
- 4.2 The statutory guidance (specified in section 4.3 below) also notes that, in contrast to the audience for the BVPP summary, the 'primary audience for the plan should be the authority itself'. However, as the document is also available to anyone who requests a copy, it should still be written in plain English, understandable to those outside of the organisation.
- 4.3 The statutory contents of the BVPP are dependent upon the CPA rating of the council producing the document. For NHDC the statutory requirements (as laid out in ODPM Circular 02/2004, addendum to ODPM Circular 03/2003, subsequently updated in ODPM Circular 05/2006) are as follows:
- '(a) A brief summary of the authority's strategic objectives and priorities for improvement. This should reflect its corporate/business planning processes and aspirations expressed in the community strategy.
- (b) Arrangements for addressing the authority's improvement priorities, particularly the opportunities and weaknesses identified in CPA (or self-assessment where a CPA has not reported), and the outcomes that are expected to be achieved as a result.
- (c) Details of performance:
- outturn performance over the past year on all Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs);
 - targets for the current year and subsequent 2 years for all BVPIs.
- (d) A brief statement on contracts. The authority should state and certify that all individual contracts awarded during the past year which involve a transfer of staff comply, where applicable, with the requirements in the Code of Practice on Workforce Matters in Local Authority Service Contracts.'
- 4.4 The overall external style of the document will reflect the format adopted for the Corporate Plan and the BVPP summary for 2006/07 - blue front cover with photo montage, and lavender rear cover. Due to the tabular format of several of the sections of the full BVPP, it will not be possible to include the colour block sections used down the sides of the internal pages of the Corporate Plan and the BVPP summary.
- 4.5 The BVPP summary 2006/07 was circulated with the Council Tax bills in March 2006. As this moved to a shorter, bullet point style presentation with 4 pages instead of the previous 12 pages, it was not possible to update all of the 'promises' made in the 2005/06 BVPP summary. It was suggested during the production of the BVPP summary that this information could be included in the full Plan document. In line with the BVPP summary it is proposed that this will move away from the 'Directorate model' used previously and follow the six strategic objectives. This will also align it more closely with the Corporate Plan. This will be added as a new section (see Achievements in 2005/06 in Appendix A), which shows the promises remodelled into the appropriate strategic objectives.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There is a legal requirement under the Local Government Act 1999 to produce a Best Value Performance Plan by the end of June each year.

6. FINANCIAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 As previously advised, the funding to produce the document is identified within existing Performance Team budgets. Use will be made of the Council's print facilities for production of the document, with the exception of the design activity which will be handled by an external designer, as with the BVPP summary. In consideration of costs, the document will be produced with a full colour cover, black and white inside pages and wire binding.
- 6.2 The resources in terms of overall performance and service delivery will be considered within the service and financial planning/budget setting framework.
- 6.3 Management of risk is an integral part of the performance, service and financial planning process of the Authority and is therefore included within the annual plan.

7. HUMAN RESOURCE AND EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no human resource or equalities implications arising from this report.

8. CONSULTATION WITH EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS AND WARD MEMBERS (If appropriate)

- 8.1 Not applicable.

9. RECOMMENDATION

- 9.1 PARC is asked to:

Agree the Best Value Performance Plan 2006/07, subject to any changes in targets agreed earlier at tonight's meeting (agenda item 10 refers).

10. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 10.1 The Best Value Performance Plan must be produced and distributed by 30 June each year.

11. APPENDICES

Appendix A: Best Value Performance Plan 2006/07

12. CONTACT OFFICERS

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use same cover as BVPP summary 06

DRAFT

Performance

Best Value Performance Plan 2006-2007

www.north-herts.gov.uk

Introduction

Welcome to North Hertfordshire District Council's seventh Best Value Performance Plan.

The Best Value Performance Plan is a vital component of our strategic planning framework and is prepared in accordance with central Government guidance and subject to external audit. Best Value is about ensuring local people receive the best services possible at the best price and it places a duty on the Council to fundamentally review all services. This is achieved through comparing our services and performance with others, consulting service users and residents, challenging how and why services are provided, and ensuring fair competition and procurement of services. This Performance Plan outlines our achievements in the past year, and identifies our priorities for the year ahead. The Plan expands on the summary information sent out with council tax bills in April 2006.

The Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) carried out by the Audit Commission in early 2004 assessed NHDC as a 'fair and improving Council'. We produced an improvement plan following the CPA inspection and 2005/06 has seen many of the elements of that plan put into effect. We are committed to taking action to improve further the services we deliver for communities in North Hertfordshire and to working to achieve our vision of this area as a 'vibrant place where people can live, work and prosper'.

John Smith
Leader of the Council

John T Campbell
Chief Executive

We welcome comments on the Best Value Performance Plan, which should be addressed to:

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The District of North Hertfordshire

The district of North Hertfordshire is an attractive area in which to live and work. It is located less than 40 miles from central London and has a population of 119,900. There are three historic market towns - Hitchin, Baldock and Royston - plus Letchworth, the world's first Garden City. The remainder of the district is rural, containing numerous established village communities.

In many ways, the district is a very good place to live and work. However, there are a number of current development pressures relating to residential growth and airport expansion which could threaten the traditional way of life. In addition, the district also has some small pockets where deprivation index scores are relatively high, and the impact of that deprivation is often heightened by close proximity to more prosperous areas.

Our district has excellent road and rail links. The A505, recently improved with the opening of the Baldock bypass, provides east/west access while the A1 (M) connects to London and the north. London, Cambridge and the north have fast rail connections. Bus routes link the main towns to Luton and Stansted airports.

North Hertfordshire is the second most culturally diverse district in Hertfordshire with a minority ethnic population of 6.8%. This comprises communities of Chinese, Bangladeshi, Asian, Pakistani, Polish, Caribbean, African and Italian origin. North Hertfordshire has a higher number of older people than the national average of 24%, with 34% urban households and 43% of rural households including at least one person of retirement age or over.

Employment in the district is centred on distribution, hospitality, financial and business services. Unemployment has continually declined over recent years and stood at 1.3% in January 2006 compared with 5.1% in the whole of the United Kingdom. This is a small reduction on the previous year.

The district's workforce is highly educated. A survey in 2000 revealed that 71% of residents had participated in job related training or learning in the previous three years. North Hertfordshire mirrors the County's high education standards. The proportion of students achieving five or more GCSE A*-C grade passes is above the national average (58.5% for North Hertfordshire against 51.19% nationally).

North Hertfordshire has a relatively low crime rate and has no areas with severe or longstanding crime and disorder problems. On the whole, it is one of the safest areas in the country to live, work and visit.

This knowledge of our communities helps us to ensure that the services we and our partners deliver cater for the needs of our residents and businesses.

Corporate Planning

Under the Local Government Act of 2000, local authorities were required to work with their local residents to develop a Community Strategy. The Community Strategy for North Herts addresses the aspirations of our communities and has eight key themes: community safety; education and lifelong learning; health; housing; leisure and community development; planning, town centres and environment; transport; and young people. When the Strategy was first published in November 2003 it contained 103 improvement actions; currently 95 of these have been completed, with the remainder being absorbed into other relevant plans, such as town centre strategies, and transport plans. Further new activities will be included in the revision of the Community Strategy to be published in late 2006, and these will reflect the challenges facing North Herts in the coming years.

In 2004 together with our Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) colleagues, the Council developed a new vision for North Hertfordshire as a vibrant place to live, work and prosper. Our internal corporate planning has been reshaped around delivering that vision both in terms of what we do as an individual member of the LSP and the collaborative work we carry out in conjunction with our partners.

There are currently six high level strategic objectives which focus on creating sustainable, safer, healthier, equal, prosperous and satisfied communities.

These six strategic objectives form the foundation for key processes such as budget planning, service delivery and fundamental service reviews and they also reflect our role as a community leader. The strategic objectives are listed below, together with examples of some of the actions we plan to complete in 2006/07.

The Council's Corporate Plan shows our thinking on how the vision for the area, the council's mission to work collaboratively with our LSP colleagues and our strategic objectives fit together in a framework for corporate planning. The Corporate Plan runs from 2005 to 2015 and is refreshed every year. The first annual review of the plan will take place in 2006.

These are our strategic objectives, and some of our actions for 2006/07:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Sustainable
communities | <p>Promote sustainable development of the district to ensure we deliver adequate affordable housing, protect the environment and conserve the heritage of our historic towns and rural settlements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – We will facilitate the delivery of an average of 100 new affordable homes per year until 2008. The brown bin composting scheme will be extended across the district and kerbside collection of cans and plastics will be introduced. We will ensure that the vitality of our town centres is sustained through developing plans for their economic, community and social future. |
| Safer
communities | <p>Encouraging responsible citizenship and creating safe communities with less crime and less fear of crime</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – We will install 5 additional CCTV cameras to tackle crime hotspots, and help to minimise offences of antisocial behaviour. We will increase the number of new Neighbourhood Watch and Business Watch schemes in our communities, and introduce a Pub Watch scheme for all our towns. |
| Healthier
communities | <p>Promoting first class leisure and cultural facilities to contribute to healthy living for all of our citizens</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – We will agree future arrangements for Hitchin Town Hall, invest in the renovation of Mrs Howard Community Hall in Letchworth, and begin planning for enforcement of a smoking ban in public places. We will also develop a Parks and Open Spaces Strategy. |

- Equal communities**
- Targeting resources at areas of disadvantage in the district to reduce social exclusion and improve the quality of life for everyone**
- We will continue to implement our Social Inclusion and Rural Strategies. We will introduce a Choice Based Lettings (CBL) initiative. We will integrate consideration of equalities and the Gender Equality Duty into service areas.
- Prosperous communities**
- Creating opportunity for all by promoting sustainable local economic development**
- We will work with partners to encourage small business development across the district. We will work with the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation (LGCHF) to co-ordinate redevelopment of Letchworth town centre. We will develop a renewed work programme for the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) to optimise opportunities for delivery of the Hertfordshire Local Area Agreement (LAA).
- Satisfied communities**
- Ensuring that we listen to our citizens and deliver responsive, high quality, value for money, customer focused services**
- We will transform the way our services are delivered to customers. We will provide equal access in person, by telephone and over the internet. A new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) model will be introduced. Further online facilities will be established for the payment of service transactions by credit/debit cards. We will implement a comprehensive communications strategy.

