

18 April 2006

Our Ref. PARC 4.2/06

Your ref:

Contact: Nigel Schofield

Direct Dial No: (01462) 474590

email:nigel.schofield@north-herts.gov.uk

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

Councillors: J. Cunningham (Chairman), Mrs Sarah Wren (Vice – Chairman), D.J. Barnard, S. Bloxham, Tony Hartley, A.F. Hunter, M. Kirkland, L. McNamara, I. Mantle, P. Mardell, D. Miller, Lawrence Oliver, Derek Sheard and Mrs C.P.A. Strong.

(Substitutes: Councillors: F. Hill, S.K. Jarvis, Sandra Lunn and Deepak Sangha)

You are invited to attend a meeting of the

PERFORMANCE, AUDIT AND REVIEW COMMITTEE

to be held in

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

on

26 APRIL 2006

at

7.30 p.m.

Yours sincerely,



David Miley
Democratic Services Manager

DRAFT AGENDA
PART 1

ITEM		PAGE
1.	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE	-
2.	MINUTES The Minutes for the meetings held on 6 April will be presented for approval at the meeting to be 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.	REVISION OF THE CORPORATE PLAN - CONSIDERATION OF ACTIONS 2006-2007 AND 2007-2008 REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE <i>To allow PARC consider the individual actions identified for 2006-2007 and the method by which the actions contained within the Corporate Plan will be identified, incorporated and prioritised from 2007 to 2015.</i>	1
7.	BEST VALUE FUNDAMENTAL SERVICE REVIEW – STREET SCENE SERVICES - OUTCOME REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING AND BUILDING CONTROL <i>To provide PARC with the outcomes of the BVFSR Street Scene Services, to seek PARC approval of the Action Plan and seek endorsement of the Critical Friend report.</i>	29

ITEM	PAGE
<p>8. AUDIT COMMISSION – PLANNING AND BUILDING CONTROL SERVICE REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING AND BUILDING CONTROL <i>To advise PARC of the Audit Commission inspection of Planning and Building Control and to seek PARC's approval to the Action Plan.</i></p>	87
<p>9. BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE PLAN (BVPP)2006-2007 REPORT OF THE HEAD OF POLICY, PARTNERSHIPS AND PERFORMANCE <i>To present the draft outline of the Best Value Performance Plan.</i></p>	101
<p>10. UPDATE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NHDC WEBSITE REPORT OF THE STRATEGIC DIRECTOR OF CUSTOMER SERVICES <i>To provide PARC with an update on the implementation of the Council's website.</i></p>	133
<p>11. PERFORMANCE INDICATOR PE34 – BUS PERMITS UPDATE REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING AND BUILDING SERVICE <i>To allow PARC consider the issue of bus permits against the target for this Performance Indicator.</i></p>	137

PARC will meet on the following dates in the 2006/2007 Civic Year.

2006

Thursday 25 May
Thursday 22 June
Thursday 20 July
Thursday 7 September
Thursday 12 October
Thursday 7 December

2007

Thursday 25 January
Thursday 22 March
Thursday 19 April

Performance, Audit and Review Committee
26th April 2006

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

AGENDA ITEM No.

6

TITLE: REVISION OF THE CORPORATE PLAN - CONSIDERATION OF ACTIONS IDENTIFIED FOR 2006/07 AND 2007/08

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 To present for consideration by PARC individual actions identified for 2006/07.
- 1.2 To present for consideration by PARC the method by which the actions contained within the Corporate Plan will be identified, incorporated and prioritised from 2007 to 2015.

2. FORWARD PLAN

- 1.2 This report contains a recommendation on a key decision that was first notified to the public in the Forward Plan.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 In November 2003, NHDC responded to a District Audit report on Programme Governance and Project Management which committed the Council to develop a more structured approach to managing corporate projects and providing a clear link through from high level objectives, service plans and to individual objectives.
- 3.2 The CPA Improvement plan (action two) required that the Authority produce a Corporate Plan and financial strategy to reflect new strategic objectives and targets.
- 3.3 The Corporate Plan sets out the Council's mission and strategic objectives which will be pursued in order to deliver the vision for North Hertfordshire. It should be viewed as the formal arrangement by which programme governance can be managed i.e. the oversight by the organisation's managerial and political leadership of work carried out by the Council.
- 3.4 Figure 1 (below) provides an overview and illustrates the relationship between corporate management, improvement planning and corporate planning, and the Service and Financial Planning process. The figure also shows how these relate to the Corporate Plan and through divisional service plans to individual work objectives.

NORTH HERTS DISTRICT COUNCIL: PROGRAMME GOVERNANCE & PROJECT MANAGEMENT

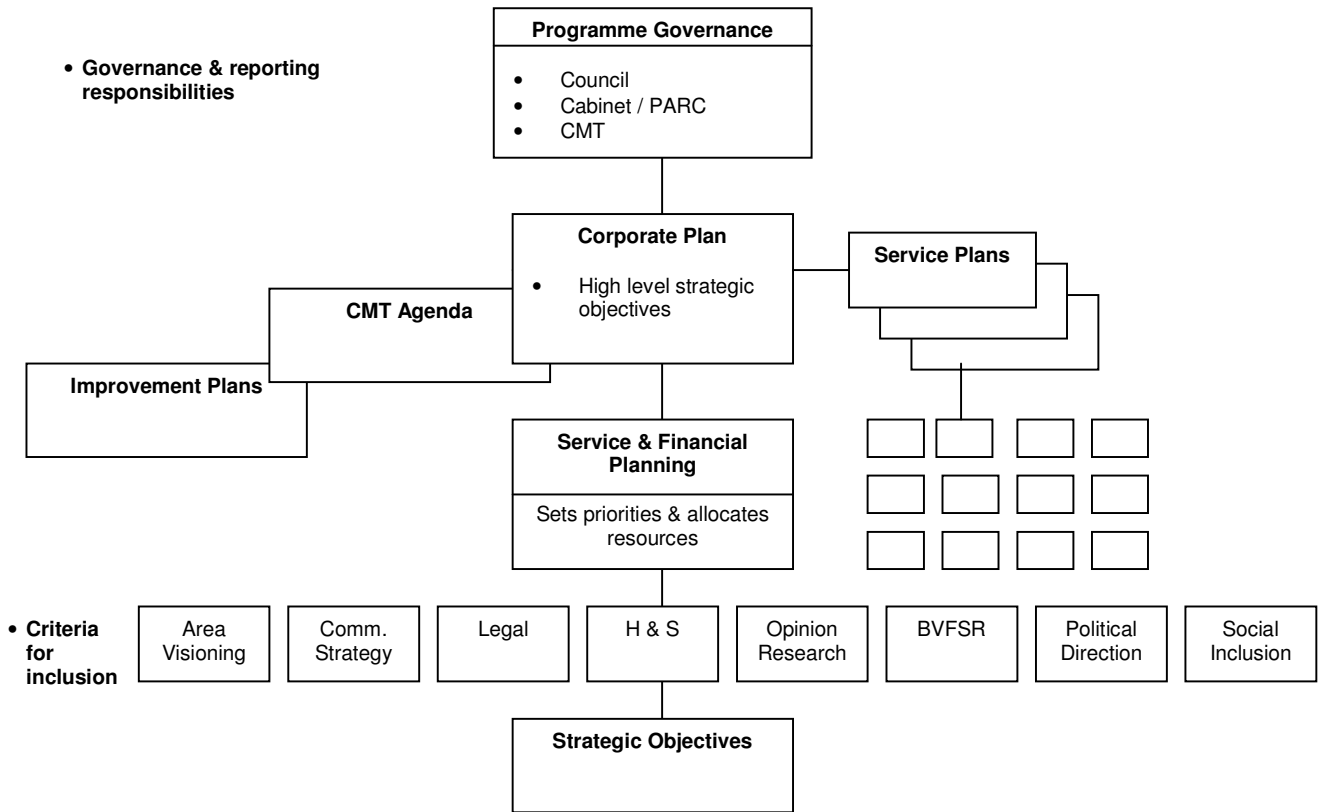


Figure 1

4. ISSUES

4.1 Programme governance provides a clear statement of governance/accountability for the principal organisational plans and strategies, such as the Corporate Plan and the integration of improvement plans from inspections as they arise.

4.2 The individual projects which make up the Corporate Plan vary significantly in cost, resource, scale and impact. In order to ensure that all such projects are adequately managed, a number of measures have been put in place;

- organisation wide training for senior managers in basic project management methodology as part of the corporate project management programme.
- Specialist PRINCE 2 training for senior staff and members involved in managing major projects. To date 11 officers and two councillors have completed the Foundation Level and 8 officers have completed the Practitioner Level training
- The application of formal PRINCE 2 methodology for significant projects, such as the construction of the Royston Leisure Centre, the leisure management contract etc.

- 4.3 The Service and Financial Planning process for the Authority has been reviewed to take full account not only of the strategic objectives themselves, but to provide criteria by which the individual priorities can be scored, whether by their importance to the local community (consultation/opinion evidence), their legislative need or political direction, for example. The scoring table is shown as Figure 2 (below).

FRAMEWORK FOR INCLUSION WITHIN CORPORATE PLAN/SERVICE AND FINANCIAL PLANNING

Task for consideration:						
Lead Officer:						
Strategic Objectives						
Criteria	safer	equal	healthier	prosperous	sustainable	satisfied
Community Strategy/LSP						
Area Visioning Action						
Statutory requirement						
LPSA/LAA priority						
Health & Safety						
Consultation/Opinion Evidence						
Best Value FSR Improvement						
Political direction						
Social Inclusion						
Risk assessment score						
TOTAL						

Scoring: All criteria strands, with the exception of risk (which has a pre-determined score) will require a scoring mechanism, 1-3 in terms of priority with 3 as the highest.

Diagram 2

- 4.4 As detailed in the report to PARC in January 2006, the alignment of the Service and Financial Planning (S&FP) Process, Corporate Plan annual revision of actions and monitoring is part of the same process. This process commenced in Autumn 2005, when the scoring described at 3.6 above was applied to individual growth bids submitted through the S&FP, and scores were included on the budget papers considered at Cabinet and Council. Whilst this does mean that for 2006/07, the budget considerations came ahead of the discussions to determine sub-actions to include within the Corporate Plan, both savings and growth were prioritised in line with the broader strategic objectives. From this point forward, the annual cycle for determining high level aspirations and individual actions will commence early in the calendar year, informing growth and savings options through the Autumn, for agreement through Cabinet and Council, before appearing in the refreshed Corporate Plan the following spring. The timetable of how this cycle is determined for 2007/08 actions is attached as Appendix A.
- 4.5 The determination of those short term actions which are complete and can therefore be 'removed' from the revision of the Corporate Plan can take place following the annual progress report to PARC; it is proposed that an annual progress review should be built into the PARC calendar following each April year end. The regular monitoring of progress against the Corporate Plan throughout the year will take place at PARC meetings in July, October and January.

- 4.6 The original Corporate Plan published in March 2005 contained a number of actions as being for completion in the 'medium term' . The table of proposals attached as Appendix B proposes those which could potentially move into this year's actions, along with a number which can be moved from the longer into medium term.
- 4.7 A number of other methods by which actions can be proposed for integration into the plan include;
- legislative need, i.e. new requirements under the Disability Equality Scheme or Clean Neighbourhoods Acts
 - actions arising from service review, i.e. implementation of the Museums FSR, or through inspection i.e. elections, planning etc
 - political priority, through agreement with elected members
 - Government policy, i.e. Local Area Agreements
 - Continuous or organisational improvement - the five remaining actions from the original CPA Improvement Plan will be integrated into this revision
 - evidence and consultation - the Authority will come under increasing pressure to prove that its priorities closely reflect the aspirations of its communities
 - longer term actions will need to respond to the changing needs of the district in order to achieve its overall vision.

Whilst review of the overall plan will take place each year, the opportunity to 'capture' actions throughout the year must also exist in order to effectively inform the next part of the process. This will be co-ordinated through the Performance Team alongside monitoring of the overall plan.

- 4.8 Appendix B contains a number of actions identified by service areas for inclusion, together with a number of measures of success. Some actions will not necessarily deliver immediate impact to the community, and in recognition of this, the intervals at which reporting against targets can effectively take place have been included within the plan.
- 4.9 In order to provide effective performance measurement, the performance team will undertake additional work to establish a baseline for each measure, to provide numerical or percentage improvement.
- 4.10 Once the high level Corporate Plan actions have been identified, this will inform the establishment of individual service plans underpinning those aspirations. A revision of the guidance notes for Heads of Service and a corporate template for service plans is in preparation and will be published shortly.
- 4.11 Appendix C details actions already identified within the corporate planning process which will require action in the longer term, and which will help to inform discussions regarding future priorities.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 New legislative duties required of the Authority will be considered for inclusion within both the Corporate Plan and individual service plans which underpin it.
- 5.2 The consideration of corporate risk will be included within the new service plan template to ensure that its impact will be reviewed regularly within the performance management process.

6. HUMAN RESOURCE AND EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Resourcing of individual projects will be considered within the Service and Financial planning timetable attached as Appendix A.
- 6.2 The scoring of actions within the Service and Financial Planning process takes full account of the strategic objectives for the Authority, including equalities and social inclusion.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Since the revision of the Corporate Plan and the Service and Financial Planning cycle are now incorporated through the year, this will ensure effective resourcing for the actions to be undertaken by individual service areas.
- 7.2 The rigorous management of projects using either PRINCE 2 or sub Prince methodology, in proportion with their value and impact, will help the Authority to demonstrate value for money as required under its annual 'Use of Resources' assessment for CPA.

8. CONSULTATION WITH EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS AND WARD MEMBERS

- 8.1 The annual timetable attached as Appendix A includes the schedule of meetings at which elected members can be consulted on both their strategic/political and budgetary priorities.
- 8.2 It is proposed that the timetable for the budget setting meetings for the coming autumn will be circulated in the summer to enable that the maximum number of elected members can plan attendance in their diaries.
- 8.3 A public event will be held in the summer to ensure that the Corporate Plan revision proposed aligns with the overall aspirations of the local communities. For 2006/07, it is intended that this event will also be used to consider the revision of the Community Strategy for the district.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 That PARC members consider the priorities proposed at Appendix B for review of the Corporate Plan actions for 2006/07.

10. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 The Authority has a requirement to have strategic plans, including the Corporate Plan, in place to inform future direction.

11. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

None apply.

12. APPENDICES

- 12.1 Appendix A : Service and Financial Planning Timetable
12.2 Appendix B: Corporate Plan objectives for 2006/07
12.3 Appendix C: Corporate Plan objectives already identified for 2007 onwards

13. CONTACT OFFICERS

John Campbell
Chief Executive
john.campbell@north-herts.gov.uk
01462 474300

Liz Green
Head of PPP
liz.green@north-herts.gov.uk
01462 474230

John Robinson
Strategic Director, Customer Services
john.robinson@north-herts.gov.uk
01462 474655

14. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 14.1 Held by the HPPP.

APPENDIX A

**NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
Timescale for Service & Financial Planning 2006-07 incorporating Corporate Plan**

Document and Process	Date	Who Will Consider/Action
Summary version Best Value Performance Plan/Council Tax Leaflets	January 2006 (completed)	Corporate Management Team PARC
Senior Managers Workshop reviewing Corporate Plan	January 2006 (completed)	Corporate Management Team Senior Managers Group
Consideration of Strategic objectives and actions for 2006/07 and onward	February /March 2006	Corporate Management Team Start member discussions
Distribute BVPP Summary Plan	End March	Performance Team
Review and agree underpinning actions for delivery of Corporate Plan objectives	April 2006	SFPP Group Corporate Management Team PARC
SMART targets and measures of success applied to priorities	April 2006	Directorate Management Teams Performance Team
Draft Divisional Service Plans	April 2006	Corporate Management Team/Directorate Management Team
Draft BVPP (for printing and distribution by end June)	May 2006	Corporate Management Team PARC Cabinet Council
Annual Review of Corporate Plan	May 2006	Corporate Management Team PARC (25 May)
Personal objectives drawn up to meet divisional service plans and strategic objectives	May 2006	Management cascade and through commencement of appraisal process
Gershon Efficiency Target for 2006/07 - annual review	May 2006	Challenge Board Corporate Management Team PARC (25 May)
Integrate Service Plans into overall Corporate Plan document	June 2006	Corporate Management Team
Gershon efficiency target backward looking for 2005/06	June 2006	Challenge Board Corporate Management Team Scrutiny Cttee/sub group
2005/06 Year End Statement of Accounts and state of balances	July 2006	Corporate Management Team Cabinet (20 June)
Service growth and pressures (high level) identification and scoring against corporate plan/objectives review of savings target	June 2006	SFPP Group Challenge Board
Discussion with Political Administration	July 2006	Discuss political priorities

Document and Process	Date	Who Will Consider/Action
		and draft Budget Strategy
Consultation with Community <i>- this can be linked with revision of the Community Strategy for North Herts</i>	July 2006	Corporate Management Team Policy, Partnerships and Performance Team Consultation Officer
Ensure all members are informed of proposed budget/priority setting discussions/timetable of meetings	July 2006	MIS Area Committees Party Leaders
Financial Strategy reports <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political priorities confirmed • Corporate Plan priorities confirmed • Identify gap between growth and savings • how to bridge the Gap • Include provision for strategic/visioning funding 	July 2006	SFPP Group Challenge Board Corporate Management Team PARC (22 June) Cabinet (18 July)
First Quarter Finance figures showing spend profile	August 2006	Challenge Board Corporate Management Team Cabinet (22 August)
Approval of revised plan	August/September 2006	Corporate Management Team PARC Cabinet Council
Savings and growth options in detail showing 5 year financial forecast	September 2006	SFPP Group Challenge Board Corporate Management Team
Publication of the 2006 review of the 2005/15 Corporate Plan	September/October 2006	Corporate Management Team PARC
Budget round for 2007/08 based on refreshed Corporate Plan commences	October 2006	Corporate Management Team
Savings and growth options in detail showing 5 year financial forecast	October 2006	Cabinet
Members Workshops	October 2006	Corporate Management Team
Consultation: Business groups (ratepayers) 2 x per annum LSP focus groups Committees/members; PARC, area committees, scrutiny finance sub committee	October/November 2006	Corporate Management Team Policy, Partnerships and Performance Team
Half year spend profile and position of balances	November 2006	Corporate Management Team Cabinet
Aggregated projects for approval	November 2006	Challenge Board Corporate Management Team Cabinet

Document and Process	Date	Who Will Consider/Action
Savings and growth options feedback from Area Committees, partnerships and community visioning workshops	November 2006	Corporate Management Team SFPP Group
Draft Budget and Council Tax Base	December 2006	Corporate Management Team Cabinet Council (8 February)
Summary version Best Value Performance Plan/Council Tax Leaflets	January 2006	Corporate Management Team PARC
Consultation: Business groups (ratepayers) formal Members (informal via MIS)	January 2007	Corporate Management Team Policy, Partnerships and Performance Team
Council Tax Level Set	February 2007	Corporate Management Team Cabinet Full Council(28 February)

SFPP Group - it is proposed that this group consist of Head of Finance, Head of PPP and Head of Strategy and Support Services, and will provide the ability to score proposed actions and budget growth/savings against corporate priorities in order to provide a more cohesive framework for consideration by Challenge Board and committees.

Liz Green
Head of Policy Partnerships and Performance

Barrie Jones
Head of Finance

February 2006

APPENDIX B

CORPORATE PLAN - AGREED SERVICE AND FINANCIAL PLANNING PRIORITIES GROWTH/CAPITAL OPTIONS 2006/07

SHORT TERM - SATISFIED

'Ensuring that we listen to our citizens and deliver high quality, value for money, customer focused services'

Short tem action	underpinning actions	responsibility	timescale	measures of success	monitoring regularity
Establish electronic committee management system	Electronic access for public to decision making process	HO L & D	Sept 06	IEG Compliance report - ODPM April 06	New report cycle not yet established annual
	Purchase bespoke software to enable Committee member access		Dec 06	Democratic process costs reduced from £ pa to £ pa by Electronic agenda/papers available for % meetings by	annual
Increase availability of e-enabled payments	Establish On line facilities for the payment of more service transactions by credit/debit cards	HO R & B	Mar 2007	Increased payment by Cr/Dr Cards Reduction in cash handling by %	Quarterly
	Establish system for customers to check Council Tax and Business rate balances electronically		Mar 2007	Increase in number of self-service transactions Increase in e-receipts issued	Quarterly Quarterly
	Demonstrate efficiency savings and improved collection rates from uptake in electronic collection methods		Mar 2007	Establish baseline for current costs and collection rates, then show decrease	Quarterly
				Collect and publish evidence of efficiency gains	Annually

Introduce new corporate integrated HR/payroll system	Evaluate tenders for new system Award Contract Go live with new system	HO HR	June 2006 July 2006 Jan 2007	More effective/efficient payroll system Improvement in PI reporting for HR Ability to produce electronic HR reports showing trends	monthly quarterly quarterly
Introduce new CRM model for single point of capture for Council Tax, Benefit and NNDR		HO R & B	October 06	Increase in number of web enabled customer transactions from to Increase in issue of email receipt to customers	quarterly quarterly
SATISFIED - ACTIONS MOVING FROM THE MEDIUM INTO THE SHORTER TERM					
We will implement an accommodation strategy for council offices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete Consultant review Approve revised strategy Provide Implementation plan Procure office solution Dispose of surplus assets 	HO F S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> March 06 May 06 June 06 April 07 June 09 	Disposal of surplus assets Revised office accommodation arrangements	quarterly
we will continue performance improvement on all appropriate BV PIs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Benchmark NHDC services against other authorities review local indicators to ensure they address key areas of need 			Increase and maintain number of indicators in upper quartile nationally Nil qualification of indicators reporting of high level indicators	quarterly quarterly monthly
We will strive to reduce operating costs by 2007/08	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual savings/efficiencies within targets set by Financial Strategy 	HO F S	March each year	Achievement of Annual Gershon Efficiency (2.5%) Maintenance of Council Tax increase below 5%	Annual Annual

<p>We will implement a comprehensive communications strategy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • finalise draft communications strategy • deliver first year actions once agreed 	<p>HO C</p>	<p>June 07 Mar 07</p>	<p>Agreement by Cabinet and publication evidence completion of individual targets</p>	<p>once</p>
<p>We will work to ensure we do not return to being a Planning Standards Authority</p> <p>We will transform the way our services are delivered to customers, providing equal access in person, by telephone and over the internet</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • maintain momentum on planning application targets • implement agreed outcomes of planning inspection 2006 • we will establish our Customer Relations Model as scheduled in Service@North-Herts Action Plan 	<p>HO P & BC</p> <p>HO CS &IT</p>	<p>Mar 07</p> <p>Oct 06</p>	<p>BV109a, BV109b, BV109c to PARC evidence completion of individual targets once established</p> <p>% rise in customer satisfaction from commencement</p> <p>% movement in web transactions enabled</p> <p>% of calls to the authority handled by the CRM staff</p>	<p>quarterly</p> <p>quarterly</p> <p>annually</p> <p>quarterly</p> <p>quarterly</p>

CORPORATE PLAN - AGREED SERVICE AND FINANCIAL PLANNING PRIORITIES GROWTH/CAPITAL OPTIONS 2006/07

SHORT TERM - SAFER

"Encouraging responsible citizenship and creating safe communities with less crime and less fear of crime"

Short tem action	underpinning actions	responsibility	timescale	measures of success	monitoring regularity
Install 5 additional CCTV cameras to tackle crime hotspots	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement review of CCTV effectiveness (arising from Streetscene FSR) 	HO F		Increased public confidence - MIDAS reporting	Annually
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review effectiveness of CCTV control room improvements 	HOF		Reduction in local crime statistics from X to Y Increase reporting of crime detected by CCTV and convictions arising therefrom	Quarterly Quarterly

SAFER - ACTIONS MOVING FROM THE MEDIUM INTO THE SHORTER TERM

We will work with relevant partners to set up a Youth Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> we will roll-out the existing pilot scheme, The Voice in Hitchin, to other areas of the district 	HO CD & CS	Mar 07	Number of regular participants and consultations to which the group has contributed	Quarterly
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> we will work with the Town Council to establish a youth council for Letchworth 		Dec 06	Establishment of youth council	Six monthly
We will deliver actions arising from our Community Safety Strategy 2005/08	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> we will aim to minimise offences of antisocial behaviour 	HO PPP	Mar 07	reduce incidents proven by iQuanta and MIDAS data	annual
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> we will increase the number of new Neighbourhood Watch and Business Watch schemes in our 	HO PPP	Mar 07	decrease in ASB calls to the Authority Increase in number of offenders brought to justice or subject to ABC/ASBO Increase uptake by 5% from X to Y	Quarterly annual

	<p>communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> we will introduce a Pub Watch Scheme for all our towns 	HO PPP	Jan 07	Number of pubs participating from X to Y	annual
<p>We will work with North Herts Homes, to implement projects that support our community safety strategy</p> <p><i>this was a high level action from our original CP, but we work with all RSLs equally so we need to revise to 'We will work with our registered social landlords to implement projects that support our community safety strategy'</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will develop a revised ASB protocol to deal with antisocial behaviour issues effectively we will develop new joint action plans and projects to deal with ASB between tenants and householders 	HO PPP	<p>Aug 06</p> <p>Dec 06</p>	<p>Number of ASB interventions</p> <p>Measurement of effect of individual projects</p> <p>tenant satisfaction surveys</p>	<p>annual</p> <p>annual</p> <p>annual</p>
we will respond to proposed changes to community safety funding arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will secure funding to maintain an effective community safety team at NHDC We work with the police to ensure funding and resources are targeted to the areas of greatest need 	HO PPP	January 07	secure Authority funding through budget planning process 2007/08	annual
		HO PPP	January 07	Performance management Reports to RAG showing link from incidents to resolution	quarterly
We will implement appropriate local parking strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will complete the Traffic Regulation Order Review 	HO L & E		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of revised Traffic Regulation Orders. 	Annual

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will continue to expand the Controlled Parking Zones • We will continue the programme of car park improvements • We will review our parking Enforcement service. 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of new zones. • Fit for purpose car parks. application for Secured Car Parks award. • Customer satisfaction survey. 	<p>Annual</p> <p>Annual</p> <p>Annual</p>
Implement licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of licensable HMOs • Consultation with landlords • Development of standardised HMO licences 	HO H&EH	2006/7	Granting of licences (without successful appeal by landlord)	Annual

CORPORATE PLAN - AGREED SERVICE AND FINANCIAL PLANNING PRIORITIES GROWTH/CAPITAL OPTIONS 2006/07

SHORT TERM - SUSTAINABLE

'Promoting 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'

Short tem action	underpinning actions	responsibility	timescale	measures of success	monitoring regularity
Extend Brown Composting Scheme across the district	<p>Deliver brown bins to households that currently do not have them except flats without gardens.</p> <p>The rollout programme will commence on the 1st April 06 with an expected completion within the month.</p>	<p>HO L & E</p> <p>HO L E</p>	<p>End May 06</p> <p>End May 06</p>	<p>Increase in compostable waste sent by the Authority (BV82b)</p> <p>Number of households with brown bin to be increased from 31,821 to 48,000</p> <p>Increase in number of households with brown bin from 61 % to 92.5% by May 2006</p> <p>100% of households with brown bin by January 2007</p> <p><i>*Dependant upon HCC providing In vessel composting plant, to enable the scheme to be expanded to include kitchen waste and cardboard allowing the inclusion for the remaining properties</i></p>	<p>monthly</p> <p>quarterly</p> <p>quarterly</p> <p>annual</p>
Introduce kerbside collection of cans and plastics	medium term budget plan06/07	HO L & E		Compliance with Household Act 2003 % of household waste arising sent for recycling (BV82a) (target setting info)	<p>annual</p> <p>quarterly</p>
Conduct Private Sector House Condition Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tender for appropriate consultant Engage consultant Integrate conclusions in to private sector housing strategy 	HO H&EH	2006/7 onwards	<p>Publication of robust survey</p> <p>Integration within housing strategy</p> <p>Ool 14? Reduction in number of unfit homes per 1,000 from 60.8 in 2003</p>	<p>Annual</p> <p>annual</p>