To request a copy of the Corporate Plan please contact:

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Improvement Activities

In our Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) inspection in early 2004, the Audit Commission awarded NHDC 41 points out of a possible 60. We were rated as a 'fair and improving council' and specific improvement objectives and activities were identified. The full CPA report is available at www.audit-commission.gov.uk/cpa.

Arising from the CPA inspection and full report we developed an organisation-wide CPA Improvement Plan (CPAIP) which outlined how we would improve in the future to ensure we continue to deliver the best possible services to our residents.

The 22 strategic actions that formed the basis of the improvement plan were each divided into specific time-based tasks with allocated responsibilities. Our approach ensures the detailed tracking of each task towards the completion of all 22 strategic improvement actions.

Progress of the improvement plan is monitored on a regular basis by our Corporate Management Team (CMT) and the Performance, Audit and Review Committee (PARC).

By the end of 2005/06, 17 of the 22 strategic actions had been completed. Progress is well underway with the remaining five strategic actions (these actions are not due to have been completed yet); these are:

- 6. To improve our internal and external communication to ensure effective and efficient exchange of information;
- 8. To support and lead the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP);
- 12. To establish a project management system;
- 17. To improve transportation planning;
- 22. To improve the Benefit Performance Standards compliance.

This information is highlighted in the table below. Any remaining elements of the five incomplete strategic actions will be incorporated into the Corporate Plan revision process as part of the organisation's continuous improvement agenda.

CPA Improvement Plan

Strategic Actions	Progress in 2005/06
1. Refresh the council's vision, mission and strategic objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new vision for North Hertfordshire as a vibrant place to live, work and prosper was agreed in July 2004. • The Council also adopted a mission statement which focuses on working collaboratively with our partners and communities to deliver the vision for North Herts. • The Council agreed six new high level strategic objectives which have been set out in the Council's first Corporate Plan.
2. Produce a corporate plan and financial strategy to reflect new strategic objectives and targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In March 2005 we launched our ten year Corporate Plan (2005-2015). The six strategic objectives are incorporated within that plan. The plan will be regularly reviewed and monitored.
3. Undertake a senior management restructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The final stages of our restructure took place in Autumn 05: by streamlining the senior team, we achieved savings of around 15% overall in senior management costs.

<p>4. Incorporate emerging objectives and targets into the performance management system</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All of the new strategic objectives were embedded in the performance management system throughout 2005/06, and will continue to be in future years. • Targets have been set for all Best Value Performance Indicators and local indicators across the council. • All indicators are reviewed quarterly by CMT and PARC with high level indicators reviewed monthly by these groups.
<p>5. Produce service plans that reflect the emerging objectives and link to the corporate plan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each service area has its own service plan which links directly to the Council's strategic objectives, the Corporate Plan and the Vision for North Herts.
<p>6. Improve our internal & external communication to ensure effective and efficient exchange of information</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A communications plan for Service@NorthHerts (our new approach to customer service) has been established, and includes communication via <i>Outlook Magazine</i>, presentations to managers and through team briefing. • <i>Outlook</i> has been reconfigured to show clear links with our strategic objectives. • The staff magazine, <i>NHDC News</i>, has been brought up to date and improved in quality to improve our internal communication. • <i>Team Talk</i>, our internal briefing paper has been refreshed and now addresses issues identified in our staff survey. • The consultation strategy has been comprehensively reviewed and the improved process is now being followed • A corporate communications plan is under development. • Performance measures are being devised for the Communications Team.
<p>7. Effective/structured challenges of services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council has put in place at senior level a Challenge Board which scrutinises budgets, savings and growth bids to ensure that they are in line with the Council's overall priorities. • In addition the Council has completed a five year programme of fundamental service reviews across all areas of the organisation.

<p>8. Support and lead the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have increased our support and leadership of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) in the past 12-18 months. • Links to other corporate plans, such as the Local Development Framework are now in place. • The work of the LSP has been linked into other major policy areas such as Local Area Agreements (LAAs). The East of England Development Agency (EEDA) funding, and Investing in Communities (IIC) funding is complete. • The development of action plans with clear performance measures has commenced and will be taken forward with the revision of the Community Strategy in 2006. • The LSP has now secured resources from Herts County Council, JobCentre Plus and from North Hertfordshire College (NHC).
<p>9. Improve our human resource service to ensure that we recruit and retain appropriate levels of skilled staff to ensure that we can deliver against the communities' needs and the council's strategic objectives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The "People Strategy 2005-08" has been developed which includes the Workforce Development Plan. This covers areas such as recruitment and retention, equality, absence and skills. The strategy directly relates to the strategic objectives and community needs. • A leadership development provider was selected and the management development programme was launched at the end of 2005/06.
<p>10. Improve the speed of planning application handling</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council has significantly improved its response times in dealing with planning applications: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – major applications – from 58.97% (2004/05) to 70.59% (2005/06); – minor applications – from 57.18% (2004/05) to 71.97% (2005/06); – 'other' applications – from 75.49% (2004/05) to 83.81% (2005/06). • As a result, the ODPM has announced that the council's designation as a planning standards authority has been lifted.
<p>11. Improve sport and leisure facilities satisfaction</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Royston Leisure Centre opened in September 2005, on time and within budget, and is being used regularly by the local community.
<p>12. Establish a project management system</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A number of large projects such as the Royston Leisure Centre and tendering of our leisure centre management contracts have been carried out using the PRINCE2 project management methodology. • Extensive project management training (PRINCE2) has taken place for officers and members.

<p>13. Embed equalities and social inclusion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council has developed social inclusion and rural strategies, which are now being implemented. • Home visits to vulnerable residents have been increased by the use of mobile working technology within our benefits section. • Rural conferences, community events and playschemes have been established.
<p>14. Implement the housing strategy ensuring delivery of affordable homes while responding to developmental pressures</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are implementing the housing strategy and are on course to meet the target of 500 new affordable homes over 5 years. • We continue to oppose proposals for greenfield developments in North Herts, and we made strong representation to this effect at the Examination in Public of the draft East of England Plan.
<p>15. Reviewed the revised housing renewal strategy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Strategy was reviewed and endorsed by Cabinet in October 2004, and approved by full Council in November 2004.
<p>16. Actively monitor targets in providing affordable housing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes were required to monitoring reports and amendments in the way data was collected. This has been completed and the relevant performance indicators are subject to ongoing quarterly reporting to CMT and PARC.
<p>17. Improve transportation planning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A review of the Engineering Service is currently underway. • We are working in partnership with Herts County Council (HCC) in the production of town wide transport plans, implementation of Baldock Town Centre schemes and reviewing / implementing the cycle route network. • Rural transport issues are being taken forward in the development of the rural strategy. • Reporting arrangements have been improved to co-ordinate with North Hertfordshire Highways Partnership (NHHP) on fault reporting. • The Transport Fundamental Service Review (FSR) is the first scheduled for 2006.
<p>18. Improve the physical environment of our district</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A review of car park and public convenience cleansing has taken place as part of a management review (May 2005) • A Streetscene Fundamental Service Review (FSR) has been completed. This review was carried out during 2005/06 and will be reported to Cabinet in June 2006. • A Parking Strategy has been developed and adopted by the Council (July 2004), with Parking Attendants starting work in January 2005.

<p>19. Improve waste minimisation and recycling</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waste minimisation and recycling programmes have been developed in and built into the adopted Municipal Waste Strategy for Hertfordshire. • A quarterly schedule has been established to monitor the effectiveness of these programmes in conjunction with our partners in the Herts Waste Partnership. • A door-to-door campaign took place to raise awareness of recycling within the local community. • Schools Education Packs were published and distributed in conjunction with Wasteaware. • Green waste recycling has been expanded increasing overall household waste recycling to 27%.
<p>20. Work with partners to reduce crime & fear of crime</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training sessions were provided for officers and members on Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, to ensure that consideration of the community safety impact featured highly in all decisions made. • We have used the powers available to us to work with partners and develop a number of effective measures to deal with antisocial behaviour. • We have used partnership funding to encourage participation in diversionary activities, such as the Boxing Club at Royston and Football activities in Hitchin, to discourage young people gathering on streets and becoming involved in antisocial activities at an early age.
<p>21. Positively engage children and young people</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £229,600 has been invested in 6 sites to enhance teenage and children's facilities. • Young People's FSR - We are 3 years into a 4-7 year youth development and participation plan. The Youth Council in Hitchin is working effectively and the initiative will be replicated across the district. • A new Youth Issues Group was set up (in 2004) and continues to meet regularly.
<p>22. Improve the Benefit Performance Standards compliance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our self-assessment was completed on time and submitted to the Benefit Fraud Inspectorate (BFI). Although the criteria are substantially different to those used at the last assessment it was agreed that our score has improved from 'fair to good' to 'good'. • There are some areas of performance in which we still need to improve and we are dealing with this through use of mobile technology, allowing officers to complete assessment and produce reports in a single visit.

Achievements for 2005/06

In last year's Best Value Performance Plan Summary we made 26 promises for 2005/06. This section gives an update on each of those promises.

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

We will expand the green waste recycling scheme to 32,000 properties throughout the district.

We achieved this. This has helped to increase overall household waste recycling to 27%.

We will enable a further 170 new affordable homes to be built.

Whilst we expected to achieve the annual target of 170 new affordable homes during 2005/06, the year end figure was 149; however, the Authority is still on schedule to meet the target of 500 new affordable homes over 5 years.

We will prepare a new Local Development Scheme for North Hertfordshire.

The Local Development Scheme has been agreed. The Local Development Framework is being progressed in accordance with the Scheme.

We will make representations to the Examination in Public for the East of England Plan, which is currently proposing major greenfield developments in North Hertfordshire.

The Council successfully presented its case to the Examination in Public for the East of England Plan between November 2005 and February 2006.

SAFER COMMUNITIES

We will further minimise anti-social behaviour through the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership strategy published April 2005.

We tackled anti-social behaviour by working with partners in a number of ways dealing with neighbour issues both through our community safety team and working with local Social Landlords. We have also provided partnership funding to encourage participation in diversionary activities, such as the Boxing Club at Royston and Football in Hitchin, to discourage young people gathering on streets and becoming involved in antisocial activities.

We will implement the Licensing Act 2003 when it fully comes into force in August 2005.

This legislation was successfully implemented.

We will continue to invest in CCTV initiatives.

We are continuing to invest in CCTV to assist in the reduction of crime and increase detection rates.

We will complete our consideration of the potential for delegating additional powers to area committees.

A report on Area Governance was considered by the Area Committees in December 2005 and several recommendations have been implemented. Further consideration is currently being given to some aspects.

HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES

We will carry out a Fundamental Service Review (FSR) of the Council's Museums Service and develop medium to long term improvement plans by July 2005.

The Fundamental Service Review has been undertaken and the results reported in July and August 2005. A service improvement plan has been developed which recommended significant changes to the existing service.

The new Royston Leisure Centre will be completed, fully operational and open to the public by September 2005.

The new Royston Leisure Centre opened in September 2005 on schedule and within budget.

We will undertake a review of the need for reinvestment in village and other community halls, and with appropriate partners develop a plan for the required works.

We have provided grant aid totalling £443,000 to 116 community groups and organisations to help them with their work throughout our district.

We will apply for lottery funding to renovate the historic open space at Howard Park in Letchworth.

The application was successfully made and the Lottery has awarded a £38,000 project planning grant to develop the project.

EQUAL COMMUNITIES

We will work with JobCentre Plus to target employment information at harder to reach groups.

We have worked with JobCentre Plus to renew our eligibility to advertise using the two tick symbol (positive about applicants with a disability). We advertise all external vacancies with JobCentre Plus and they have displayed our posters targeted at attracting a wider diversity of applicants for council vacancies. We have also worked with JobCentre Plus, as a member of our LSP (Local Strategic Partnership), to undertake outreach work in Royston to encourage small business development, and this will include encouraging those from harder to reach groups to consider self-employment.

We will work to develop an extended range of services for the young and elderly to reduce social exclusion and respond to our residents' views expressed in the North Herts district-wide survey.

We have developed the Frozen Meals Service further in order to support independent living, which has included significantly increasing the target for meals delivered. We also aim to introduce Telecare technology to support independent living by completing the implementation of new call handling software. A draft 50+ action plan has been developed and this is currently being implemented; Young People's FSR - We are 3 years into a 4-7 year youth development and participation plan. We are in the emerging / established phase, recognised standard of "hear by right", a set of standards from the Local Government Association.

We will improve the standards of temporary accommodation provided for homeless people, with more support to enable them to live more independent lives.

Preparatory work is currently under way, with the first specialist units due to be available in 2007/8.

We will reduce the time homeless families have to wait in temporary accommodation to 25 weeks.

This was not met (actual figure for 2005/06 – 36.89 weeks) and has been reviewed due to the extended stays in temporary accommodation by clients choosing limited property types and restricting areas considered for their permanent housing.

We will make sure that people are aware of their housing options.

We have achieved this by launching our new Gateway Allocation Scheme, which was reviewed and further enhanced early in 2006.

PROSPEROUS COMMUNITIES

We will work with partners to support development of the local business economy.

We produced a free local business directory to promote local companies, which has been

distributed through our business partnerships and is also available on the Authority's website, alongside other business support information.

We will prepare a revised Development Brief for Churchgate, Hitchin and surrounding land.

We agreed a Development Brief for the Churchgate area in Hitchin.

LISTENING TO YOU (SATISFIED COMMUNITIES)

We will seek to increase awareness and involvement in the democratic process.

We carried out publicity across the district to raise understanding of the May 2006 election and to encourage registration to increase participation. We have improved publicity regarding public speaking at committees and are working with young people in local schools to increase their knowledge of the democratic process as part of the Citizenship programme for schools.

We will progress the construction of a new chapel at Wilbury Hills Cemetery, Letchworth.

We will carry this out, along with the construction of a new mausoleum, following consultation with local religious groups. Building will commence in summer 2006.

The actions within the Community Strategy will be developed further, linking the community's aspirations with the strategic objectives of the LSP partner agencies, producing a smarter, measurable programme of work.

We have reviewed and completed 95 out of the original 103 actions from our original Community Strategy. The Community Strategy of 2003 is now due for revision and community consultation events will take place in 2006 to ensure that the strategy remains a relevant document which our residents can engage with.

We will develop closer working arrangements with parish and town councils in the district.

We have renewed our commitment to the Parishes, with the relaunch of the Parish Charter in June 2005. We held an annual Parish Conference to ensure that we work effectively with our parishes, sharing information and expertise, whilst making effective use of resources. We also held an Annual Rural Community Safety event to address the specific needs of those communities in tackling rural crime.

We will collect 98.8% of council tax and 99.0% of business rates

Our collection rates were excellent, achieving more than 99% (99.5% and 99.3% respectively).

We will determine 70% of planning applications within eight weeks.

We exceeded this target for the year:

- 71.97% (minor applications)
- 83.81% (other applications).

We also determined 70.59% of major applications within 13 weeks.

Opportunities to make web-based building regulations applications will be provided.

Preparation is progressing by, for example, electronic data capture for archived projects.

Performance Management

The council's performance management system was introduced in October 2000 to ensure that we set and achieved challenging targets in the services we provide. It has been recognised by our external auditors as an example of notable practice, helping us to 'collect accurate, comprehensive and comparable data on performance, providing a good foundation from which to improve services'.

What is reported and to whom?

During 2005/06 we monitored our performance against 79 Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs) set by the Government. We also monitored performance against 30 locally set indicators that measured our performance and responsiveness to meeting specific local needs.

BVPIs and locally set indicators are reported quarterly to our Corporate Management Team and the Performance Audit & Review Committee (PARC).

Performance on a selection of 'high level' indicators is also considered on a monthly basis. The criteria used for identifying which indicators should be designated as 'high level' include:

- Supporting Strategic Objectives
- Consistent poor performance
- Cost effective for monthly monitoring
- Significant corporate health implications
- High public visibility

Performance is also reported to management teams within each directorate on a monthly basis.

Performance targets

Targets specify desired levels of achievement, with deadlines and should aim for continuous improvement. They act as a guide to all of our staff as to what they should be aiming to achieve. Targets are used by auditors and inspectors as evidence of ambition and future priorities. They aim to show local people what service improvements they can reasonably expect.

The targets on some BVPIs are set by the Government by analysing national and regional averages to predict the future performance across local government. Other targets are set by us locally, based on local circumstances.

Targets are informed by residents' and users' priorities, previous performance, internal and external comparisons, national and local priorities and other external influences such as new legislation. They are set for the current year and subsequent two years to show our aspirations for the future.

How we performed

The following tables set out the council's performance. The information is split into sections showing the statutory Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs) followed by the local indicators. Statutory indicators must be collected by all district councils and reported annually to the Audit Commission. In addition local indicators have been selected by the council to measure local performance and our responsiveness to meeting local needs.

Our performance for the year 2005/06 relates to the period 1 April 2005 to 31 March 2006.

BVPI No.	Performance Indicator	2005/06 Target	2005/06 Actual	Top Quartile Data 2004/05	2006/07 Target	2007/08 Target	2008/09 Target	Comments
Ref no. (Shaded PI denotes High Level)	Brief description	What we aimed to achieve	What we actually achieved	The top 25% of English authorities are achieving this performance or better	What we aim to achieve in these years			Commentary to explain performance where necessary

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The table below demonstrates a breakdown of the performance indicators collected, compared with the previous year. This shows good progress compared with the position at the end of last year: there are 6% more indicators showing green.

Directorate	Total PIs (or parts thereof)			Green	Amber	Red	*N/A
	BVPI	Local	Total				
Financial & Reg Services	40	14	54	28	12	10	4
Customer Services	29	14	43	19	15	7	2
Chief Executive	10	2	12	4	0	0	8
TOTAL	79	30	109	51	27	17	14
April 2005 – March 2006				54%	28%	18%	
April 2004– March 2005				48%	30%	22%	

*N/A – Indicators to which a colour status is not applicable.

The information contained in the following tables will be audited in the autumn of 2006. The information, however, seeks to be as accurate, robust and informative as possible.

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BVPI/ Local No.	Performance Indicator	2005/06 Target	2005/06 Actual	Top Quartile Data 2004/05	2006/07 Target	2007/08 Target	2008/09 Target	See Commentary on pages 31-38
BV2a	The level of the Equality Standard for Local Government to which the Authority conforms in respect of gender, race and disability.	Level 4 Level 3	Level 3	No Data	Level 4	Level 5	Level 5	Yes
BV2b	The quality of an Authority's Race Equality Scheme (RES) and the improvements resulting from its application.	78.9% or greater	84%	72%	84%	84%	84%	No
BV8	The percentage of invoices for commercial goods & services paid by the authority within 30 days of receipt or within the agreed payment terms.	98.25% or greater	99.03%	95.97%	98.80%	99.00%	99.00%	No
BV9	The percentage of council tax collected by the authority in the year.	98.80% or greater	99.50%	98.30%	99.00%	99.00%	99.00%	No
BV10	The percentage of non-domestic rates collected.	99.10% or greater	99.30%	99.14%	99.20%	99.20%	99.20%	No
BV11a	The percentage of the top paid 5% of local authority staff who are women.	28% or greater	35.49%	40.23%	28%	29%	30%	No
BV11b	The percentage of the top paid 5% of local authority staff who are from an ethnic minority.	6% or greater	0%	3.48%	4%	4%	4%	Yes
BV11c	The percentage of the top paid 5% of local authority staff who have a disability.	1% or greater	0%	No Data	4%	4%	4%	Yes
BV12	The number of working days/shifts lost to the local authority due to sickness absence per employee.	8 days or less	9.09 days	8.40 days	8 days	8 days	8 days	Yes
BV14	The percentage of employees retiring early (excluding ill health retirements) as a percentage of the total work force.	0.17% or less	1.04%	0.16%	0.26%	0.26%	0.26%	Yes

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BVPI/ Local No.	Performance Indicator	2005/06 Target	2005/06 Actual	Top Quartile Data 2004/05	2006/07 Target	2007/08 Target	2008/09 Target	See Commentary on pages 31-38
BV15	The percentage of local authority employees retiring on grounds of ill health as a percentage of the total work force.	0.17% or less	0.26%	0.12%	0.26%	0.26%	0.26%	Yes
BV16a	The percentage of local authority employees with a disability.	4% or greater	3.75%	3.73%	4%	4%	4%	Yes
BV16b	The percentage of the economically active population in the local authority area who have a disability.	No targets required	10.23%	No Data	No Targets Required			Yes
BV17a	The percentage of the local authority employees from ethnic minority communities.	6% or greater	5.52%	4.6%	6%	6%	6.5%	Yes
BV17b	The percentage of the economically active (persons aged 18-65) population from ethnic minority communities in the local authority area.	No targets required	6.70%	No Data	No Targets Required			No
BV64	The number of non-local authority-owned vacant dwellings returned to occupation or demolished during the financial year as a direct result of action by the local authority.	10 properties or greater	2	56.25	3	5	7	Yes
BV76a	The number of housing benefit claimants in the local authority area visited, per 1,000 caseload.	310.00 or greater	214.45	282.16	240.00	250.00	260.00	Yes
BV76b	The number of fraud investigators employed by the local authority, per 1,000 caseload.	0.43 or greater	0.41	No Data	0.40	0.40	0.40	Yes

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BVPI/ Local No.	Performance Indicator	2005/06 Target	2005/06 Actual	Top Quartile Data 2004/05	2006/07 Target	2007/08 Target	2008/09 Target	See Commentary on pages 31-38
BV76c	The number of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit (HB/CTB) fraud investigations carried out by the local authority per year, per 1,000 caseload.	65.00 or greater	27.80	53.40	32.00	35.00	38.00	Yes
BV76d	The number of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit (HB/CTB) prosecutions and sanctions, per year, per 1,000 caseload, in the local authority area.	5.50 or greater	6.74	5.31	5.00	5.40	5.80	No
BV78a	The average processing time taken for all new Housing and Council Tax Benefit (HB/CTB) claims submitted to the local authority, for which the date of decision is within the financial year being reported.	25.0 days or less	28.7	29.4 days	35.0	32.0	29.0	Yes
BV78b	The average processing time taken for all written notifications to the local authority of changes to a claimant's circumstance that require a new decision on behalf of the authority.	8.5 days or less	24.9	7.4 days	20.0	18.0	16.0	Yes
BV79a	The percentage of cases within a random sample for which the authority's calculation of Housing and Council Tax Benefit (HB/CTB) is found to be correct.	98.60% or greater	97.00%	99.00%	98.41%	98.61%	98.81%	Yes
BV79bi	The amount of Housing Benefit (HB) overpayments recovered during the period being reported on as a percentage of all HB overpayments during that period.	48.00% or greater	68.41%	No Data	50.00%	51.00%	52.00%	No

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BVPI/ Local No.	Performance Indicator	2005/06 Target	2005/06 Actual	Top Quartile Data 2004/05	2006/07 Target	2007/08 Target	2008/09 Target	See Commentary on pages 31-38
BV79bii	Housing Benefit (HB) overpayments recovered during the period as a percentage of the total amount of HB overpayment debt outstanding at the start of the period plus amount of HB overpayments identified during the period.	22.00% or greater	34.42%	No Data	23.00%	24.00%	25.00%	No
BV79biii	Housing Benefit (HB) overpayments written off during the period as a percentage of the total amount of HB overpayment debt outstanding at the start of the period, plus amount of HB overpayments identified during the period.	3.00%	5.46%	No Data	2.90%	2.80%	2.70%	Yes
BV82ai	The percentage of household waste arising which have been sent by the authority for recycling.	17% 14.1% or greater	15.34%	17.89%	13.63%	13.75%	14.00%	No
BV82aii	Total tonnage of household waste arising which have been sent by the authority for recycling.	9000 7937 tonnes or greater	8600.80	No Data	8356.52	8396	8436.00	No
BV82bi	The percentage of household waste sent by the authority for composting or treatment by anaerobic digestion.	7% 11.45% or greater	11.40%	9.80%	16.59%	17.40%	17.40%	No
BV82bii	The tonnage of household waste sent in by the authority for composting or treatment by anaerobic digestion.	3700 6446 tonnes or greater	6427.42	No Data	10168.63	10668	10668	No
BV84a	The number of kilograms of household waste collected per head of the population.	435.0kg or less	470.4kg	397.7kg	511.2kg	507.0kg	507.0kg	Yes

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BVPI/ Local No.	Performance Indicator	2005/06 Target	2005/06 Actual	Top Quartile Data 2004/05	2006/07 Target	2007/08 Target	2008/09 Target	See Commentary on pages 31-38
BV84b	The percentage change from the previous financial year in the number of kilograms of household waste collected per head of the population.	3% or less	4.53%	No Data	6.69%	0.5%	0%	Yes
BV86	The cost of household waste collection per household.	£56.46 or less	£47.51	£35.31	£57.79	£60.68	£58.19	No
BV91a	The percentage of households resident in the authority's area served by kerbside collection of recyclables.	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	No
BV91b	The percentage of households resident in the authority's area served by kerbside collection of at least two recyclables.	100%	100%	No Data	100%	100%	100%	No
BV106	The percentage of new homes built on previously developed land.	45.00% or greater	53.25%	94.00%	50.00%	50.00%	50.00%	No
BV109a	The percentage of major applications determined within 13 weeks.	60.00% or greater	70.59%	68.90%	60.00%	60.00%	60.00%	No
BV109b	The percentage of minor applications determined within 8 weeks.	63.00% or greater	71.97%	75.40%	65.00%	65.00%	65.00%	No
BV109c	The percentage of 'other' applications determined within 8 weeks.	75.00% or greater	83.81%	88.00%	80.00%	80.00%	80.00%	No
BV126	Domestic Burglaries per year, per 1000 households in the Local Authority area.	10.71 or less	8.0	6.90	Reduce by 5% per annum			No
BV127a	Violent crime per year per 1,000 population in the Local Authority area.	15.15 or less	15.6	No Data	Reduce by 90% by 2008			No
BV127b	Robberies per year per 1,000 population in the Local Authority area.	0.67 or less	0.9	No Data	Reduce by 4% per annum			No
BV128	The number of vehicle crimes per year, per 1,000 population in the Local Authority area.	8.62 or less	9.5	7.77	Reduce 3% per annum			No

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BVPI/ Local No.	Performance Indicator	2005/06 Target	2005/06 Actual	Top Quartile Data 2004/05	2006/07 Target	2007/08 Target	2008/09 Target	See Commentary on pages 31-38
BV156	The percentage of authority buildings open to the public in which all public areas are suitable for, and accessible to, disabled people.	85.2% or greater	77.77%	No Data	85.19%	88.46%	92.00%	Yes
BV157	The number of types of interactions that are enabled for electronic delivery as a percentage of the types of interactions that are legally permissible for electronic delivery.	77.00% or greater	80.04%	87.50%	To be deleted 2006/07			Yes
BV166a	The local authority's score against a checklist of best practice for environmental health.	100.0%	82.0%	97.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	Yes
BV170a	The number of visits to/usage's of local authority funded or part-funded museums/galleries per 1,000 population.	445 or greater	490	877	470	475	480	No
BV170b	The number of those visits to local authority funded, or part funded museums/galleries that were in person, per 1,000 population.	321 or greater	295	514	325	325	325	No
BV170c	The number of pupils visiting museums and galleries in organised school groups.	2500 or greater	3626	7031	2550	2600	2650	No
BV174	The number of racial incidents reported to the Local Authority, and subsequently recorded, per 100,000 population.	4.19 (5)	0	No Data	0	0	0	Yes
BV175	The percentage of racial incidents reported to the Local Authority that resulted in further action.	100%	N/A	No Data	100%	100%	100%	No
BV179	The percentage of standard searches carried out in 10 working days.	100%	100%	100%	To be deleted 2006/07			Yes

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BVPI/ Local No.	Performance Indicator	2005/06 Target	2005/06 Actual	Top Quartile Data 2004/05	2006/07 Target	2007/08 Target	2008/09 Target	See Commentary on pages 31-38
BV183a	The average length of stay in bed and breakfast accommodation of households that are unintentionally homeless and in priority need.	0.00 weeks	0.00 weeks	1 week	0.00 weeks	0.00 weeks	0.00 weeks	No
BV183b	The average length of stay in hostel accommodation of households that are unintentionally homeless and in priority need.	35.00 weeks or less	36.89 weeks	0 weeks	38.00 weeks	35.00 weeks	30.00 weeks	Yes
BV199a	The proportion of relevant land and highways (expressed as a %) that is assessed as having combined deposits of litter and detritus that fall below an acceptable level.	20% or less	8%	No Data	11%	11%	11%	No
BV199b	The proportion of relevant land & highways (expressed as a %) from which unacceptable levels of graffiti are visible.	20% or less	1%	No Data	3%	3%	3%	No
BV199c	The proportion of relevant land and highways (expressed as a %) from which unacceptable levels of fly-posting are visible.	20% or less	0%	No Data	3%	3%	3%	No
BV199d	The year-on-year reduction in total number of incidents and increase in total number of enforcement actions taken to deal with 'fly-tipping'.	3 (good)	First grade will not be produced until 2007	No Data	3 (good)	3 (good)	3 (good)	Yes
BV200a	Did the local planning authority submit the Local Development Scheme (LDS) by 28th March 2005 and thereafter maintain a 3-year rolling programme?	Yes	Yes	No Data	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

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BVPI/ Local No.	Performance Indicator	2005/06 Target	2005/06 Actual	Top Quartile Data 2004/05	2006/07 Target	2007/08 Target	2008/09 Target	See Commentary on pages 31-38
BV200b	Has the local planning authority met the milestones which the current Local Development Scheme (LDS) sets out?	Yes	Yes	No Data	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
BV200c	Did the local planning authority publish an annual report by 31st December each year?	Yes	Yes	No Data	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
BV202	The number of people sleeping rough on a single night within the area of the authority.	0	0	No Data	0	0	0	No
BV203	The percentage change in the average number of families placed in temporary accommodation.	-5.30%	-3.82%	-6.94%	-20.00%	-15.00%	-10.00%	Yes
BV204	The number of planning appeal decisions allowed against the authority's decision to refuse on planning applications, as a percentage of the total number of planning appeals against refusals of planning applications.	30.0% or less	25.0%	25.0%	30.0%	30.0%	30.0%	No
BV205	The local authority's score against a 'quality of planning services' checklist.	94.4% or greater	94.4%	88.9%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	No
BV213	The number of households who considered themselves as homeless, who approached the local housing authority's housing advice service, and for whom housing advice casework intervention resolved their situation.	1 per 1,000 households	1 per 1,000 households	No Data	2 per 1,000 households	3 per 1,000 households	3 per 1,000 households	No