SUSTAINABLE - ACTIONS MOVING FROM THE MEDIUM INTO THE SHORTER TERM

<p>We will produce a Local Development Framework which adequately balances the need for sustainable development against environmental protection</p>	<p>Submit core strategy document DPD to the ODPM</p> <p>Submit Development Control Policies DPD to the ODPM</p> <p>Publish Land Allocations Options</p> <p>Publish Stevenage Joint Area Action Plan Options</p>	<p>HO P & BC</p>		<p>Acknowledgement of submission by the ODPM</p> <p>Acknowledgement of submission to the ODPM</p>	<p>Once</p> <p>Once</p>
	<p>We will facilitate the delivery of an average of 100 new affordable homes per year until 2008</p>	<p>HO H&EH</p>	<p>By end of 2008</p>	<p>Delivery of affordable housing units</p>	<p>Annual</p>
<p>We will work with all relevant partners to promote more effective and sustainable transport arrangements across the district</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct Transport FSR - other actions to be developed following completion 				
<p>We will work with our relevant partners and local residents to improve local streetscene and encourage civic pride</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be added from Streetscene FSR action plan once agreed 				

We will work with our partners at county and district level to deliver against agreed LAA targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• targets to be added as developed and agreed	HOS	Mar 2007		
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SHORT TERM - HEALTHIER

'Promoting first class leisure and cultural facilities to contribute to healthy living for all our citizens'

Short tem action	underpinning actions	responsibility	timescale	measures of success	monitoring regularity
Improvements to play areas to ensure they come up to an acceptable standard	Agree £50k revenue growth for priority improvements not listed in the capital programme or provided within the parks revenue maintenance budget, eg essential vandalism repairs	HO L & E	All complete before the school summer holidays (July 06)	Rise in customer satisfaction with play areas in DWS from % to %	three yearly
Allotment Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement outcomes of our allotment strategy Improvements to roadway and fencing at Old Hale Way, Hitchin. 	HO L & E	August 06	Increased satisfaction of Allotment holders by survey	annual
Play areas and youth strategy - site improvements	Improvements 06/07 will include:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grange, Letchworth – play & youth King George Rec. Hitchin – skatepark Walsworth, Hit – Skatepark Baldock Rd, Let – Skatepark Ivel way, Bal – Playground imp. Jackmans, Let – Play area imp. Bancroft, Hit – Play area imp. York way, Roy – Play area imp. Norton Common, Let – MUGA King George V, Hit – MUGA 	HO L & E	All by March 07	Customer Satisfaction Surveys Rise in customer satisfaction with play areas in DWS from % to %	annual three yearly
Enforce smoking ban in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Authorisation of officers to gather 	HO H&EH	2007/8	Number of inspections that included	Annual

public places	evidence relating to breaches of the law (yet to be made) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integration of new duties in existing inspection programmes 		(subject to confirmation)	reference to this new duty Complete investigations following an allegations of non-compliance		
Parks and Open Spaces Strategy development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop strategy for Parks and Open spaces Audit current provision Consultation Draft imp. Plans Report to Area cttees Cabinet approval Launch strategy 	HO L & E	Complete by Mar 07 Jun 06 Aug 06 Sept 06 Dec 06 Jan 07 Mar 07	Increased opportunity for children to play safely Reduction of childhood obesity (NHS objective) Increasing uptake of leisure opportunities - measurement of people using parks and play areas Improving the green space within the urban environment to improve the communities quality of life.	Annual Annual Annual	
HEALTHIER - ACTIONS MOVING FROM THE MEDIUM INTO THE SHORTER TERM						
We will agree arrangements for Hitchin Town Hall						
Implement works resulting from the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy (07/08)	medium term budget plan 06/07					
We will commence making improvements to our museums following completion of our recent service review		Ho S & S				

SHORT TERM - EQUAL

'Targeting resources at areas of disadvantage in the district to reduce social exclusion and improve the quality of life for everyone'

Short tem action	underpinning actions	responsibility	timescale	measures of success	monitoring regularity
We will continue to implement our Social Inclusion and Rural Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop baseline assessment of district to identify areas of greatest social exclusion develop action plan for the authority and partners to increase social inclusion implement year 2 actions for the rural strategy 	HO PPP	<p>May 2006</p> <p>July 2006</p>	<p>Movement of most deprived areas mapped locally out of deprivation</p> <p>QoL 7 - % of population of working age who are claiming key benefits reduced from 7.8 in 2002</p> <p>QoL 8 - % of children under 16 who live in low income households reducing from 21.0% in 1998</p> <p>Action plan in place and implementation commencing</p>	<p>annual</p> <p>annual</p> <p>annual</p>
Implement Choice Based Lettings (CBL) initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify current best practice Adopt best practice utilising existing software package Publicise new method of housing allocation 	HO H&EH	2007/8	<p>Successful adoption of new methodology</p> <p>Widespread publicity to encourage awareness of options</p>	Annual
Improve the quality of playscheme training, and ensuring an equitable spread of services throughout the district	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the amount and variety of play training. Increase the number of sites where playschemes are provided NHDC to become an accredited play training provider, with staff receiving a qualification 	HO CD & CS	<p>July 2006-</p> <p>Aug 2006</p> <p>July 2007</p>	<p>Number of staff receiving extended training</p> <p>Increase in site provision from 9 to 15</p> <p>Number of staff gaining an approved playwork qualification</p>	<p>quarterly</p> <p>once</p> <p>quarterly</p>

EQUAL - ACTIONS MOVING FROM THE MEDIUM INTO THE SHORTER TERM

<p>We will achieve level 4 of the Equality Standard for Local Government*</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • complete equality impact assessments for remaining service areas • complete equality impact assessments for key partnerships • integrate consideration of equalities into service review programme • integrate requirements of Gender Equality Duty into service areas 	<p>HO PPP</p>	<p>April 2007 December 07 April 2007</p>	<p>Achievement of Level 4 of the Equality Standard All reviews show equality/inclusion have been addressed Service Review outcomes and actions address any inequalities</p>	<p>Quarterly Annual Annual</p>
<p>Rural Strategy implementation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural Play Officer recruited • - work programme developed <p>medium term budget 06/07</p>	<p>HO CD & CS</p>			
<p>We will continue to implement our visioning plans</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roll out of individual action plans for 2006/06 for Hitchin, Letchworth, Baldock, Royston and Southern Rural • Champions to report monthly to area committees 	<p>HO CD & CS</p>		<p>% completed actions on individual plans</p>	

SHORT TERM - PROSPEROUS

'Creating opportunity for all by promoting sustainable local economic development'

Short tem action	underpinning actions	responsibility	timescale	measures of success	monitoring regularity
Development of Town Centre Strategy for Letchworth and Baldock	Agreed project plan to be implemented	HO P & BC		Six monthly monitoring of action plan Increased footfall in Baldock Town Centre from X per annum to Y per annum Reduction of empty retail properties from X to Y	six monthly annual annual
Development of Town Centre Strategy - Royston	Develop project plan and seek agreement	HO P & BC		Increased footfall in Royston Town Centre from X per annum to Y per annum Reduction of empty retail properties from X to Y	annual
we will agree proposals for Hitchin Town Centre improvements		HO P & BC			
PROSPEROUS- ACTIONS MOVING FROM THE MEDIUM INTO THE SHORTER TERM					
We will work with partners to support development of the local business economy	We will work with NHSBI, NHC, and JobCentre Plus to encourage small business development in Royston	HO PPP		QoL 1 - proportion of people of working age in employment rising from 82% in 2003	Annual
	We will secure IIC funding to conduct	HO PPP		QoL 4 - % rise in total number of VAT	Annual

	<p>a feasibility study for establishment of business incubation units in North Herts</p> <p>We will work with the Greater Cambridgeshire Partnership to identify ways in which we can support industrial and commercial growth in Royston</p> <p>We will work with the LGCHF to co-ordinate redevelopment of Letchworth Town Centre</p>	<p>HO P & BC HO PPP</p> <p>HO P & B C</p>		<p>registered businesses in the area from +1.3% in Dec 2002</p> <p>QoL 5 - % rise in the number of local jobs</p>	
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APPENDIX C

CORPORATE PLAN - ACTIONS MOVING FROM LONGER INTO MEDIUM TERM 2009/2010

SUSTAINABLE
 'Promoting 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'

Action	underpinning actions	responsibility	timescale	measures of success	monitoring regularity
we will encourage and enable provision of further affordable housing					
We will encourage and enable employment in our town centres and rural areas					

SAFER
 'Encouraging responsible citizenship, and creating safe communities with less crime and less fear of crime'

Action	underpinning actions	responsibility	timescale	measures of success	monitoring regularity
<i>*New</i> We will carry out the three year review of premises following the new Licensing Act					

HEALTHIER 'Promoting first class leisure and cultural facilities to contribute to healthy living for all our citizens'					
Action	underpinning actions	responsibility	timescale	measures of success	monitoring regularity
we will ensure that adequate community and leisure facilities are provided to support any new development in the district					
EQUAL 'Targeting resources at areas of disadvantage in the district to reduce social exclusion and improve the quality of life for everyone'					
Action	underpinning actions	responsibility	timescale	measures of success	monitoring regularity
We will achieve level 5 of the Equality Standard for Local Government			Mar 2008	Achievement of Level 5	
PROSPEROUS 'Creating opportunity for all by promoting sustainable local economic development'					
Action	underpinning actions	responsibility	timescale	measures of success	monitoring regularity
We will encourage improved east/west transport links to support sustainable growth and economic development					

We will deliver agreed plans for Letchworth Town Centre					
We will deliver agreed plans for Baldock Town Centre					
We will agree plans for Royston Town Centre					
SATISFIED					
'Ensuring that we listen to our citizens and deliver high quality, value for money, customer focused services'					
Action	underpinning actions	responsibility	timescale	measures of success	monitoring regularity
We will seek ways of establishing further joint initiatives with partners on service provision					
We will maintain improved performance across the range of BV Indicators					
We will aim to achieve an excellent CPA rating					

TITLE OF REPORT: STREET SCENE FUNDAMENTAL SERVICE REVIEW

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING & BUILDING CONTROL

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 To inform Members of the outcomes from the Fundamental Service Review into Street Scene Services, which was carried out between August 2005 and April 2006.
- 1.2 To seek PARC's approval to the Report on the Fundamental Service Review and endorsement for the Action Plan arising from the Fundamental Service Review.
- 1.3 To seek PARC's endorsement of the Critical Friend Report relating to the provision of services and the Fundamental Service Review process and outcomes.

2. FORWARD PLAN

- 2.1 This report does not contain any key decisions and is thus not included within the Forward Plan.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Fundamental Service Review of the Council's Street Scene Services commenced in 2005 as part of the Council's Best Value Review Programme (minute 14 refers).
- 3.2 Best Value requires the Council to challenge the need for services, consult widely and compare its services to others nationally and to investigate alternative means of service provision.
- 3.3 Street Scene Services bring together a wide variety of service areas that combine to and impact upon the appearance, condition and amenity of streets, paths and landscaping within the District. As such, Street Scene Services impact upon everyone in the District on a daily basis.
- 3.4 The Review has been carried out both through an Officer Group and a Member Group, which have met on frequent occasions throughout the duration of the Review.
- 3.5 The Review has involved Stakeholders through a series of two Stakeholder Consultation meetings in addition to the use of other survey data. As part of the Review, ENCAMS (Environmental Campaigns) have been commissioned to produce a Critical Friend analysis both of the services that we provide, the

performance of those services (including Customer views and expectations) and a critique of the process and outcomes from the Review itself.

4. ISSUES

4.1 In preparing for the Review it has been acknowledged that, because of the range of services involved, the Review will need to be undertaken at a high level and the project has been approached accordingly. The scope of the Review includes the cleaning and maintenance of our streets and verges, car parking, the provision of street furniture (benches, lighting, bins etc.,) CCTV and decorative planting and hanging baskets. Street Scene Enforcement is also encompassed within the Review, including issues such as the removal of graffiti, fly-tipping (both deterring and removing) and other street based enforcement e.g. implementation of the Clean Neighbourhood and Environment Act.

4.2 The outcome from the Review is set out in the Report attached as Appendix A. Members' attention is drawn to the Improvement Plan and annexe to the report, which sets out in detail those areas where improvements could be made and the mechanism and time scale for effecting such change. The annexe also identifies the financial implications arising from the Improvement Plan. In terms of service improvements identified in the report some of the key areas are:-

- Comprehensive streetscene enforcement service
- Implement Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act
- Improve Community engagement – e.g. schools packs / adopt a street
- Produce an agreed programme of public realm enhancements
- Produce a CCTV strategy – review type and location of cameras
- Simplifying our customer contact arrangements
- Improve quality of public convenience provision

Much has been learnt in carrying out the Fundamental Service Review. Firstly, the vast majority of the Street Scene Services are being undertaken in an effective manner and are meeting a good proportion of the Public's expectations. There are areas which need greater focus and depth of analysis e.g. Citizen's Panel Surveys in relation to satisfaction rates with street cleanliness and these are dealt with both in the Report on the FSR and in the Critical Friend assessment. In section 5 of the Report it is concluded that Street Scene based services within the District are generally well run, meet Customer expectations and offer reasonable value for money.

4.3 Many of the services are tested in the commercial market place or are subject to partnering with other Authorities. Where this is not the case, then the FSR recommends that this should be undertaken.

4.4 The widest area of consensus was in relation to the provision of Highway Services by the County Council where there is clearly widespread dissatisfaction with the role of the County in relation to the maintenance of roads and footpaths. This in stark contrast to the satisfaction levels with the merge maintenance arrangements which are managed by this Council.

- 4.5 The Critical Friend assessment by ENCAMS is attached as Appendix B to this Report and offers a wholly independent view of both the provision of services at North Hertfordshire and the process and conclusions of the Street Scene FSR. The ENCAMS report concludes that the approach taken for the FSR is entirely consistent with advice given in the Audit Commission Briefing Paper “acknowledge learning from Audit Inspection and Research – Street Scene”. The ENCAMS report concludes that we have assessed the right performance data and come to appropriate conclusions and considers this in relation to Corporate documents. The recommendations from ENCAMS are consistent with those reached within the Street Scene FSR report.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no legal implications directly arising from this report. Although the implementation of individual improvements within the Action Plan will need to have regard to legal implications.

6. FINANCIAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The Action Plan attached to the FSR Report details the anticipated financial implications from each of the areas of improvement. There is a requirement for the FSR to seek a 5% efficiency saving and this is anticipated that a combination of cashable and non-cashable efficiency savings in excess of 5% will be made from the implementation of all of the actions within the Action Plan. In the short term savings of at least £290,000 will be made. This will increase through further market testing of services, revenue generation (in the areas set out in the report) and the implementation of longer term initiatives. A number of the services contained within the FSR report are listed within the Council’s Risk Register. The Risk Register will need to be updated following the adoption of the Report and subsequently, following the implementation of individual actions.

7. HUMAN RESOURCE AND EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no human resource or equalities implications directly arising from the contents of this report. Any organisational changes (e.g. to the Engineering or Enforcement functions) would need to have regard to the Council’s approved policies for restructuring and would be subject to separate approval from the Council’s Restructure Board.

8. CONSULTATION WITH EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS AND WARD MEMBERS

- 8.1 Stakeholder meetings have taken place in November 2005 and March 2006 as part of the FSR process. The notes from the Stakeholder Consultation meeting are available on the FSR file. The Member Working Group has been actively involved in the scoping, challenge and preparation of the Review.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 That the contents of the report are noted and that the FSR report (attached as Appendix A) are endorsed and recommended to Cabinet for approval.
- 9.2 That the Critical Friend report attached as Appendix B is endorsed by PARC as an independent review of the Council's service provision and process of carrying out this FSR.
- 9.3 That all the Members and Officers involved in the FSR be thanked for the considerable time and effort that they have put into the review process.

10. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 10.1 To implement the outcomes of the FSR process.

11. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 11.1 The Council is required to review its services under the Local Government Act 1999 (revised 2003).

12. CONTACT OFFICERS

- 12.1 David Scholes
Head of Planning and Building Control
david.scholes@north-herts.gov.uk telephone: 01462 474836
- 12.2 Anita Thomas
Group Accountant
anita.thomas@north-herts.gov.uk telephone: 01462 474451
- 12.3 Kerry Shorrocks
Head of Human Resources
kerry.shorrocks@north-herts.gov.uk telephone: 01462 474224
- 12.4 Frances Bogie
Head of Legal and Democratic Services
frances.bogie@north-herts.gov.uk telephone: 01462 474460

13. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 13.1 Citizen's Panel Survey
- 13.2 BVPI data
- 13.3 Notes from Stakeholders' meetings

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BVFSR – STREET SCENE SERVICES

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Terms of Reference

1.1.2 The Fundamental Service Review of North Hertfordshire District Council's Streetscene Services commenced in 2005 as part of the Council's Best Value Review Programme. (PARC 19 May 2005 Minute 14 refers).

1.1.3 Best Value requires NHDC to challenge the need for this service, consult widely, compare its service to others nationally and investigate alternative means of service provision.

1.2 Purpose of the Review

1.2.1 Streetscene brings together the various services that combine to impact on the appearance, condition and amenity of streets, paths, landscaping and green, open spaces of the district. The Streetscene is therefore the one area of Council services that everyone in the District experiences everyday. It includes most of the public areas within the District.

1.2.2 The main purpose of the review was to fundamentally challenge how we provide the street scene services as defined in the scoping document achieve the Council's corporate objectives as set out on the Corporate Plan.

1.2.3 The Corporate Plan sits at the centre of our corporate planning framework, which integrates service and financial planning to ensure resources are allocated to priorities.

Sustainable Communities

Our Short Term Actions for 2005/6

- We will continue to implement measures to address fly-tipping and misuse of the environment.

Our Medium Term Actions for 2006/7 – 2008/9

- We will take steps to care for the environment by encouraging the minimisation of domestic and commercial waste.

Safer Communities

Our Short Term Actions for 2005/6

- We will develop closer working arrangements with parish and town councils in the district.
- We will continue to invest in CCTV initiatives.

Our Medium Term Actions for 2006/7 – 2008/9

- Through delivery of our Community Safety Strategy 2005/08 we will continue to work to tackle crime and the fear of crime.

Listening to you

Our Short Term Actions for 2005/6

- We will strive to secure continuous improvement in customer satisfaction.

1.2.4 Under the Local Government Act 1999, revision 2003, authorities must demonstrate that they are achieving continuous improvement in their services. This means that the service needs to ensure that statutory, political and service objectives are met, that the services delivered are to the highest standard, are cost efficient and are amongst the upper quartile in terms of measured performance. Finally, the Act requires the service to demonstrate that it contributes to the Council's achievement of its corporate vision and priorities, that is to say among the top 25% achievers.

1.2.5 This is a complex set of service areas that cut across many departments of the Council. With this in mind the review is intended to be at a thematic high level rather than a detailed root and branch review of each of the service areas which are sometimes provided by the Council, sometimes by other public organisations, or in partnership.

1.3 Scope of the Review

1.3.1 The review covers a number of cross cutting services which are all present in the Streetscene. These are set out in greater detail in Section 2 and includes the cleaning and maintenance of our streets and verges, car parking, the provision of street furniture (benches, lighting, bins etc.) CCTV and decorative planting trees and hanging baskets. Important aspects of the Streetscene which the review also covers graffiti removal, fly-tipping (deterring and removing) and street based enforcement (e.g. dog fouling / A boards).

1.3.2 The review also considered other significant issues which effected use of the 'public realm' including: community safety, co-ordination of service provision, interrelationship with other service providers, for example, Police, County Council, Highways Agency and Town and Parish Councils.

1.4 Membership of the Review Team

1.4.1 David Scholes, Head of Planning & Building Control chaired the Officer review group, formed of:-

1.4.2	John Robinson	Strategic Director (Customer Services)
	Andrew Mills	Service Manager Ground Maintenance
	Vaughan Watson	Head of Leisure & Environment

Pete Marshall	Chief Engineer
Tony Clampton	Service Manager Waste
Lynn Saville	Strategy & Community Services Manager
Liz Green	Head of Policy, Performance & Partnerships
Andy Godman	Head of Housing & Health
Helen Leitch	Urban Designer
Giovanno Silverio	Enforcement Manager
Debbie Hiscock	Performance Officer
Kate Brierley	Performance Officer
Sue Parnell	Personal Assistant

1.5 **Critical Friends/Consultants**

- 1.5.1 In undertaking the review, ENCAMS (Environmental Campaigns) offered their services as Critical Friend.
- 1.5.2 The Critical Friends were asked to robustly challenge the scope of the review. They also participated in the consultation exercise and shared best practice and information regarding performance and best practice elsewhere, and added a regional and national dimension to the review.

1.6 **Elected Members Involvement**

- 1.6.1 The Officer Group had 6 meetings with Members to review the scope of the study, its implementation and perhaps most importantly the emerging report and action plan. The Member Group comprised:
- Cllr Mrs C Strong (Chairman)
 - Cllr M Paterson (Vice Chairman)
 - Cllr M Weeks
 - Cllr L Oliver
 - Cllr Mrs J Billing
 - Cllr A Hartley
 - Cllr Mrs S Wren

1.7 **Project Management**

- 1.7.1 The methodology used to conduct the review followed the North Hertfordshire District Council's Best Value Toolkit and accepted Audit Commission methodology.

1.8 **Reporting Procedures**

- 1.8.1 The review team met on 8 occasions at predetermined points throughout the review, to discuss progress, and review findings. A programme of meetings, the agendas and minutes of each of these meetings are available for reference in the review file.

2 **DETAILS OF CURRENT SERVICE PROVISION**

- 2.1 North Hertfordshire District Council undertakes this service provision in accordance with its strategic objectives:-

- Promoting sustainable development of the District to ensure that we deliver adequate affordable housing, protect the environment and conserve the heritage of our historic towns and rural settlements.
- Encouraging responsible citizenship and creating safe communities with less crime and less fear of crime.
- Promoting first class leisure and cultural facilities to contribute to healthy living for all our citizens.
- Targeting resources at areas of disadvantage in the District to reduce social exclusion and improve the quality of life for everyone.
- Creating opportunity for all by promoting sustainable local economic development .
- Ensuring that we listen to our communities and deliver high quality, value for money, and customer focussed services.

The services cover the following area:-

2.1.2 **Cleansing Waste**

- Domestic waste
- Street waste
- Commercial waste
- Litter and chewing gum

2.1.3 **Grounds Maintenance**

- Trees and shrubs
- Street planting and hanging baskets
- Ornamental planting
- Verges and grass cutting

2.1.4 **Engineering and Enforcement**

- Street furniture
- CCTV
- Street lighting
- Road signage
- Bus stops
- Disability issues
- Enforcement
- Fly tipping
- Fly posting
- Graffiti
- Street trading
- 'A' signs
- Abandoned vehicles
- Licensing

and 'incidental' services e.g.:

- Highways Agency
- HCC
- Police
- Town/Parish Councils
- Environment Agency
- Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation

2.1.5 **Current Service Performance**

2.1.6 Details of each of the Service Plans for the current year are held in the evidence file and set out detailed work programmes for each of the Service Areas. In undertaking the review it became evident at an early stage that many of the Council services are impacted upon one way or another by street scene issues. It has been most important therefore to consider this review at a strategic level rather than a detailed review of each and every aspect of the service areas and also consider only the impacts that will accrue upon the street scene from each of these Service Areas. In this regard the details of the waste contract, for instance, are not included within the review process as this in itself has minimal bearing upon street scene issues. Rather the focus has been on those matters which are present in the street scene for people within the District. The objectives of the review can be summarised as:-

- The design and the appearance of the street scene
- The health and safety and maintenance of the physical street environment
- The safety of the street from crime and from the fear of crime

2.1.7 These service areas which provides street scene services have a significant number of best value performance indicators (BVPIs) which apply to them. The starting point for assessing the delivery of street scene services is to review the evidence already available with regard to performance and cost. The tables in Appendices 2 and 3 show BVPI data for street scene services. Appendix 2 makes comparisons between North Hertfordshire District Council and our “nearest neighbours” according to the CIPFA classification of similar Authorities in terms of their size/population and not necessarily proximity, also other authorities within the Hertfordshire county area. This data is the most recent available data i.e. audited 2004/5 information.

2.1.8 **Waste**

2.1.9 Whilst the review itself has taken a strategic level approach rather than looking in details into each individual service, the overall visual impact on Streetscene of our waste collection and recycling services is an important consideration. The impact of large vehicles entering often small streets or rural areas, the spillage of refuse awaiting collection and the aesthetic effect of numerous recycling bins make this a “high profile” service in the customers’ perception. It is therefore worth noting our progress to date against stringent government targets.

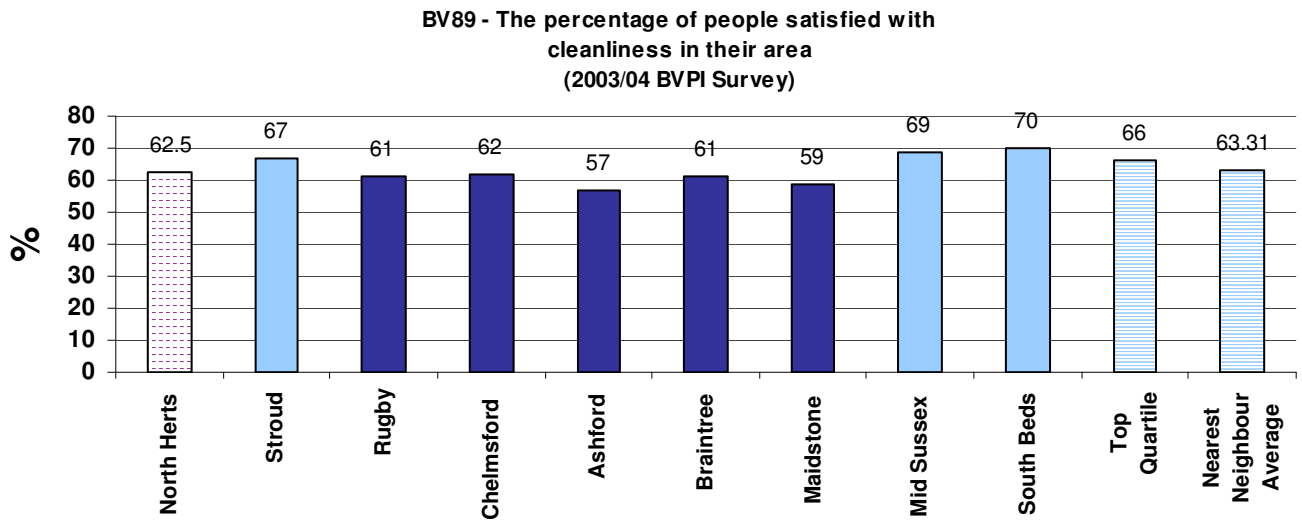
- We recycle 19.8% of household waste, which is below the Hertfordshire average – we are currently investigating additional £380,530 to extend our brown bin service across the district to increase this figure significantly.
- We collect 450 kgms of waste per household, which is above the Hertfordshire average

2.1.10 The cost per head for waste collection of £44.19 is below the Hertfordshire average of £52.66. However, with regard to waste collection 89.2% of

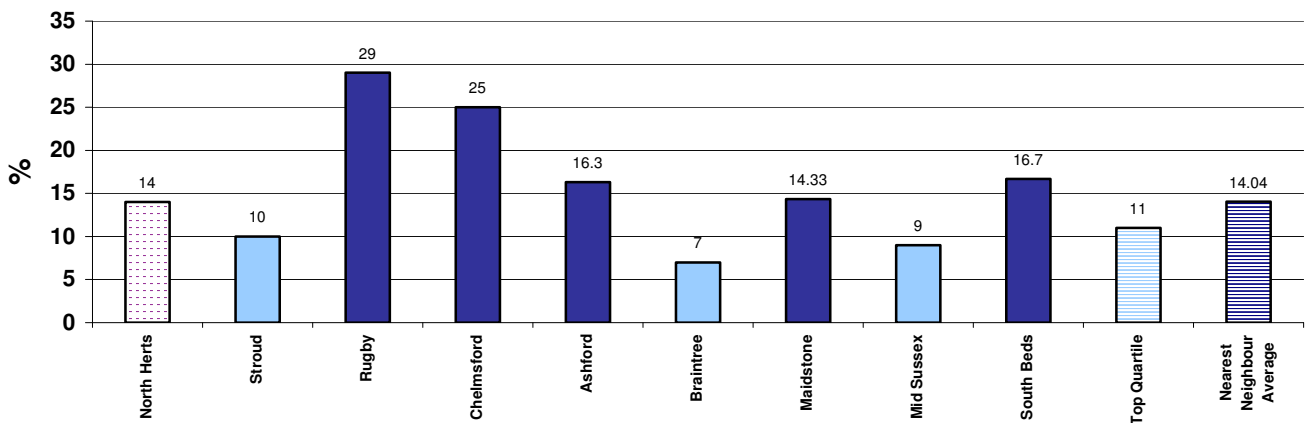
households are satisfied. This compares favourably with the near neighbour average of 87.5% and the Hertfordshire average figure of 81.2%.

- 2.1.11 In respect of recycling 63.7% of households are satisfied compared with a near neighbour average of 80.09% and a Hertfordshire average of 66.57%. We will be able to measure the effect of increased recycling availability in the District wide survey to be carried out in Summer 2006.
- 2.1.12 For kerbside collection 100% of the population are covered by this service, whereas the near neighbour average is 93.13% and the Hertfordshire average is 66.57%. It should be noted that this relates to some form of kerbside collection for some types of recyclables.
- 2.1.13 Waste management itself was the subject of a specific Fundamental Service Review carried out in 2001. The scope of that review focused on waste minimisation, waste collections (including domestic, bulky, commercial etc) recycling, and household waste (bring bank) sites.
- 2.1.14 The service improvement plan arising from the review contained a number of measures (now complete), including;
- increasing joint working with HCC and the Herts Waste Strategy Group to explore increased potential for recycling, new shared waste sites and contractual arrangements
 - increased opportunity for public consultation on the location of bring banks
 - inclusion of trade waste and street cleansing function when subjecting waste management to competition
- 2.1.15 The CPA Inspection of 2003/04 reported that other areas required further improvement, and action 19 (now complete) of the CPA Improvement Plan identified;
- the need to increase monitoring of effectiveness of waste minimisation to a quarterly cycle,
 - conduct a door stepping campaign to raise awareness of initiatives,
 - work with schools and Wasteaware to encourage greater awareness of recycling opportunities within the citizenship agenda,
 - and increase the authority's communications with residents about reducing waste, increasing composting and recycling opportunities
- 2.1.16 **Street Cleansing**
- 2.1.17 The following tables compare North Hertfordshire with our '**Nearest Neighbours**' against satisfaction levels from the 2003/04 BVPI survey (BV89) and the BV199 Cleanliness survey 2005/06.

Light shades denotes better performance than North Hertfordshire and darker shades denote worse.



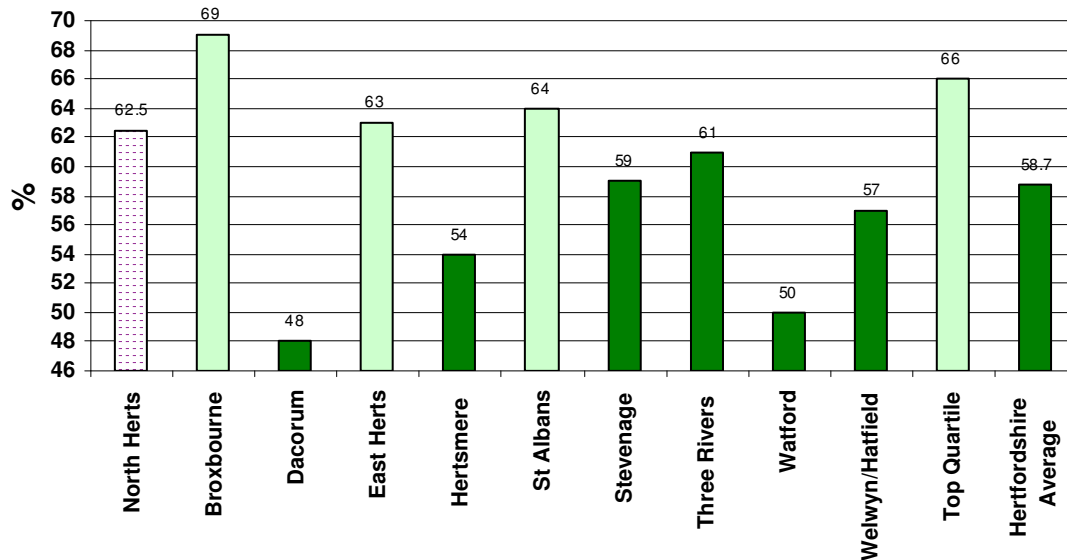
BV199 - The proportion of land and highways assessed as having combined deposits of litter and detritus across four categories of cleanliness (2004/05 audited data)



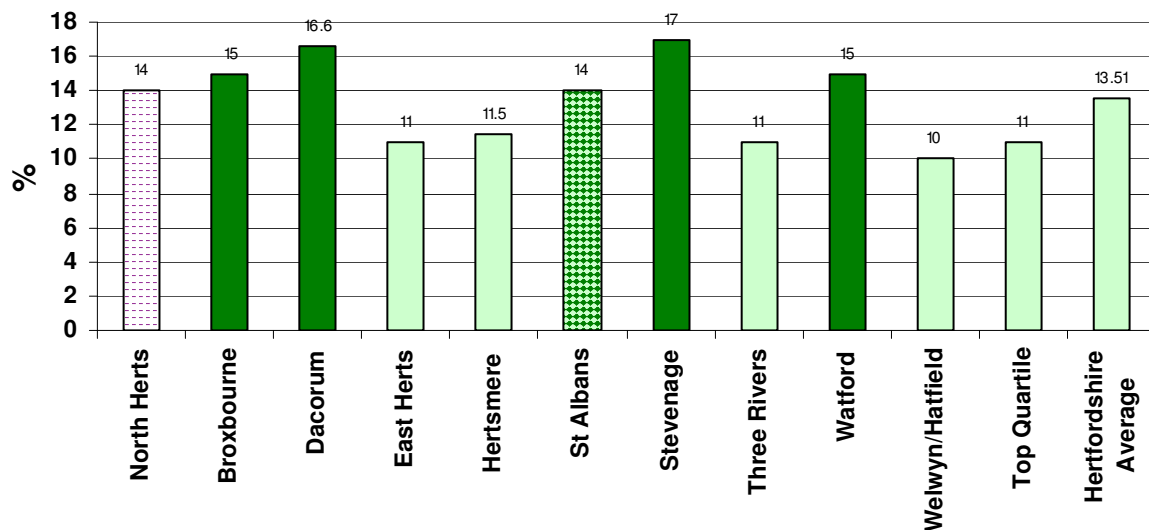
The following tables compare North Hertfordshire with all **Hertfordshire Authorities** against satisfaction levels from the 2003/04 BVPI survey and the BV199 Cleanliness survey 2005/06.

Light shades performed better than North Hertfordshire and darker shades performed worse.

BV89 - The percentage of people satisfied with cleanliness in their area (2003/04 BVPI Survey)



BV199 - The proportion of land and highways assessed as having combined deposits of litter and detritus across four categories of cleanliness (2004/05 audited data)



2.1.18 The above graphs from BVPI data demonstrate quite clearly that North Herts has low levels of combined litter and details compared with our 'near

neighbours' and other Herts Councils. Indeed the Council is within the top quartile nationally. Of concern however is the customer satisfaction levels below 'near neighbour' average and top quartile. This may be a matter of expectation and perception as the Hertfordshire District figures are significantly below the NHDC 'near neighbours'. The next BVPI general survey should be used to inform action planning on this.

2.1.19 **Community Safety BV1127**

2.1.20 Include data from 'fear of crime' survey etc i.e. to stress the difference actual and perceived crime.

2.1.21 The definition "community safety" means preventing, reducing or containing the social, environmental and intimidatory factors which affect peoples' lives. It includes preventative measures, such as providing sufficient lighting or sensitive landscaping to reduce fear of crime and tackle anti-social behaviour.

2.1.22 The CDRP (crime and disorder reduction partnership) crime audit report (Perpetuity Research and Consultancy International Limited – November 2004) found that:-

- North Herts remains a low crime area, compared with other areas of Hertfordshire.
- Recorded crime in North Herts has risen in the past 3 years, but is low for serious crimes and relatively higher for criminal damage in comparison across the County.
- Low level quality of life issues, such as graffiti, vandalism, gangs of youths and rubbish, concerned residents the most. In particular, graffiti was seen as a bigger problem in North Herts than in other areas of the County.
- In a multi-choice selection of improvements 39% of respondents felt that increased police foot patrols were most important to their personal safety, 25% suggested street or neighbourhood wardens would help reduce crime, 21% wanted more CCTV and 12% improved street lighting.
- More residents considered the areas in which they live to be less safe at night than during the day. Town Centres and residential streets were considered "relatively safe" by all except in the over 65 age group, where concern rose significantly (49% would not go out of an evening).

2.1.23 The public perception and reassurance provided by additional "presence" on the street has helped inform the review of our enforcement function which is currently underway. It is anticipated this could strengthen a service the authority currently provides.

2.1.24 Community Safety BVPI127 deals with matters of community safety and is broken into four elements. It deals with violent offence (a) by a stranger (b) in a public place (c) in connection with a licensed premises and (d) under the influence. WEF April 2005 broken into 2 parts only Robbery and Violent Crime

2.1.25 BVPI128 deals with theft of or from a vehicle.

2.1.26 For each of these categories the assessment method is offences per 1,000 population. In respect of violent offences, the North Hertfordshire figure is close to the average for its near neighbours. The range of data varies from

2.2 per 1,000 population to 6.68 in respect of an offence in a public place, again North Hertfordshire is close to the near neighbour average with 8.8 offences. The range here has a similar span and covers 6.86 to 10.78.

2.1.27 In respect of offences in connection with a licensed premises, the North Hertfordshire performance figure is marginally above the average of 0.99 being 1.07. For violent offences connected with those under the influence, the North Hertfordshire figure is approximately twice the average of the near neighbour figures. It is concerning to note that North Hertfordshire has the highest level of offences per 1,000 population of the near neighbours, the next nearest being Maidstone at 3.01. Conversely, in respect of BVPI128 the North Hertfordshire figure is below the average of 9.89 at 8.87. The figures in this performance indicator range from 6.48 (Braintree) to 14.67 (Rugby).

2.1.28 Grounds Maintenance

2.1.29 In respect of grounds maintenance functions, there are no nationally recognised BVPIs. With this in mind the Council participates in the Eastern Grounds Maintenance benchmarking club which has produced a database for assessing grounds maintenance provision and making comparisons between the cost and quantity of work within the constituent district. The Grounds Maintenance function was subject to its own fundamental service review in 2002/3 where this data was used.

- We maintain almost 2.4 million square metres of grass, almost 80% of which is cut on a two week cycle
- We maintain and inspect 49 play areas, with the outcomes of daily inspections reported weekly through our Grounds Team
- We have 22 football pitches, 228 dog bins and 240 litter bins, with 150 of the latter being emptied twice daily
- The extent of flower beds we tend is sufficient to cover approximately six football pitches

2.1.30 Engineering/Enforcement Functions

2.1.31 In the past North Hertfordshire had an agency agreement for highways maintenance with the County. In 1999 this was embodied in a partnership (North Herts Highways – now Herts Highways). The residual engineering function remains with the Council and deals with a range of issues:

- Land drainage
- Controlled parking zones
- Car parking enforcement
- Road naming and signs
- Rural bus stops

2.1.32 A number of other Streetscene enforcement functions are carried out in the Housing and Environmental Health Enforcement and Licensing Team including:

- A boards
- Fly tipping
- Street trading
- Abandoned vehicles

2.1.33 It is appropriate to consider synergies between service areas to see if the current organisational arrangements are the most appropriate.

RECOMMEND

Define objectives for engineering function and review structure (I10)

- Undertake restructure as appropriate (A22)
- Withdraw administrative funding from Highways Partnership (A23)

2.1.34 Other Organisations

2.1.35 Suggest some analysis of services provided by other organisations and some of the difficulty this presents i.e.:

- Different standards of grass maintenance according to highway verge ownership
- Necessity to co-ordinate enforcement activity across agencies e.g. Police, Fire Service and NHDC
- Role of utilities in degrading carriageway surfaces through uncoordinated repairs
- High levels of public satisfaction with highway maintenance standards

2.1.36 Cost of Providing the Service

2.1.37 For the financial year 2006/7 “Streetscene” services cost the following:-

Street Cleansing £902,400 (inc. street waste) to provide:-

Waste household £1,855,660

Grounds Maintenance (excluding cemeteries, allotments) but including verge maintenance etc £2,628,320

CCTV £276,710

Town centre enhancements £55,500 (includes street furniture £8,000, street signs £24,000, decorative lighting £8,500 and footway lighting £15,000)

3 CONDUCTING THE REVIEW

3.1 The 4C’s were addressed by Officers and Members: Challenge, Compare, Compete and Consult (for challenge, see 4.1 below).

3.2 Compare

3.2.1 Comparisons were made through BVPI benchmarking data of our nearest neighbours and visits to two authorities which were selected for the following reasons:

3.2.2 **Broxbourne Borough Council** is a neighbouring Hertfordshire authority. the District has a series of small/medium size towns along the busy A10.

The main towns are Waltham Cross, Cheshunt, Broxbourne and Hoddesdon with a total population of 83,000.