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BVPI/ Local No.	Performance Indicator	2005/06 Target	2005/06 Actual	Top Quartile Data 2004/05	2006/07 Target	2007/08 Target	2008/09 Target	See Commentary on pages 31-38
BV214	The proportion of households accepted as statutorily homeless who were accepted as statutorily homeless by the same authority within the last two years.	0.00%	0.00%	No Data	2.00%	1.50%	1.00%	No
BV216a	The number of 'sites of potential concern' [within the local authority area], with respect to land contamination.	665	647	No Data	647	627	607	No
BV216b	The number of sites for which sufficient detailed information is available to decide whether remediation of the land is necessary, as a percentage of all 'sites of potential concern'.	3.5%	2%	No Data	2.8%	2.9%	3.5%	Yes
BV217	The percentage of pollution control improvements to existing installations completed on time.	90% or greater	100%	No Data	92%	94%	96%	No
BV218a	The percentage of new reports of abandoned vehicles investigated within 24hrs of notification.	100.00%	86.32%	No Data	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	Yes
BV218b	The percentage of abandoned vehicles removed within 24 hours from the point at which the authority is legally entitled to remove the vehicle.	80.00% or greater	70.86%	No Data	80.00%	80.00%	80.00%	Yes
BV219a	The total number of conservation areas in the local authority area.	40	40	No Data	40	40	40	No
BV219b	The percentage of conservation areas in the local authority area with an up-to-date character appraisal.	7.50% or greater	5.00%	No Data	10.00%	15.00%	20.00%	Yes

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BVPI/ Local No.	Performance Indicator	2005/06 Target	2005/06 Actual	Top Quartile Data 2004/05	2006/07 Target	2007/08 Target	2008/09 Target	See Commentary on pages 31-38
BV219c	The percentage of conservation areas with published management proposals.	2.50% or greater	0.00%	No Data	5.00%	10.00%	15.00%	Yes
BV225	Actions against domestic violence. The percentage of questions from a list of 11 to which the local authority can answer yes.	72.7% or greater	90.91%	No Data	90.91%	90.91%	90.91%	No
BV226a	The total amount spent by the local authority on advice and guidance services provided by external organisations.	£330,000 or greater	£296,353	No Data	£339,900	£350,100	£360,600	No
BV226b	The percentage of monies spent on advice and guidance services provision which was given to organisations holding the CLS Quality Mark at 'General Help' level and above.	68% or greater	84.71%	No Data	68%	68%	68%	No
BV226c	The total amount spent on advice and guidance in the areas of housing, welfare benefits and consumer matters which is provided directly by the authority to the public.	£293,283	£293,200	No Data	£301,421	£310,464	£319,776	No
H1a	The number of placements at end of period in bed and breakfast accommodation.	0	0	No Data	0	0	0	No
H1b	The number of placements at end of period in other temporary accommodation.	100	114	No Data	75	60	50	Yes
H2	The percentage of applications for the housing register to receive a decision within 5 working days once all information is received.	94.00% or greater	88.00%	No Data	90.00%	92.00%	94.00%	Yes

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BVPI/ Local No.	Performance Indicator	2005/06 Target	2005/06 Actual	Top Quartile Data 2004/05	2006/07 Target	2007/08 Target	2008/09 Target	See Commentary on pages 31-38
H3	New housing in social sector.	170 or greater	149	No Data	190	200	150	Yes
H4	Homeless decisions made within 33 days.	92.50% or greater	78.80%	No Data	To be replaced with LPI 4 2006/07			Yes
LPI 4	The percentage of homelessness applications on which the authority made a decision and notified the applicant within 21 working days.	New for 2006/07			80.00%	85.00%	90.00%	No
H5	The percentage of nominations made within 3 working days.	96.00% or greater	86.80%	No Data	To be deleted 2006/07			Yes
H6	The number of reported incidences of rough sleeping in the district.	10	1	No Data	9	8	7	Yes
L24	The percentage of letters responded to within 4 working days.	90% or greater combined	No Data	No Data				Yes
L25	The percentage of letters acknowledged within 4 days and given a full reply within 10 working days.							Yes
L52	The number of days lost due to accident / injury in the workplace per employee.	0	0.02	No Data	To be deleted 2006/07			Yes
L59	The percentage of staff receiving appraisal and have a training plan.	94% or greater	92.23%	No Data	100%	100%	100%	Yes
L61	The percentage of new staff that have attended the half-day induction within 3 days of joining NHDC.	100%	68.97%	No Data	100%	100%	100%	Yes
LC4	The percentage of market stalls hired as a percentage of stalls available.	59% or greater	54.04%	No Data	58%	58%	58%	Yes
LC5	The percentage of emergency calls to Care-line answered in under 30 seconds.	88% or greater	83.41%	No Data	80%	80%	80%	Yes

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BVPI/ Local No.	Performance Indicator	2005/06 Target	2005/06 Actual	Top Quartile Data 2004/05	2006/07 Target	2007/08 Target	2008/09 Target	See Commentary on pages 31-38
LC7a	The total number of hot meals served to Meals on Wheels, hostels and in luncheon clubs.	104,030	109,657	No Data	96,531	77,156	77,156	No
LC7b	The total number of frozen meals delivered by Wiltshire Farm Foods.	3000 4600	5,255	No Data	5642	6206	6827	No
LC8	The percentage of allotment plots let.	86%	91%	No Data	87%	87%	92%	No
LC10	The percentage of play scheme places utilised.	82%	73%	No Data	To be amended 2006/07			Yes
LC15	The number of swims and other leisure visits per 1000 population.	8,745	7137	No Data	7743	7800	7800	Yes
PE1	The number of collections missed per 100,000 collections of household waste.	36 or less per 100,000	23.55	No Data	32.40	29.16	26.25	No
PE2	The percentage of missed collections put right within allowed time-scale.	99%	98.35%	No Data	99%	99%	99%	No
PE14	The target time set by the authority for responding to all environmental health requests for services.	92.00% within 3 days	94.15% within 3 days	No Data	92.00% within 3 days	93.00% within 3 days	94.00% within 3 days	No
PE24	The percentage of high risk premises programmed for inspection that were actually inspected by year end.	100.00%	100.00%	No Data	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	No
PE25	The percentage of other risk premises programmed for inspection that were actually inspected by year end.	95.00% or greater	78.87%	No Data	95.00%	95.00%	95.00%	Yes
PE29	The total net spending per head of population on street cleaning.	£7.78 or less	£7.18	No Data	£7.90	£7.90	£7.90	No
PE30	Building control quality and performance matrix score.	81.0% or greater	81.5%	No Data	84.0%	85.0%	85.0%	No

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BVPI/ Local No.	Performance Indicator	2005/06 Target	2005/06 Actual	Top Quartile Data 2004/05	2006/07 Target	2007/08 Target	2008/09 Target	See Commentary on pages 31-38
PE31	The percentage of racist / obscene graffiti removed within 24 hours of verification on NHDC property.	100%	100%	No Data	To be replaced with LPI 21 2006/07			No
LPI21	The percentage of reported graffiti/bill-posters or stickers removed within the allowed time-scale.	New for 2006/07			100%	100%	100%	No
LPI22	The percentage of street cleanliness complaints put right within the allowed time-scales allowed under EPA.	New for 2006/07			99%	99%	99%	No
PE32	Percentage of customers satisfied with the environmental health service.	65.00% or greater	81.98%	No Data	65.00%	67.00%	70.00%	No
PE33	Environmental health quality matrix score.	70.00% or greater	70.16%	No Data	To be deleted 2006/07			No
PE34	The percentage of annual bus permit renewals issued by the 15 th of April.	98.00%	100.00%	No Data	To be deleted 2006/07			No

Survey Data 2006-07

BVPI	Description	03/04 actual	06/07 target
BV3	The percentage of citizens satisfied with the overall services provided by their authority	54.20%	72%
BV4	The percentage of those making complaints satisfied with the handling of those complaints	32.10%	45%
BV80	The % residents satisfied with the Benefit Service:		
	i) Contact/access at benefit office	85%	87%
	ii) Service in Benefit office	91%	91%
	iii) Telephone Service	73%	77%
	iv) Staff in Benefit Office	89%	90%
	v) Clarity of forms	68%	70%
	vi) Time taken for a decision	76%	80%
	vii) Overall satisfaction	85%	88%
BV89	The % people satisfied with the cleanliness standard in their area	62.50%	73%
BV90	a) The % people satisfied with household waste collection	89.20%	91%
	b) The % people satisfied with waste recycling	63.70%	65%
BV111	% of applicants satisfied with the service received	83%	85%
BV119	The % residents satisfied with the Local Authority Cultural services:		
	a) Sports and leisure facilities	50.80%	54%
	b) Libraries	71.40%	-
	c) Museums	48.80%	49%
	d) Art activities and venues	45.50%	-
	e) Parks and open spaces	71.50%	72%

Commentary

BV2a – The level of the Equality Standard for Local Government to which the Authority conforms in respect of gender, race and disability

NHDC had originally set itself a target of achieving Level 4 by March 2006. However, it is evident that more time will be needed for new monitoring to 'bed in' with both NHDC and its partners. Hence, achieving level 4 by March 2007 is seen as a more realistic target and as agreed by the Performance, Audit and Review Committee (PARC) in November 2005.

BV11b – The percentage of the top paid 5% of local authority staff who are from an ethnic minority

0% is a continuation from the end of 2004/05, as no individuals with ethnic minority backgrounds have been appointed to senior positions during 2005/06. Turnover in this group is low.

BV11c – The percentage of the top paid 5% of local authority staff who have a disability

No individuals employed in senior positions have declared disabilities and turnover in this group is extremely low.

BV12 – The number of working days / shifts lost to the local authority due to sickness absence

Although sickness absence is reducing year on year, for the civic year 2005/06 we are 13% above target. Long-term absence is firmly controlled, however the severe winter impacted against short-term absence levels.

BV14 – The percentage of employees retiring early (excluding ill health retirements) as a percentage of the total work force

The target has been exceeded due to people retiring early as a result of the Council's restructure. This should settle during 2006/7.

BV15 – The percentage of local authority employees retiring on grounds of ill health as a percentage of the total work force

During 2005/06 there was only 1 ill-health retirement, which equates to 0.26%.

BV16a and BV16b – The percentage of local authority employees with a disability and The percentage of the economically active population in the local authority area who have a disability

We have continued to improve year on year in relation to BV16a and with similar improvements in 2006/07 expect to meet our new targets. This information for BV16b is taken from the 2001 Census. The actual question asked 'Do you have any long-term illness, health problem or disability which limits your daily activities or the work you can do? (include problems, which are due to old age)'. The question asked to local authority staff on the employment application form is 'Do you consider yourself to have a disability?'; this is the question which has been asked over a number of years and so provides useful comparative information and has therefore not been changed to reflect the Census question. As this is not a direct comparison BV16b should only be used as a guide.