- 3.2.3 Its Street Scene Best Value review was reported following an inspection in June 2003, it was found to be a two star good service with promising prospects of improvement.
- 3.2.4 The Audit Commission Inspection included street cleaning, maintenance of parks and open spaces, car parking, and public toilets.
- 3.2.5 The Inspection identified best practice in the following areas:-
- Streets, open spaces and car parks are generally clean and free from litter and grass well maintained.
 - Localised problems of verge parking, fly-posting, graffiti and dog fouling are being tackled.
 - Quick response to abandoned vehicles, graffiti, and fly-tipping.
 - Customers find it easy to access services, helpline; extended opening hours, website and leaflets
 - Education and promotion
- 3.2.6 Effective use of enforcement powers (however not balanced with education and promotion)
- 3.2.7 **Braintree District Council's** Street Scene Best Value review was reported following an inspection in May 2005, it was found to be a two star good service with excellent prospects of improvement.
- 3.2.8 Braintree is the second largest Essex district, in area covering 612 square kilometres and is largely rural in character, just over half of the 134,500 population live in the three main towns of Braintree, Halstead and Witham.
- 3.2.9 There is no overall political control of the council but the Conservatives and Independents form the administration having taken over from Labour at the last election in May 2003.
- 3.2.10 The Audit Commission Inspection included street cleaning, maintenance of parks and open spaces, on and off street car parking and the management of the Council's vehicle fleet.
- 3.2.11 The Inspection identified best practice in the following areas:-
- Streets and public open spaces are clean and tidy
 - Service works effectively with other departments and external partners- County
 - Flexible partnership arrangements- parish/community groups
 - Accessible to local people (response to abandoned cars, flytipping, litter and graffiti prompt)
 - Street cleaning good value for money

Braintree is considered a Nearest Neighbour by the Audit Commission.

3.3 Consult

- 3.3.1 Consultation has been undertaken at regular intervals by the service areas in terms of individual surveys.
- 3.3.2 In addition satisfaction with the districts street cleansing provision is tested regularly as part of the General Survey and the Best Value Surveys.
- 3.3.3 Feedback from the Council's Comments, Compliments and Complaints process, which is widely available for this service area, was also used to inform this service review.
- 3.3.4 Copies of PI data for BVPI surveys and the MORI survey are included in the evidence file.
- 3.3.5 Additional consultation has been undertaken specifically for this review with stakeholders. This has been an essential and informative part of this review. Consultation with these groups was undertaken in the following way.

- **Stakeholder meetings**

The findings of this survey are available in the Evidence File of this Review.

Key stakeholders were identified by the Officer and Member teams staff as partners they work closely with in delivering their service. Stakeholders were invited to participate in a workshop session where they shared their thoughts on what the service should look like, what elements are vital to future success and finally what plans they had that could be included or considered when formulating recommendations from the review. In addition written comments were accepted.

A note of this meeting and the comments raised was sent out to Stakeholders and can be referenced in the Evidence file of the review.

- **Stakeholder Survey**

A note of this meeting and the comments raised were sent out to Staff and can be referenced in the Evidence file of the review.

3.4 Compete

- 3.4.1 This section of the review looked at the process of service delivery and assessed the current method of procurement and the opportunity to either market test the provision of services or enter into partnerships to deliver services with increased efficiency.
- 3.4.2 Procurement of cross cutting services requires co-ordination by service commissioners. Possibilities could include: co-ordinating letting times from grounds maintenance contracts, market testing for street based enforcement services, etc.

4 REVIEW FINDINGS

4.1 Challenge

4.1.2 ENCAMS have provided a comprehensive report relating to the scope of the FSR, the way that the FSR has been undertaken and the outcomes of the FSR process and the improvement plan. In terms of the scope of the FSR, ENCAMS have identified that the areas that the Council wish to cover in the report are appropriate for a comprehensive Streetscene Review and that a high level review of such cross cutting services is entirely consistent with the approach advocated by the Audit Commission. ENCAMS have undertaken their own independent assessment performance and looked at the integration of the various strategic corporate documents. ENCAMS have also analysed the Service Plans, particularly that of the Leisure and Environmental Service to see how this fits in with Corporate priorities, Customer expectations and external factors. The appraisal from the Critical Friend concludes that the Review has taken a strategic look at the delivery of Streetscene services via appropriate methodology. The Review Team included all relevant parties and it took a point of view of a member of the public. The review included a range of consultation methods and surveys (including Stakeholder meetings) and an appropriate comparison was made with other Hertfordshire Authorities and other "near neighbour Authorities". ENCAMS appraisal also identifies the areas for improvement being broadly the same as those identified by the Review itself.

4.2 Compare

4.2.1 The site visits to Broxbourne and Braintree proved particularly useful in demonstrating how other, broadly similar authorities organised their streetscene services. The notes from the visits are in the evidence file with the key points being:
Streetscene based enforcement services are operated by both Councils and are regarded as offering a more comprehensive solution rather than each service area offering individual enforcement elements
There are differing views about contacting out large service areas.

RECOMMEND

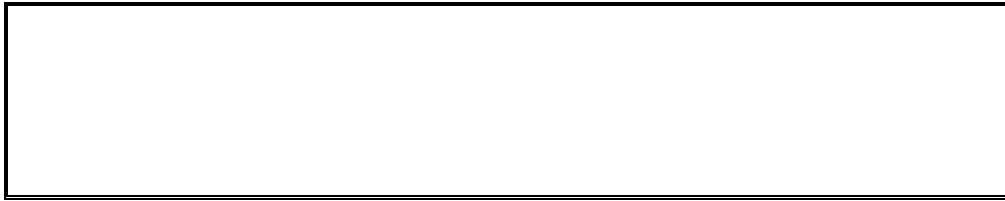
A comprehensive Streetscene Enforcement Service (I6)

- Restructure (A14)
- Implement Clean Neighbourhoods Act (A15)

RECOMMEND

Get the Community more involved (I7)

- Community engagement plan (A16)



RECOMMEND

Simplify customer contact arrangements (18)

- Customer contact centre (A17)
- Seamless co-ordination with contractors (18)

4.3 Consult

- 4.3.1 The consultation element of the review encompassed the analysis of BVPI data, two stakeholder consultation events and a web based survey. The analysis of the BVPI data, the notes from the consultation and the outcomes from the survey are included in the evidence file. The key points that emerge from this element of the review are:-

You told us;

‘Getting the community involved’

‘Harness goodwill of Citizens’

‘Educate everyone how to do it’

‘Better information on funding sources’

**‘Town Centre Ranger/Wardens/Neighbourhood Watch Type Scheme’
‘Better HCC / NHDC / Parishes co-ordination**

Our response is;

- The Annual Parish Conference has already highlighted the need for greater sharing of information regarding not only functions which are carried out by each of the agencies involved, but also sharing expertise and opportunities for resourcing. This dialogue will continue through the development of the Rural Strategy.
- Action 11 in the attached plan identifies that the Council will work with parishes to develop joint arrangements and review services provided in consultation with our parishes
- Action Improvement 1 in the improvement plan indicates our aim to improve community engagement in the maintenance of streetscene throughout the district
- The involvement of schools into the District’s recycling initiatives as part of their citizenship agenda will help to raise awareness of younger residents of the District, an example of good practice seen during our visit to Braintree.
- With regard to education, we have recently conducted a door-stepping campaign (see 2.1 above) and are extending our work in schools to raise awareness of recycling potential (2.1 above)
- The North Herts Community Safety Strategy already includes the strategic objective 'to increase the uptake of neighbourhood and business watch schemes', but at its revision will also include factors to address 'envirocrime' (damage to street furniture, litter, graffiti etc) as identified by the Encams Critical Friend report attached.

RECOMMEND

Improve Streetscene when development occurs through (I1)

- Section 106 supplementary guidance (A1)
- Model legal clauses (A2)
- Review and implement our internal procedures (A3) (A4)

RECOMMEND

Improve communication with Stakeholders (I5)

- Joint working (A11)
- Technical advice (A12)
- Review service provision (A13)

RECOMMEND

Define objectives for engineering function and review structure (I10)

- Undertake restructure as appropriate (A22)
- Withdraw administrative funding from Highways Partnership (A23)

You told us;

'Poor lighting' - 13.5% of respondents were very satisfied, 40.5% fairly satisfied, 21.6% neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, 10.8% fairly dissatisfied and 5.4% very dissatisfied in our recent survey

'Herts Highways – could be better, often difficult to get good design solutions'

'Signage – requirements of Traffic Regulation Orders'

'Sun Street / Bucklersbury works well, apply this design elsewhere'

'Local standards reporting hotline'

'Make it easy to report on issues'

Our response is;

- Action 18 in the improvement plan undertakes that we will ensure seamless co-ordination between NHDC and contractors
- Action 17 in the improvement plan identifies the commencement of the NHDC 'one stop shop', enabling residents to use one number to record their complaints or comments, regardless of which authority is ultimately responsible for undertaking action; NHDC will relay calls to the relevant agency direct on their behalf.

You told us;

'CCTV not always focussed on the hotspots'

'Concerned about safety' - 73% of respondents were satisfied/, 24% dissatisfied that North Herts has low levels of crime in our recent survey

'Safety and quality of public toilets'

'Abandoned cars – not a big issue, remove quicker'

**'Churned up verges, verge parking'
'real local policing, on foot or bike preferable'
'co-ordinate street scene enforcement'**

Our response is;

- As a result of this review, and acting on the outcomes of the three yearly Crime Audit referred to within the body of the report at 2.1, we will be conducting a review of CCTV provision and criteria for its use. (Action Improvement 4, to develop a CCTV policy, on the improvement action plan). This will include consideration of location of individual cameras.
- Concerns about safety will be addressed by the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership within the delivery of its Community Safety Strategy, by meeting with residents through the new neighbourhood policing panels (to be established shortly), and by the review of existing 'on street' enforcement functions carried out by the Council. The speed at which abandoned cars are removed is being reviewed through our countywide contracting arrangements

RECOMMEND

Improve effectiveness and efficiency of CCTV (I4)

- Business Plan (A8)
- Review camera provision (A9)
- S106 funding (A10)

RECOMMEND

Improve quality of public convenience provision (I11)

- Produce 3 year improvement programme (A24)

You told us;

'Range of open spaces for different users' - 71% satisfied/11% dissatisfied with the quality of open spaces within their locality in our recent survey

'Priory Gardens – well kept thoroughfare'

'General well kept park areas in Hitchin'

'Important to retain open spaces, not lost to building'

Our response is;

- We will maintain our daily inspections of play areas as described at 2.1

(grounds maintenance) within this report

- We will produce and keep up to date a five year rolling programme for streetscene environmental improvements across the district (Action A5 on the improvement plan)

RECOMMEND

Improve Streetscene when development occurs through (I1)

- Section 106 supplementary guidance (A1)
- Model legal clauses (A2)
- Review and implement our internal procedures (A3) (A4)

RECOMMEND

Produce a plan for Streetscene improvements (I2) (A5)

RECOMMEND

Promote policies and minimum standards for the appearance of Streetscenes (I3)

- Section 106 supplementary guidance (A6)
- Local Development Framework policies (A7)

RECOMMEND

Review and develop Parks and Open Spaces Strategy (I9)

- Evidence based – what is there / what needs improving (A19) (A20)
- Review provision of buildings and services (A21)

4.4 Compete

4.4.1 Due to their very nature Streetscene services cross over many (if not all) of the Council's functions. For single service reviews an assessment can be made of the opportunities for providing the service in a different way (either through contracting out/partnerships etc). The same cannot be said for the Streetscene services in their entirety. Significant parts of the service are already market tested through the letting of externalised contracts:-

- Grounds Maintenance

- Waste
- Street Cleansing
- Abandoned Vehicle Collection

4.4.2 The significant service delivery areas that are not tested in this manner are:

- Car Parking Enforcement
- CCTV

RECOMMEND

Improve effectiveness and efficiency of CCTV (I4)

- Business Plan (A8)
- Review camera provision (A9)
- S106 funding (A10)

RECOMMEND

Define objectives for engineering function and review structure (I10)

- Undertake restructure as appropriate (A22)
- Withdraw administrative funding from Highways Partnership (A23)

4.4.3 It is recommended that the service areas that are currently either tested in a competitive environment should be subject to a detailed review to identify whether partnership opportunities exist to provide efficiencies or whether competitive testing is appropriate.

5 CONCLUSION

5.1 Street scene based services in North Hertfordshire are generally well run, meet customer expectations and offer reasonable value for money. Many of the services are tested in the commercial market place and the award of contracts are made on a cost/quality basis. A number of service areas identified in the report could benefit from either market testing or business planning and strategy work. There is clearly widespread dissatisfaction with the role of HCC as Highway Authority particularly with regard to maintenance of footpaths and roads.

5.1.2 The provision of planned maintenance in other aspects of street scene services (e.g. furniture) received support. The Officer group identified the need to have a more rigorous and systematic approach to S106 agreements which will link in with a planned maintenance regime.

5.1.3 Whilst enforcement per se did not feature as an area of particular dissatisfaction the compare visits were most helpful in demonstrating the opportunities in having a more comprehensive approach to street scene enforcement and contract monitoring. In a similar vein simplified reporting

procedures are seen to be desirable and would hopefully lead to further improvements in customer satisfaction.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 Recommendations are drawn together in the attached Improvement Plan, which aims to collate recommendations of the review into an action plan that is user focussed. The Improvement Plan is attached as Appendix 1.

7 MONITORING

- 7.1 It is important that the Improvement Plan is regularly monitored and evaluated. The Plan will be reviewed in light of the decision made by Cabinet in order to ensure that the necessary revenue and capital finances are in place to deliver the improvements according to the time scales.

Corp. Plan	Improvement	Action	Financial Implications	Timescale	Accountability	Comments
	Improve our negotiation and delivery of streetscene improvements that are funded from Planning Obligations (S106). (I1)	Production of S106 Supplementary Planning Document (A1)	Within existing budgets	Aug-06	David Scholes	Timetable set out in agreed Local Development Scheme
		Produce model S106 clauses (A2)		Aug-06	David Scholes	
		Review internal processes and protocols (A3)		Jul-06	David Scholes	
		Produce a business case to establish S106 Officer post from Planning Delivery Grant funding (2 year post) to implement new arrangement. (A4)	To be funded from Planning Delivery Grant.	Sep-06	David Scholes	
Prosp. LT 2-4 Safer ST 1+2	Produce a programme agreed between partners of public realm streetscene improvements in our towns and villages in partnership with HCC, LGCHF and Town/Parish Councils. (I2)	Produce and keep up to date (through the Town Centre Strategy Action Plans) a rolling 5 year programme for streetscene environmental improvements throughout each of the District's 4 towns. (A5)	Through review of the Capital Strategy	Dec-07	Barrie Jones	Town centre strategy outcomes to feed into capital strategy in the intervening period. Timescale identified here relates to the completion of all 4 town centre strategies
Prosp. ST 1-3 MT 1-3 LT 1-4	Promote policies that require improvements and minimum standards to the physical appearance of our towns, villages and rural areas when development/redevelopment occurs. (I3)	Production of S106 Supplementary Planning Document (A6)	Within existing budgets	Aug-06	David Scholes	

Corp. Plan	Improvement	Action	Financial Implications	Timescale	Accountability	Comments
		Production of Local Development Framework Policies in accordance with the Local Development Scheme. (A7)	Within existing budgets	On going	David Scholes	Timescale set in Local Development Scheme - these are kept under review
Safer ST 5+4 MT 2	Produce a strategy including policy objectives (supporting our community safety strategy) increase the efficiency of CCTV to NHDC, whilst maintaining/enhancing effectiveness. Strategy to encompass the next 10 years operation. (I4)	Produce a Business Plan which encompasses the wider Partnership opportunities (e.g. for the existing arrangement with Stevenage) (A8)	Possible cost savings and/or income generation	Nov-06	Liz Green	
		Review the type and location of cameras (A9)	Within existing budgets.	Jul-06	Barrie Jones / Liz Green	
		Require contributions from S106 agreements as appropriate for the provision and operation of CCTV associated with development (A10)	S106 funding to supplement capital / revenue funding.	Jul-06	David Scholes	Relates to the production of Supplementary Planning Document
Listen ST 9	Undertake effective communication with our stakeholders about the services we provide (I5)	Establish joint working arrangement for Parishes to NHDC contracted services. (A11)	Within existing budgets – efficiency gains	Dec-06	Vaughan Watson	
		Review grant aid rules and the use of NHDC technical consultancy. (A12)	Additional income stream.	Dec-06	Vaughan Watson / Patrick Candler	

Corp. Plan	Improvement	Action	Financial Implications	Timescale	Accountability	Comments
		Review of services in consultation with the Parishes (A13)	Within existing budgets.	Aug-06	Patrick Candler / Vaughan Watson / Liz Green	
Safer ST 6+7 Sustain ST 2	Enhance the streetscene through a more comprehensive enforcement service. (I6)	Restructure project board to determine composition, duties and organisational arrangements. (A14)	Within existing budgets	Aug-06	Norma Atlay / John Robinson	
		To implement the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act (those parts adopted Cabinet 20/9/05) using the current staff resources and introduce FPN (Fixed Penalty Notices). To consider long term enforcement plan/provisions to ensure consistent approach, and one point of contact. (A15)	Within existing budgets with additional income stream. To ensure powers adopted to issue FPN and mechanism to administer. To supersede Bylaws by virtue of the above.	April - 06	Andy Godman	Timescale as dictated by CNEA.
Safer MT 3+4	Improve our care of the streetscene by improving our community engagement. (I7)	Produce a community engagement plan for streetscene based services to facilitate improved communication and participation including themed initiatives e.g. adopt a street; schools packs; community safety. (A16)	Any additional spend to be off set against savings accrued elsewhere in FSR Action Plan and through income generation and	Nov-06	Roger Harrison	

Corp. Plan	Improvement	Action	Financial Implications	Timescale	Accountability	Comments
			sponsorship.			
Listen MT 8	Simplify our customer contact arrangements. (I8)	Establish one stop customer contact centre and area presence through <u>service@north-herts.</u> (A17)	Budget approved through SFP process and SSSC contract. Efficiency savings once operative.	Sept '06		
		Seamless co-ordination between NHDC and contractors (A18)	Within existing budgets	Sept'06	Vaughan Watson	
Health MT 2	Review and develop the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy. (I9)	Produce a robust evidence base to support the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy on the quantity and type of provision and enhancement needed throughout the District. (A9)	Within existing budgets	July 2007	Louise Symes	
		Produce evidence based action plan to support LDF policies (A9)	Within existing budgets	July 2007	David Scholes	
		Review the provision of buildings and services. (A21)	Within existing budgets	July 2007		
	Define operational objectives (in line with agreed restructuring policy) of the engineering service and review organisation thereafter.	Review functions and synergies with other service areas to effect restructuring. (A22)	Minimum £50k saving per annum	April 2006	Norma Atlay / John Robinson	Consultation

Corp. Plan	Improvement	Action	Financial Implications	Timescale	Accountability	Comments
	(I10)					
		Withdraw administrative funding the highways partnership (A22)	Cost savings 2006/7 onwards	April 2006	John Robinson	Poorly perceived by residents generally. Effectively a subsidy to a HCC function.
	Improve the quality of public convenience provision through the District. (I11)	Produce a 3 year implementation plan providing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - appropriate locations/availability - improved facilities - consistent management arrangement (A24) 	£80 saving on anticipated 2005/6 costs	April 2006	Vaughan Watson	

Appendix 2

BVPI	Description	Ashford	Maidstone	Mid Sussex	South Beds	North Herts DC	Tonbridge & Malling	Braintree	Stroud	Rugby	Average
BV82a	Percentage of household waste that is recycled	13.36%	10.28%	19.74%	14.98%	14.6%	16.19%	19.17%	20.88%	11.22%	15.60%
BV82b	Percentage of household waste that is composted	0.60%	6.51%	1.59%	0.5%	5.29%	1.86%	9.28%	0	4.60%	3.36%
BV82a + 82b	Percentage of household waste that is recycled and composted	13.96%	16.79%	21.17%	15.12%	19.88%	18.05%	28.46%	20.88%	15.82%	18.90%
BV84	Number of Kg of household waste collected per head of population	413.93kg	445.31kg	348kg	429.5kg	450kg	456kg	415.5kg	354.59kg	461.1kg	419.33kg
BV86	Cost of household waste collection per household	£37.51	£27.74	£37.39	£40.00	£44.19	£30.16	£64.40	£37.05	£44.62	£40.34
BV89 2003/04	The % of people satisfied with the cleanliness standard in their area	57%	59%	69%	70%	62.50%	-	61%	67%	61%	63.31%
BV90a 2003/04	the % of people satisfied with household waste collection	88%	87%	86%	88%	89.20%	-	81%	87%	91%	87.15%
BV90b 2003/04	The % of people satisfied with waste recycling	69%	64%	74%	67%	63.70%	75%	70%	80%	78%	80.09%
BV91	Percentage of households served by kerbside collection of recyclables	82.10%	69.3%	100%	96.5%	100%	100%	100%	100%	94.0%	93.54%
BV199	The proportion of relevant land and highways as defined under EPA 1990 Part IV section 86 that is assessed as having combined deposits of litter and detritus across four categories of cleanliness	16.3%	14.33%	9%	16.7%	14%	10.0	7%	10%	29%	14.04%
BV126	Domestic burglaries per 1000 households	10.57	8.2	5.86	13.23	10.63	8.11	5.62	8.3	15.47	9.56
BV127a	Violent offences per 1000 pop. by a stranger	2.2	2.47	5.18	1.31	3.29	1.70	3.65	2.7	6.68	3.24
BV127b	Violent offences per 1000 pop. in a public place	7.2	6.95	6.86	9.91	8.8	5.25	-	7.81	10.78	7.95
BV127c	Violent offences per 1000 pop. in connection with licensed premises	0.69	0.6	-	0.4	1.07	0.42	-	1.19	1.96	0.90
BV127d	Violent offences per 1000 pop. under the influence of an intoxicating substance (legal or otherwise)	2.63	3.01	-	2.03	4.65	1.99	0.94	2.64	2.88	2.60
BV128	Vehicle crimes per 1000 population	8	9.8	7.9	13.01	8.87	9.42	6.35	10.4	14.67	9.80
BV174	The number of racial incidents per 100,000 pop	1.8	2.83	0	0.87	4.19	0.91	0	0.92	2.24	-
BV175	The percentage of racial incidents resulting in further action	100%	100%	N/A	100%	100%	100%	N/A	100%	100%	-

BVPI	Description	Ashford	Maidstone	Mid Sussex	South Beds	North Herts DC	Tonbridge & Malling	Braintree	Stroud	Appendix 3	
BV176	Domestic violence refuge places provided or supported by the authority per 10,000 population	0	0	0.01	0.37	0	0.20	0.04	0	0	-

		Broxbourne	Dacorum	East	Hertsmere	North	St Albans	Steven-	Three	Watford	Welwyn	
<p>Source: Audit Commission Audited Data. N/A denotes that data is not applicable 'Nearest Neighbours' – those authorities chosen as most similar to NHDC in demographic, economic and social make-up.</p>												
BV82a + 82b	Percentage of household waste that is recycled and composted	18.84%	28.66%	18.20%	13.32%	19.88%	22.15%	19.73%	25.27%	25.13%	19.73%	21.09%
BV84	Number of Kg of household waste collected per head of population	425.6kg	399.8kg	409kg	415.8kg	450kg	384.2kg	396kg	341.40kg	391.90kg	394.7kg	400.84kg
BV86	Cost of household waste collection per household	£46.82	£53.25	£62.45	£49.90	£44.19	£46.66	£40	£74.00	£64.96	£44.33	£52.66
BV89 2003/04	The % of people satisfied with the cleanliness standard in their area	69.00%	48.00%	63.00%	54.00%	62.50%	64.00%	59.00%	61.00%	50.00%	57.00%	58.70%
BV90a 2003/04	the % of people satisfied with household waste collection	91.00%	82.00%	88.00%	70.00%	89.00%	87.00%	78.00%	77.00%	77.00%	76.00%	81.50%
BV90b 2003/04	The % of people satisfied with waste recycling	79.00%	71.00%	65.00%	61.00%	64.00%	70.00%	72.00%	66.00%	55.00%	61.00%	66.40%
BV91	Percentage of households served by kerbside collection of recyclables	92.5%	89%	80%	91.3%	100%	89.6%	97%	100%	100%	93.60%	93.3%
BV199	The proportion of relevant land and highways as defined under EPA 1990 Part IV section 86 that is assessed as having combined deposits of litter and detritus across four categories of cleanliness	15%	16.6%	11%	11.5%	14%	14%	17%	11%	15%	10%	13.51%
BV126	Domestic burglaries per 1000 households	17.58	9.86	7.70	15.41	10.63	12.85	8.72	11.80	13.54	16.69	12.48
BV127a	Violent offences per 1000 pop. by a stranger	4.74	3.63	3.00	3.89	3.29	4.07	6.99	2.99	9.80	5.48	4.79
BV127b	Violent offences per 1000 pop. in a public place	11.95	9.47	7.3	9.63	8.80	8.84	16.10	7.36	21.16	11.98	11.26
BV127c	Violent offences per 1000 pop. in connection with licensed premises	0.63	0.90	1.10	0.64	1.07	0.97	1.68	0.53	2.88	1.04	11.44
BV127d	Violent offences per 1000 pop. under the influence of an intoxicating substance (legal or otherwise)	4.84	4.47	4.00	4.40	4.65	4.43	8.55	2.72	11.17	6.97	5.62
BV128	Vehicle crimes per 1000 population	15.32	13.85	7.70	15.93	8.87	14.60	9.74	10.22	16.58	13.08	12.59

BVPI	Description	Broxbourne BC	Dacorum BC	East Herts DC	Hertsmere BC	North Herts DC	St. Albans DC	Stevenage BC	Three Rivers DC	Watford BC	Welwyn Hatfield DC	Average
BV174	The number of racial incidents per 100,000 pop	19.59	14.00	0.00*	1.00	4.19	0.75	0.00	0.00	51.57	11.23	10.23
BV175	The percentage of racial incidents resulting in further action	100%	100%	0%*	100%	100%	100%	N/A	100%	97.56%	100%	99.70%
BV176	Domestic violence refuge places provided or supported by the authority per 10,000 population	2.00	0.09	0.00	0.03	0.0	1.00	0.78	0.05	0.20	0.26	0.44

Source: Audit Commission audited data

* doubts expressed about the reliability of the council's arrangements for producing the data

N/A denotes that data is not applicable

Everyone has contact with the street scene in some way or other and everyone will have a difference perception of what the street scene is. This is a thematic review and it will therefore not be reviewing specific services but will be looking at the street scene in general and how the services that the Council, and others, provide impact on the way that residents and visitors to the District relate to the street.

Given the wide range of services that impact on the street scene, and in order to ensure that the FSR is manageable boundaries have to be draw as to the scope of the review. Therefore the scope will cover the following areas:

1. The design and appearance of the street scene.
2. **The health and safety and maintenance of the physical street environment.**
3. **The safety of the street from crime and fear of crime.**
4. The review will cover the street scene from the perspective of the town and the village from the residents' viewpoint.

The diagram below sets out the services the review will look at. This list is not exhaustive and other services maybe looked at during the course of the review if they impact on the street scene.

Some services are being reviewed as part of other changes and therefore will not be central to this review however where issues arise that impact on those services then the review may make recommendations for changes.

These are:

Planning policy. This is being covered in the consultation on the local development framework and town centre strategies.