BV17a – The percentage of the local authority employees from ethnic minority communities

We have continued to improve year on year and with similar improvements in 2006/07 we expect to meet our new targets.

BV64 – The number of non-local authority-owned vacant dwellings returned to occupation or demolished during the financial year as a direct result of action by the local authority

The annual target for 2005/06 of 10 properties has not been achieved, although the level of performance for 2004/05 has been maintained. Evaluation in December 2005 indicated that a total of 418 properties within the district have been empty for longer than six months. Of these properties, only 178 have been on the list since December 2004. The recent assessment against a stock level of approximately 53,000 properties in the district, indicates that the long-term empty properties represent approximately one third of a per cent of all properties. The target figure of 10 homes was therefore unrealistic.

A benchmarking exercise is currently underway with Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire authorities to consider the issue of vacant dwellings and a co-ordinated approach regarding the implementation of new legislation (Empty Dwelling Management Order). A more realistic target of three properties has been set for 2006/07, with targets in subsequent years reflecting the year on year improvements that are expected.

BV76a – The number of housing benefit claimants in the local authority area visited, per 1,000 caseload

There were three main factors that affected this indicator:

- Significant changes in working practices, reducing home visits and increasing electronic information handling.
- With the introduction of mobile working, it will be easier to absorb the effects of staff absence, which affected performance this year.
- The increase in the live caseload (by approximately 800 cases) made the target more difficult to achieve.

BV76b – The number of fraud investigators employed by the local authority, per 1,000 caseload

At North Herts, variations in this indicator are purely down to fluctuations in the live caseload, which has increased in recent years. Despite this, the team achieved both a record-breaking number of prosecutions and sanctions during 2005/06 and record levels of prosecutions and sanctions subsidy.

BV76c – The number of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit (HB/CTB) fraud investigations carried out by the local authority per year, per 1,000 caseload

New procedures were introduced to ensure that a number of referrals from the Housing Benefits Matching Service, which were clearly not fraudulent, were filtered out by Assessment Officers prior to being referred to the Fraud Team. This allowed the Fraud Team to target cases where a prosecution or sanction was more likely to be successful, thereby increasing the number of prosecutions and sanctions overall; this success is evidenced by performance indicator BV76d, showing that, whilst the number of investigations reduced, the number of prosecutions and sanctions increased.

BV78a – The average processing time taken for all new Housing and Council Tax Benefit (HB/CTB) claims submitted to the local authority, for which the date of decision is within the financial year being reported

Despite the number of new claims increasing by over 50 per cent compared with the previous year, performance for this indicator has improved steadily throughout the year. It is expected that the year-end result of 28.7 days will be around top quartile performance.

BV78b – The average processing time taken for all written notifications to the local authority of changes to a claimant's circumstance that require a new decision on behalf of the authority

The Department for Works and Pensions (DWP) issued new guidelines for this indicator stating that changes notified electronically in bulk by landlords should no longer be included. In the past, this would have allowed the authority to process up to 4,500 changes in one day, thereby substantially reducing the overall figure. The DWP recognised that this, and other significant changes in working practices, would impact on performance which they now expect to be around 19/20 days. Changes in procedures saw results for the last quarter of 2005/06 reduce to 10 days, but it was not possible to recover from the poor start to the year. The individual figure for the first month of 2006/07 is under 10 days, indicating that the changes are having the desired effect.

BV79a – The percentage of cases within a random sample for which the authority's calculation of Housing and Council Tax Benefit (HB/CTB) is found to be correct

This indicator measures the accuracy of 125 randomly selected claims each quarter. The check is made against any current claim regardless of whether there has been a calculation carried out in the previous quarter. Errors detected in the samples were historic and mostly in areas where procedure or system changes had already been put in place to prevent a recurrence.

BV79biii – Housing Benefit (HB) overpayments written off during the period as a percentage of the total amount of HB overpayment debt outstanding at the start of the period, plus amount of HB overpayments identified during the period

This was a new indicator for 2005/06 and the target was therefore set with little historical data. It would appear that the target was unrealistic given the nature of housing benefit overpayments and the high risk of debtors absconding. It is difficult to conclude how good the year-end result is, until comparative data from other authorities is available.

BV84a and b – (a) The number of kilograms of household waste collected per head of the population and (b) The percentage change from the previous financial year in the number of kilograms of household waste collected per head of the population

Overall waste 'arising' have been adversely affected due to the amount of waste collected by the expansion of the green waste scheme, which effectively increases the tonnage.

BV156 – The percentage of authority buildings open to the public in which all public areas are suitable for, and accessible to, disabled people

The year-end return of 77.77 per cent is lower than the target figure of 85.2 per cent. Contracts for work at Letchworth and Hitchin cemeteries were tendered and awarded to the same contractor in March. A 28-day notice to the Health & Safety Executive was required prior to demolition

of the toilet block in Hitchin which meant that the work could not be completed in 2005/06. However, as the contracts have been awarded, the necessary work will now be completed within the first quarter of the current financial year.

BV157 – The number of types of interactions that are enabled for electronic delivery as a percentage of the types of interactions that are legally permissible for electronic delivery

The achievement of BV157 was integrated into the service@north-herts programme, which commenced in September 2005. The Authority was required to achieve a 15% improvement in BV157 by the end of March 2006.

BV166a – The local authority's score against a checklist of best practice for environmental health

As a result of the significant changes across the Environmental Health service in 2005/06, a number of aspects of enforcement reporting and communication became outdated and the scores for these activities therefore declined. An action plan has been developed to ensure that this indicator improves back to 100 per cent during 2006/07.

BV174 – The number of racial incidents reported to the Local Authority, and subsequently recorded, per 100,000 population

The target for BV 174 has been revised to zero baseline to reflect that we would expect complaints against the Authority to reduce, given that we have raised awareness of service areas' responsibility with regard to equalities and diversity. Mechanisms are in place to encourage third party reporting and we would expect to receive a complaint directly or otherwise if an individual/group felt that they had been unfairly treated. This is in line with BV 175, in that 100% of any complaints received would be actioned.

BV179 - The percentage of standard searches carried out in 10 working days

We have maintained a high standard of 100% turnaround during this year.

BV183b – The average length of stay in hostel accommodation of households that are unintentionally homeless and in priority need

The year-end result for this performance indicator has improved significantly compared to the 2004/05 return. During 2005/06, 105 households moved out of hostel accommodation. The target figure of 35 weeks was not achieved due to the extended length of stay of some families. This was caused either by families selecting limited areas and types of property or by clients having poor tenancy records. The targeted efforts at those in hostel accommodation will continue throughout 2006/07, with the aim of helping families into permanent housing as soon as possible. This year also sees the introduction of a more preventative approach to homelessness, which will reduce the need for temporary accommodation in the future.

BV199d – The year-on-year reduction in total number of incidents and increase in total number of enforcement actions taken to deal with 'fly-tipping'

Local authority data submitted monthly between April 2005 and March 2006 will form the baseline for comparison against 2006/07 data, so the authority will not get a performance grade until 2007, and is not required to report the indicator in the Best Value Performance Plan. The return for this performance indicator will be calculated by Defra and sent automatically to the Audit Commission.

BV203 – The percentage change in the average number of families placed in temporary accommodation

Although the average number of families placed in temporary accommodation decreased, compared to the 2004/05 figure, the authority did not achieve the predicted target. This year (2006/07) will see the introduction of a more proactive approach to homelessness. This will include the promotion of housing options: family mediation to enable people to remain at home; an enhanced allocation scheme; and the deposit guarantee scheme, which will help clients access the private sector. This approach will reduce the need for temporary accommodation in line with government targets and will help families move into permanent housing as soon as possible.

BV216b – The number of sites for which sufficient detailed information is available to decide whether remediation of the land is necessary, as a percentage of all ‘sites of potential concern’

This performance indicator was introduced in 2005/06 and the target figure of 3.5 per cent was estimated based on the anticipated rate of progress in collecting sufficient detailed information (SDI) via the following three processes:

- i) Contaminated Land Strategy work.
- ii) Planning work for applications that were in place prior to 2005/06, which had no SDI in place.
- iii) Planning work for anticipated applications during 2005/06.

An explanation of differences between the anticipated progression to SDI and the actual progression achieved is shown below:

- i) The number of Contaminated Land Strategy sites dealt with (7) was above the number estimated.
- ii) The actual number of sites that progressed was 7.5, compared to the minimum prediction of 9.3. The nature of progression of these sites is that each site owner and developer determines the rate of progression unless a site happens to be at the top of the Contaminated Land Strategy risk prioritisation list.
- iii) The actual number of sites that progressed was 1.15, compared to the minimum prediction of 6. As with ii) above, it is each site owner and developer who determines the rate of progression.

BV218a – The percentage of new reports of abandoned vehicles investigated within 24 hours of notification

The Council has identified that the year-end return of 86.32 per cent was not fully compliant with the published government definition. The figure represents the percentage of vehicles initially investigated by the close of business on the working day following notification. This was not completely aligned with the government requirement to measure the percentage of vehicles determined to be abandoned or not within a strict 24-hour period from the time and date of notification. The Council has now developed an improved and more robust system to ensure that the indicator is reported accurately in 2006/07.

BV218b – The percentage of abandoned vehicles removed within 24 hours from the point at which the authority is legally entitled to removed the vehicle

The Council has identified that the year-end return of 70.86 per cent was not fully compliant with the published government definition. The figure represents the percentage of abandoned vehicles removed by the Council’s contractor by the close of business on the working day following a request for removal. This was not in accordance with the government requirement to measure the percentage of abandoned

vehicles removed within a strict 24-hour period from the time and date the Council was legally entitled to remove them. An improved and more robust system has now been developed to ensure that the indicator is reported accurately in 2006/07.

BV219b – The percentage of conservation areas in the local authority areas with an up-to-date character appraisal

The target to complete the character appraisal for Royston was not achieved. However, this will be completed, along with a full character appraisal of a further conservation area, during 2006/07.

BV219c – The percentage of conservation areas with published management proposals

The target to complete the management proposals for Royston was not achieved. However, this will be completed, along with an appraisal and publication of management proposals for a further conservation area, during 2006/07.

H1b – The number of placements at end of period in other temporary accommodation

There has been a slight increase in the number of placements in other temporary accommodation compared to the same period last year (the 2004/05 year-end figure of 109 increased by 4.59 per cent) due to the number of homelessness presentations made to the Council. However, further improved options have now been launched (see BV203 above).

H2 – The percentage of applications for the housing register to receive a decision within 5 working days once all information is received

Although the performance of this indicator continually improved throughout 2005/06, the year-end target figure of 94 per cent of applications receiving a decision within five working days, was not achieved. This was due to the high volume of applications for assistance, which surpassed the authority's expectations. The performance figure of 88 per cent was a 1.46 per cent reduction compared to the 2004/05 year-end result of 89.3 per cent. A target of 90 per cent has been set for 2006/07, which will prove challenging to achieve and will ensure quality customer service is delivered.

H3 – New housing in social sector

The authority committed itself to funding eight schemes in 2005/06, as well as supporting schemes receiving other public subsidy. Progress in getting the larger developments on site had been slower than anticipated due to a variety of planning and legal issues. This had a significant impact on the achievement of the Council's target figure of 170.

The authority has so far committed itself to providing funding for a further seven schemes that will start on site in 2006/07 and is in a position to fund at least a further eight schemes, for which proposals are currently being developed. A target figure of 190 affordable housing units has been set for 2006/07, which if achieved, will represent a 27.52 per cent increase on the 2005/06 year-end figure of 149.

H4 - Homeless decisions made within 33 days

Although the performance of this indicator continually improved throughout 2005/06, the year-end target figure of 92.5 per cent of homeless decisions made within 33 working days, was not achieved. The performance figure of 78.8 per cent was a 2.26 per cent reduction compared to

the 2004/05 year-end result of 80.62 per cent. This performance indicator will be replaced in 2006/07 with a more meaningful measure; the Council will now report the percentage of homelessness applications on which a decision is made and notified to the applicant within 21 working days. A target of 80 per cent has been set for 2006/07, which represents a high and challenging level of service delivery.

H5 – The percentage of nominations made with 3 working days

The performance of this indicator decreased throughout 2005/06 and the year-end target figure of 96 per cent of nominations made within three working days was not achieved, due to the authority receiving a high volume of housing applications. However, the performance figure of 86.8 per cent was only a 0.88 per cent reduction compared to the 2004/05 year-end result of 87.57 per cent.

H6 – The number of reported incidences of rough sleeping in the district

The Council introduced local performance indicator H6 to complement statutory indicator BV202. It records sightings of people sleeping rough in the district. H6 is a more meaningful measure than the government indicator as it enables the authority to gain a more accurate picture of the local situation than the very prescriptive methodology used for BV202 currently allows.

L24/L25 The percentage of letters responded to within 4 working days and The percentage of letters acknowledged within 4 days and given a full reply within 10 working days

This report does not include any data for L24 and L25 'Letter Monitoring'. The collection of this data has been inconsistent throughout the authority and therefore a year-end percentage is not available. Officers are seeking to ensure the new Document Management System will measure our response performance to letters received by the Council.

L52 – The number of days lost due to accident/injury in the workplace per employee

0.02 days equates to 3 employees taking a total of 7 days. From 2006/07 new measures are being investigated for reporting health and safety issues.

L59 - The percentage of staff receiving appraisal and have a training plan

Although appraisals have been completed the indicator is satisfied only once paperwork has been received by Learning & Development. Measures have been taken to alleviate this in future appraisal cycles.

L61 – The percentage of new staff that have attended the half-day induction within 3 days of joining NHDC

Until October 2005 'First Day Welcome' was held fortnightly meaning some new starters missed the session. This induction course is now held on a weekly basis and we have seen an improvement in this indicator as a result.

LC4 – The percentage of market stalls hired as a percentage of stalls available

Market utilisation has continued to decline against last year's figures, mainly affecting Hitchin and Baldock. Officers are working closely with the market traders to investigate ways to improve the current situation.

LC5 – The percentage of emergency calls to Care-line answered in under 30 seconds

A new call handling system was introduced in September 2005, initially slowing call response times and resulting in a year end performance 5% below target. Careline did, however, exceed the Telecare Services Association mandatory target of 80% of emergency calls answered in 30 seconds or under.

LC10 – The percentage of play scheme places utilised

Nationally, ‘closed access’ playschemes such as these are decreasing in popularity due to changing family needs, a reduction in the numbers of children of qualifying age, and an increase in alternative activities on offer. In 2006, NHDC also offered a sixth playscheme in Baldock.

LC15 – The number of swims and other leisure visits per 1000 population

The results show lower usage figures for North Herts Leisure Centre and Royston Leisure Centre (RLC) than initially predicted. Although the RLC Council targets have not been achieved, the targets that the Leisure Operator predicted have been met.

A breakdown of the visits (per 1000 population) is as follows:

North Herts Leisure Centre	3223.45
Fearnhill	142.68
Letchworth Outdoor Pool (June – Sept)	177.06
Hitchin Swim Centre	2149.28
Archers	529.02
Royston Leisure Centre (Sept – March)	832.87
Royston Outdoor Pool (June – Sept)	83.03

PE25 – The percentage of other risk premises programmed for inspection that were actually inspected by year end

The annual target figure of 95 per cent was not achieved. Priority was given to the inspection of high-risk premises, in line with the recommendation of the Council’s Performance, Audit and Review Committee (PARC), and 100 per cent of high-risk premises were inspected in 2005/06.

Statement on Contracts

During 2005/06 North Hertfordshire District Council awarded three contracts that involved a transfer of staff to a new employer. The council certifies that all of these contracts complied with the requirements published in the Code of Practice on Workforce Matters in Local Authority Service Contracts.

The contracts relate to the management of the council's swimming and leisure centres and all involved staff transferring to specialist companies during the early part of 2005/06.

From 1 April 2005, D C Leisure Management Ltd was contracted to manage Hitchin Swim Centre and Royston Leisure Centre (opened September 2005). From 1 May 2005, Stevenage Leisure Limited (SLL) was contracted to manage Fearnhill Sports Centre.

The combination of D C Leisure Management Ltd and SLL to manage our swimming and leisure centres was considered to be the most balanced way of providing a best value service for the communities of North Hertfordshire.

BACK COVER – SAME AS FOR BVPP SUMMARY

TITLE OF REPORT: HIGH LEVEL PERFORMANCE INDICATORS - APRIL 2006**REPORT OF THE HEAD OF POLICY, PARTNERSHIPS & PERFORMANCE****1 SUMMARY**

- 1.1 To update PARC on the current progress in meeting the targets for the High Level Performance Indicators during April 2006 as attached in Appendix A.
- 1.2 This is the first report of the High Level Indicators for 2006/07. Appendix A, detailing the performance results, has been revised. All the data is cumulative from 1 April 2006 and together with profiled targets should make analysis more meaningful.

2 FORWARD PLAN

- 2.1 This report does not recommend a key decision and has not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 In March 2006 PARC agreed that nineteen (including sub-sets) High Level Performance Indicators should be monitored on a monthly basis throughout 2006/7. Indicators at red or amber status should be highlighted at Corporate Management Team where a Rescue Recovery Package would be agreed if considered appropriate. The performance indicator would then be reported to PARC with details of the progress towards meeting the performance target.
- 3.2 This report will be presented to CMT on 13 June 2006.
- 3.3 There is one current 'rescue recovery plan' for BV183b 'The average length of stay in hostel accommodation of households which include dependent children or a pregnant woman and which are unintentionally homeless and in priority need'. September 2005 PARC requested that details of progress of the plan be presented to PARC on a quarterly basis.

4 TRAFFIC LIGHT STATUS AT THE END OF APRIL 2006

- 4.1 At the end of April 2006 the High level Indicator status was as follows:
- Ten indicators at status green
 - Five indicators at status amber
 - Four indicators at status red

- 4.2 The performance results and commentary can be found at Appendix A.

5 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 None.

6 FINANCIAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

6.1 None.

7 HUMAN RESOURCE AND EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

7.1 None.

8 CONSULTATION WITH EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS AND WARD MEMBERS (if appropriate)

8.1 Not applicable.

9 RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 That PARC notes the status of the High Level Indicators during April 2006.

9.2 That PARC notes areas of under-achievement as well as good performance.

10 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 The recommendation(s) contained within paragraph 9 are made in accordance with the declared policy of the Council.

11 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

11.1 Not applicable

12 APPENDICES

12.1 Appendix A - Details of the High Level Performance Indicators – April 2006.

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14 BACKGROUND PAPERS

14.1 Performance Information Files 2000 to date - available from the Policy, Partnerships & Performance Library, 1st Floor, Council Offices, Gernon Road, Letchworth.

HIGH LEVEL PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2006/2007

Appendix A

BVPI	Description	Cumulative/ Monthly		@ 30 Apr	@ 31 May	@ 30 June	@ 31 July	@ 31 Aug	@ 30 Sept	@ 31 Oct	@ 30 Nov	@ 31 Dec	@ 31 Jan	@ 28 Feb	@ 31 Mar
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Financial & Regulatory Services Directorate

BV76d	The number of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit (HB/CTB) prosecutions and sanctions, per year, per 1,000 caseload, in the local authority area.	Cumulative	2006/07	0.00											
			Profiled target	0.00	0.50	1.00	2.30	2.50	3.30	3.80	4.10	4.50	4.70	4.90	5.00
			Status	Green											
			2005/06	Reported quarterly in 05/06	1.60	Reported quarterly in 05/06	4.40	Reported quarterly in 05/06	4.30	Reported quarterly in 05/06	6.74				

BV78a	The average processing time taken for all new housing and council tax benefit claims submitted to the local authority.	Cumulative	2006/07	28.2											
			Profiled target	38.0	37.5	37.0	36.5	36.5	36.5	36.0	35.5	35.5	35.0	35.0	35.0
			Status	Green											
			2005/06	No data	No data	44.1	45.2	43.0	38.7	31.9	30.2	30.3	31.5	31.4	28.7

BV183b	The average length of stay in hostel accommodation which include dependent children or a pregnant woman and which are unintentionally homeless and in priority need.	Cumulative	2006/07	51.00											
			Profiled target	38.00	38.00	38.00	38.00	38.00	38.00	38.00	38.00	38.00	38.00	38.00	38.00
			Status	Red											
			2005/06	75.43	56.58	51.4	46	46	41.19	43.75	42.59	41.47	42	42.65	36.89

The return for April 2006 was higher than expected due to the fact that only four households moved out of hostels during the month, one of which had been in temporary accommodation for a period of 96 weeks. This extended length of stay was caused due to the family choosing three areas in Hitchin (out of a total of 53 areas district-wide) and a house only, for their permanent offer of accommodation. Continued efforts are being targeted at families in hostel accommodation, in order to minimize the respective lengths of stay. The return for this performance indicator is expected to improve throughout the year.

HIGH LEVEL PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2006/2007

Appendix A

BVPI	Description	Cumulative/ Monthly		@ 30 Apr	@ 31 May	@ 30 June	@ 31 July	@ 31 Aug	@ 30 Sept	@ 31 Oct	@ 30 Nov	@ 31 Dec	@ 31 Jan	@ 28 Feb	@ 31 Mar
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BV109a	Percentage of planning applications determined in line with development control targets to determine: 60% of major applications in 13 weeks	Cumulative	2006/07	66.67% 4/6											
			Profiled target	60.00%	60.00%	60.00%	60.00%	60.00%	60.00%	60.00%	60.00%	60.00%	60.00%	60.00%	60.00%
			Status	Green											
			2005/06	71.43%	66.67%	54.55%	64.71%	65.00%	68.18%	66.67%	66.67%	66.67%	68.75%	69.39%	70.59%
BV109b	Percentage of planning applications determined in line with development control targets to determine: 65% of minor applications in 8 weeks	Cumulative	2006/07	66.67% 20/30											
			Profiled target	65.00%	65.00%	65.00%	65.00%	65.00%	65.00%	65.00%	65.00%	65.00%	65.00%	65.00%	
			Status	Green											
			2005/06	73.68%	73.85%	69.79%	67.20%	70.00%	71.81%	72.15%	71.90%	70.57%	71.02%	71.26%	71.97%
BV109c	Percentage of planning applications determined in line with development control targets to determine: 80% of other applications in 8 weeks	Cumulative	2006/07	77.53% 69/89											
			Profiled target	80.00%	80.00%	80.00%	80.00%	80.00%	80.00%	80.00%	80.00%	80.00%	80.00%	80.00%	
			Status	Amber											
			2005/06	89.19%	85.48%	85.28%	82.82%	84.04%	83.67%	83.68%	83.78%	83.93%	83.74%	83.25%	83.81%

BV109c – Long-term absence of technical staff at the registration stage (February/March 2006) caused significant delays in the registration of applications. Post has now been filled on a temporary basis and training has been undertaken. New strategies are also in place to improve the speed of validation of applications. An improvement in the overall results is expected by the end of June 2006.

BV204	The number of planning appeal decisions allowed as a percentage of the total number of planning appeals against refusals of planning applications.	Cumulative	2006/07	0.0% 0/4											
			Profiled target	30.0%	30.0%	30.0%	30.0%	30.0%	30.0%	30.0%	30.0%	30.0%	30.0%	30.0%	
			Status	Green											
			2005/06	50.0%	30.0%	23.1%	25.0%	25.0%	28.6%	25.0%	27.6%	27.6%	28.1%	25.7%	25.0%

BVPI	Description	Cumulative /Monthly	@ 30 Apr	@ 31 May	@ 30 June	@ 31 July	@ 31 Aug	@ 30 Sept	@ 31 Oct	@ 30 Nov	@ 31 Dec	@ 31 Jan	@ 28 Feb	@ 31 Mar
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Customer Services Directorate

BV12	The number of working days/shifts lost to the Local Authority due to sickness absence	Cumulative	2006/07	0.60											
			Profiled target	0.44	0.88	1.52	2.16	2.80	3.60	4.48	5.36	6.16	6.88	7.36	8 days
			Status	Red											
			2005/06	0.49	0.92	1.61	2.18	3.27	3.82	5.49	5.53	6.57	7.53	8.37	9.09

BV12 – There are only 4 long-term sick leave cases, all of which are under close management. Poor weather has led to more viral related absence than we would normally expect over the spring months. However since December there has been a steady decline in absence from 1.02 in December, 0.93 in January, 0.80 in February, 0.82 in March and 0.60 in April.

BV82ai	Percentage of household waste arising which have been sent by the Authority for recycling	Cumulative	2006/07	13.35%											
			Profiled target	13.64%	12.50%	12.49%	12.57%	12.84%	12.80%	13.31%	13.49%	13.60%	13.72%	13.92%	13.63%
			Status	Amber											
			2005/06	14.5%	12.08%	13.72%	13.78%	14.07%	14.01%	14.44%	14.64%	14.64%	14.94%	14.98%	15.34%

BV82bi	Percentage of household waste sent by the Authority for composting or treatment by anaerobic digestion	Cumulative	2006/07	14.06%											
			Profiled target	14.4%	20.59%	21.54%	21.40%	21.09%	20.97%	20.27%	19.80%	18.87%	17.84%	17.20%	16.59%
			Status	Amber											
			2005/06	9.56%	11.54%	14.88%	14.99%	14.75%	14.72%	14.65%	14.20%	13.52%	12.52%	11.89%	11.40%

BV82ai - Serviceteam believe the reduced performance of this indicator may be due to a change in schedule rather than a reduction of paper collected. The paper collected for recycling is taken to Shefford to be stored/dried before being transported to the recycling facilities and weighed. The depot at Shefford was used for the storage of brown bins ready for delivery, and this altered the schedule of pick-ups of the paper to be taken to the recycling mill. Serviceteam believe it should even itself out next month.

BV82bi - The compost figure is below target. Brown bins were delivered up to the end of April and therefore collection of that compost will not occur until May. We are just about to enter peak growing period and officers expect compost figures to reflect that.

HIGH LEVEL PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2006/2007

Appendix A

BVPI	Description	Cumulative /Monthly		@ 30 Apr	@ 31 May	@ 30 June	@ 31 July	@ 31 Aug	@ 30 Sept	@ 31 Oct	@ 30 Nov	@ 31 Dec	@ 31 Jan	@ 28 Feb	@ 31 Mar	
BV84a	No. of kilograms of household waste collected per head of the population	Cumulative	2006/07	35.3												
			Profiled target	47.8	97.3	147.1	189.3	232.0	278.1	319.3	362.2	398.2	435.5	468.7	511.2kg	
			Status	Green												
			2005/06	43.9	85.7	130.6	168.4	206.6	248.0	287.0	326.0	358.9	397.9	434.8	470.4kg	
BV170a	The number of visits to/usage's of Local Authority funded or part-funded museums/galleries per 1,000 population	Cumulative	2006/07	59												
			Profiled target	35	66	101	156	215	250	293	333	363	395	434	470	
			Status	Green												
			2005/06	Reported quarterly in 05/06	116	Reported quarterly in 05/06	258.94	308.82		380.88	Reported quarterly in 05/06	591.42				
BV170b	The number of those visits to Local Authority funded, or part funded museums/galleries that were in person, per 1,000 population	Cumulative	2006/07	24												
			Profiled target	24	46	70	108	149	173	204	231	251	273	300	325	
			Status	Green												
			2005/06	Reported quarterly in 05/06	70	Reported quarterly in 05/06	160.51	189.57		230.15	Reported quarterly in 05/06	295.6				
BV170c	The number of pupils visiting museums and galleries in organised school groups	Cumulative	2006/07	0												
			Profiled target	170	340	510	595	595	638	977	1317	1658	1955	2252	2550	
			Status	Red												
			2005/06	Reported quarterly in 05/06	1101	Reported quarterly in 05/06	1255	1340		2068	Reported quarterly in 05/06	298.3				

BV170c This indicator has been affected by the Easter holidays. Officers are currently working to revise the profiling of the target.

HIGH LEVEL PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2006/2007

Appendix A

BVPI	Description	Cumulative /Monthly	@ 30 Apr	@ 31 May	@ 30 June	@ 31 July	@ 31 Aug	@ 30 Sept	@ 31 Oct	@ 30 Nov	@ 31 Dec	@ 31 Jan	@ 28 Feb	@ 31 Mar
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LPI 11 (LC4)	The percentage of market stalls hired as a percentage of stalls available	Monthly	2006/07	52%											
			Profiled target	58%	58%	58%	58%	58%	58%	58%	58%	58%	58%	58%	58%
			Status	Amber											
			2005/06	53.22%	54.48%	54.98%	54.85%	53.72%	53.72%	55.38%	57.46%	57.26%	51.49%	51.33%	50.58%

LPI 11 - This time of year is normally quieter and busier months are expected during the summer and leading up to Christmas. Officers are currently investigating ways of providing incentives to traders to improve utilisation of the markets.

LPI 15 (LC15)	The number of swims and other leisure visits per 1000 population	Cumulative	2006/07	645											
			Profiled target	626	1233	1857	2725	3536	4011	4512	4975	5307	5881	6475	7300
			Status	Green											
			2005/06	512	1005	1578	2453	3247	3796	4329	4804	5136	5718	6312	7137

LPI 24 (L59)	% staff receiving appraisal within the allowed time-scale	Cumulative	2006/07	1.47%											
			Profiled target	3.6%	13%	26%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
			Status	Red											
			2005/06	3.37%	14.22%	29.73%	49.24%	62.93%	68.87%	79.77%	81.58%	83.89%	91.50%	92.12%	92.23%

LPI 24 – This figure equates to 6 out of 408 staff being appraised and the completed paperwork returned to the Learning and Development team.

HIGH LEVEL PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2006/2007

Appendix A

BVPI	Description	Cumulative /Monthly	@ 30 Apr	@ 31 May	@ 30 June	@ 31 July	@ 31 Aug	@ 30 Sept	@ 31 Oct	@ 30 Nov	@ 31 Dec	@ 31 Jan	@ 28 Feb	@ 31 Mar
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LPI 19 (PE1)	No. of collections missed per 100,000 collections of household waste	Monthly	2006/07	14.41												
			Profiled target	32.40	32.40	32.40	32.40	32.40	32.40	32.40	32.40	32.40	32.40	32.40	32.40	
			Status	Green												
			2005/06	33.04	29.83	32.04	24.54	33.19	24.10	16.36	23.85	21.17	14.19	14.62	15.39	
LPI 20 (PE2)	% of missed collections put right within allowed time-scale	Monthly	2006/07	96.55%												
			Profiled target	99%	99%	99%	99%	99%	99%	99%	99%	99%	99%	99%		
			Status	Amber												
			2005/06	100%	100%	99.22%	96.08%	100%	100%	97.06%	96.88%	97.73%	96.61%	96.36%	95.31%	

LPI 20 – The number of missed collections put right within the allowed timescale is being monitored closely. The post of Contracts Manager is to be filled in June 2006 and officers are expecting an improvement in this indicator as a consequence.