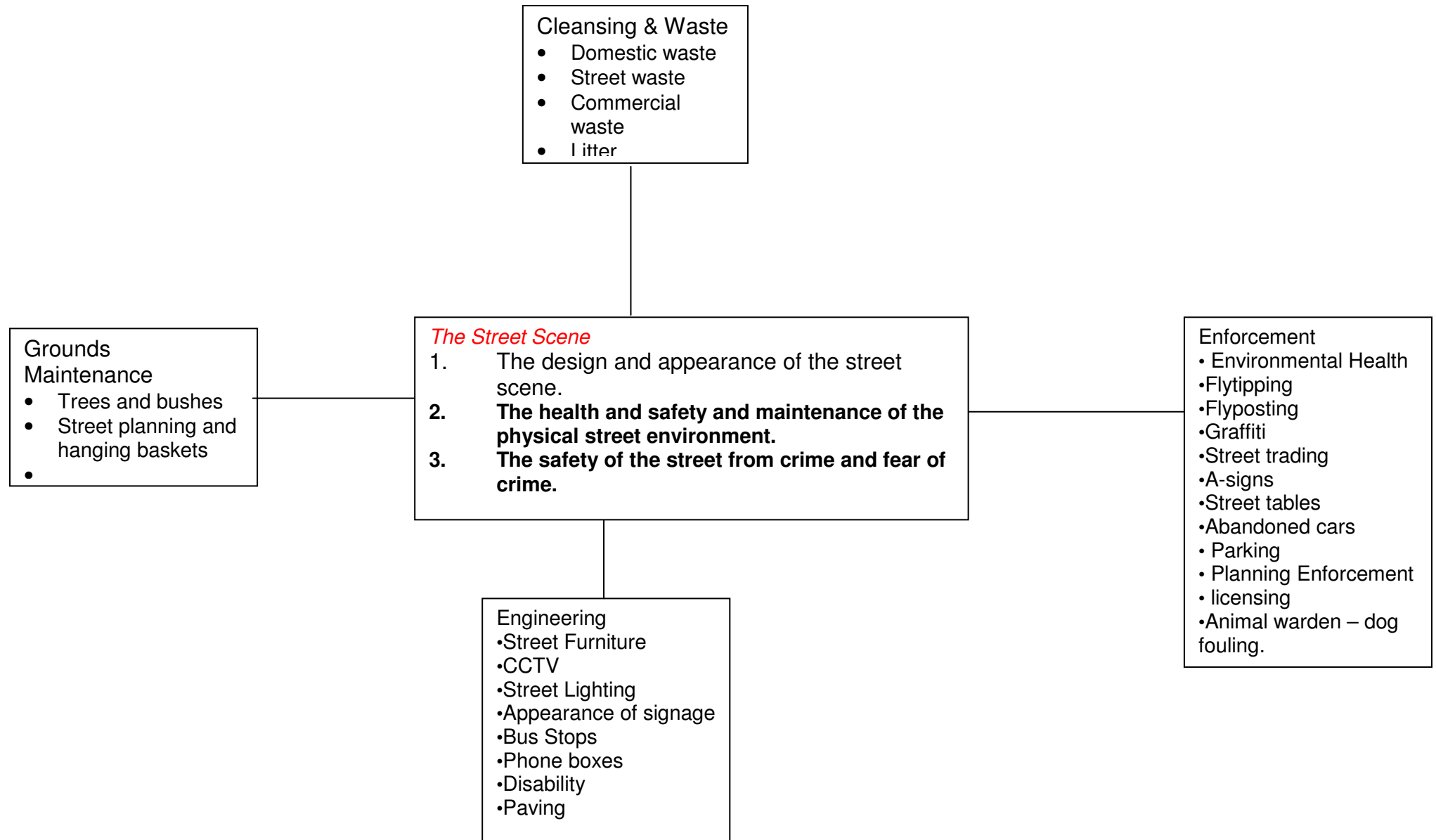
Transport policy – which is covered in other reviews.

Public toilets- these have recently been the subject of a review.

Parking Policy. This is being reviewed separately and traffic management is not part of the review.

Restructuring. The consultation on the Council structure is currently taking place.

Street Scene FSR



North Hertfordshire District Council

Street Scene Fundamental Service Review

A REPORT

On the scope and preparation of the study, its outcomes and proposals, including a review of strategic documents relating to the street scene, with recommendations for further action.



24th March 2006

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1.0 Executive Summary

1.1 Background

The District of North Hertfordshire is located less than 40 miles from central London and has a population of over 119,000. There are three historic towns – Hitchin, Baldock, Royston and Letchworth, the world's first garden city. The area is predominantly rural extending to 127 square miles with many picturesque villages.

In the NHDC Best Value Performance Plan summary 2004/5 the Council stated that its Planning and Environment Directorate would commence Street Scene Best Value review in the year 2004/5. It was stated that the review would cover:

- Street Cleaning
- Street Trees
- Street Furniture
- Grounds Maintenance
- Litter
- Dog Fouling
- Street Lighting
- Town Centre Management
- Tourism
- CCTV

These areas were initially chosen because of the high visibility and fact that the Council was conscious that they were areas of concern to residents. The review at that time would have been driven by one of the Council's Strategic priorities for 2003/4 – 2005/6 "to promote the economic, environmental and social wellbeing of the district".

1.2 Fundamental Service Review (FSR) of Street Scene

An officer group was established, this was chaired by the Head of Planning and Building Control with representatives from all Council services relating to the street scene. A members group was also set up in May 2005 and it drew up the scope of the review.

ENCAMS was invited to act in the role of 'critical friend' providing guidance on the review process, commenting on outcomes and providing good practice where possible.

The approach taken for the FSR is entirely consistent with the advice given in the Audit Commission Briefing sheet ACKnowledge - Learning from Audit, Inspection and Research. - Street Scene. This guidance points out that all residents come into contact with the street scene and the quality of their lives is affected by it. It specifically encourages local authorities to "work with residential and business communities, utilities and other stakeholders to increase engagement and

encourage ownership of issues.” Most importantly any such review should look at the street scene from the viewpoint of the resident or visitor.

1.3 Assessment of Performance

In considering current performance the review team chose to look at BVPI 199a which records the percentage of sites surveyed which fall below Grade B for cleanliness using the grades set out in the Code of Practice for Litter and Refuse (COPL&R) and BVPI 89 which records the percentage of people satisfied with the cleanliness standard of their area.

This score of 16% is well within the Government target of 25% and the result put NHDC in the top quartile.

The BV 89 score of 62% of people satisfied with the cleanliness standard of their area seems like a positive result. However data relating to street scene generated by the citizens panel (District wide survey 2004 shows that there has been a drop in satisfaction when compared with previous surveys for street cleaning, refuse collection, parks and open spaces and public conveniences. The latest findings from the Citizens Panel 2005 shows that levels of satisfaction with street cleaning and public conveniences continues to drop.

1.4 Integration with strategic documents

The N. H. D. C. Anti Social Behaviour Guidance and Procedure Protocol describes the introduction of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 and defines what is meant by the term and lists some examples including fly tipping, graffiti and litter but not fly posting, abandoned vehicles or dog fouling. The document goes on to describe the ‘multi agency approach’ taken by the North Hertfordshire ASB task group and the role of the ASB officer. Whilst other agencies such as the police and the probationary service are specifically mentioned there doesn’t seem to be any reference to the CDRP

In the absence of any more detailed North Herts ASB policy document there is a wealth of good practice elsewhere.

North Hertfordshire D.C. Corporate Plan 2005 – 2015 is a summary document of ten pages in which one side is devoted to each of the Vision, Mission and six Corporate Objectives.

The North Herts CDRP Strategy refers to some of the national priorities and strategies that influence at the local level, although there are a number of omissions of key national policy relating to low-level antisocial behaviour issues. The strategy makes reference to the Antisocial Behaviour Act (2003) but fails to make reference to the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act (CN&E Act) (2005), and their obligation to consider envirocrime issues. The strategy should make reference to the full range of PSA Targets relevant to Envirocrime and Anti Social Behaviour.

Leisure and Environmental Services – Service Plan 2005/06 gives a background to the department, reports on the successes and lessons learned in 2004/5 and sets out the Performance Targets for 2005/6 The service plan is currently being redrafted following the amalgamation of leisure and Environmental Services Departments

The plan is clearly linked to the Vision, Mission and Strategic Objectives of the NHDC Corporate Plan 2005 – 2015 There are also references to the Fundamental Streetscene Review and the Review of the Waste Management, Recycling and Street Cleansing

Contract prior to developing a strategy for 2006 – 2012. Key Milestones are related back to the strategic objectives in the Corporate Strategy and in this way the service Plan is well integrated into other NHDC strategic documents.

1.5 FSR Draft Report

The Draft Report describes the review process and lists the officers and members involved. In conducting the review the review team addressed the four c's; Challenge, Compare, Compete and Consult. The report concludes that NHDC Street Scene services are well run and meet customer expectations but that there are issues which need to be addressed namely;

- Integrated Street Scene Enforcement and contract monitoring
- The role of Herts C.C. in relation to maintenance of roads and footpaths
- Some service area could benefit from market testing or business planning
- One point of contact for street scene issues

1.6 Conclusions

The Fundamental Service Review of Street Scene carried out by North Hertfordshire District Council between September 2005 and March 2006 has taken a strategic look at the delivery of street scene services which are delivered by a number of different council departments. The preparation and methodology of the review is sound being based on the guidance issued by the Audit Commission. The membership of the Review team was broad and included all the relevant departments.

The review has tried to view the street scene from the point of view of a member of the public and accordingly has included a range of consultation methods from surveys through to stakeholder meetings. The range of consultees may have missed some hard to reach groups such as young people and people with disabilities.

The use of Best Value Performance Indicators in assessing performance was sensible and the use of similar data from other Hertfordshire Councils and 'Near Neighbours' was good.

The relationship between local environmental quality and fear of crime is now better understood but this relationship has not been fully explored in either the service plan or the CDRP strategy.

There needs to be a specific strategy for rural areas and villages perhaps involving parish councils. The environmental impact of such things as litter, abandoned cars and flytipping is much greater in rural areas

The review acknowledges that a range of other agencies impact on the street scene in addition to the Council and if sustainable improvements are to be made then these other agencies need to be involved more closely perhaps through multi agency partnership working.

2.0 Scope of the Review

2.1 In the NHDC Best Value Performance Plan summary 2004/5 the Council stated that its Planning and Environment Directorate would commence Street Scene Best Value review in the year 2004/5. It was stated that the review would cover:

- Street Cleaning
- Street Trees
- Street Furniture
- Grounds Maintenance
- Litter
- Dog Fouling
- Street Lighting
- Town Centre Management
- Tourism
- CCTV

2.2 These areas were initially chosen because of their high visibility and fact that the Council was conscious that they were areas of most concern to residents. The review at that time would have been driven by one of the Council's Strategic priorities for 2003/4 – 2005/6 "to promote the economic, environmental and social wellbeing of the district".

2.3 ENCAMS was invited to act in the role of 'critical friend' providing guidance on the review process, commenting on outcomes and providing good practice where possible.

2.3.1 Review relevant strategic documents;
North Herts D.C. Corporate Plan
Relevant Service Plans
Citizens Panel survey questionnaires
CDRP Strategy
ASB Strategy
Enforcement Strategy

2.3.2 The scope of the study;
were all relevant elements included?
did they each receive appropriate weighting?

2.3.3. An appraisal of the project preparation;
were appropriate information sources used?
was the research data used relevant?
was the analysis robust?

2.3.4 Comment on the outcomes and proposals in the draft review document and make recommendations;

2.3.5 Attend member meeting and stakeholder event in March and make further comments and recommendations;

2.4 A members group was established in May 2005 to oversee the Street Scene Fundamental Service Review. An officer group was also established, this was chaired by the Head of Planning and Building Control with representatives from all Council services relating to the street scene. The members group drew up the scope of the review which is given below;

- The design and appearance of the street scene.
- The health and safety and maintenance of the physical street environment.
- The safety of the street from fear of crime.
- The review covered the street scene from a residents perspective and considered issues relating to both towns and villages.

2.5 Four service areas were specifically included;

Cleansing and waste

Domestic waste Street waste Commercial waste Litter Chewing gum

Grounds Maintenance

Trees and bushes Street planning and hanging baskets

Engineering

Street furniture CCTV Street lighting Appearance of signage	Bus Stops Phone Boxes Disability Paving
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Enforcement

Environmental health Flytipping Flyposting Graffiti Street Trading Animal warden – Dog fouling	A Signs Street Tables Abandoned Cars Parking Licensing Planning Enforcement
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2.6 The scoping document states that the review is thematic and therefore will not be reviewing specific services but will be looking at the street scene in general and how the services provided by the Council and others impact on residents and visitors.

2.7 This broad approach is entirely consistent with the advice given in the Audit Commission Briefing sheet ACKnowledge - Learning from Audit, Inspection and Research. - Street Scene. This guidance points out that all residents come into contact with the street scene and the quality of their lives is affected by it. It specifically encourages local authorities to “work with residential and business communities, utilities and other stakeholders to increase engagement and encourage ownership of issues.” Most importantly any such review should look at the street scene from the viewpoint of the resident or visitor.

2.8 This requires engagement with other departments within the council which is reflected in the make up of the review team. It requires communication with members of the public, this was done through various consultation channels and it involves working with those other agencies which impact on the streetscene who were invited to complete stakeholder surveys and attend stakeholder meetings.

2.9 The cleanseability of the streets is dependent on a range of factors, the amount of litter and detritus that is found there, the physical condition of the highway and the footway, the impediments which may obstruct the cleansing process, the effectiveness of the operatives and their supervision and the age and condition of machinery used in the cleansing process.

2.10 Regular monitoring and evaluation will help to deploy resources to those areas in greatest need, this can be done using the BV 199 methodology.

2.11 The quantity of litter will be dependent on the effectiveness of the cleansing process, the presence or absence of litter bins, and the mindset of the people who have passed down that street.

2.12 The staff need to be properly equipped and trained and there needs to be adequate supervision. Bins should be placed strategically placed, regularly emptied and properly maintained. The amount of litter that people will drop may be reduced if there are local campaigns and well publicised enforcement. The importance of training and supervision of cleansing staff is critical in achieving good results. All staff need to understand the part they play in meeting the council’s strategic objectives and this is probably already incorporated into other training processes.

2.13 The most effective cleansing regime will struggle to achieve grade A if the physical infrastructure is damaged and broken. Where the gully is cracked detritus will gather and if left untreated ultimately weeds will grow, where weeds grow litter will become trapped. A good relationship with the County Highways department will assist in preventing physical deterioration.

2.14 The appearance of the street scene will involve several council departments and in some local authorities interdepartmental, multi disciplinary matrix teams have been set up to coordinate their work and to reduce duplication. The review Team set up for this FSR is a good example of such a matrix group.

2.15 In the same way partnerships involving those other agencies whose activities impact on the street scene, water companies, gas and electricity distributors, highways engineers, can help to integrate activities and reduce disruption.

2.16 Public perception of the Streetscene and of the quality of council services will be affected by a number of issues. The publics' view of the street scene will be coloured by a whole basket of issues in addition to litter. They will see graffiti, gum, fly posting, dog fouling, weeds, abandoned vehicles, poor lighting, cracked pavements. The arrival of a mobile, multi skilled hit squad will instil confidence that the Council can carry out remedial measures. The visible presence of cleansing operatives will reassure the public that their street is being cleaned. A single point of contact/telephone helpline for all street related enquiries will simplify the process. The presence of uniformed enforcement officers will give the public confidence that anti social and irresponsible behaviour will not be tolerated.

3.0 Comparisons with other Hertfordshire Councils

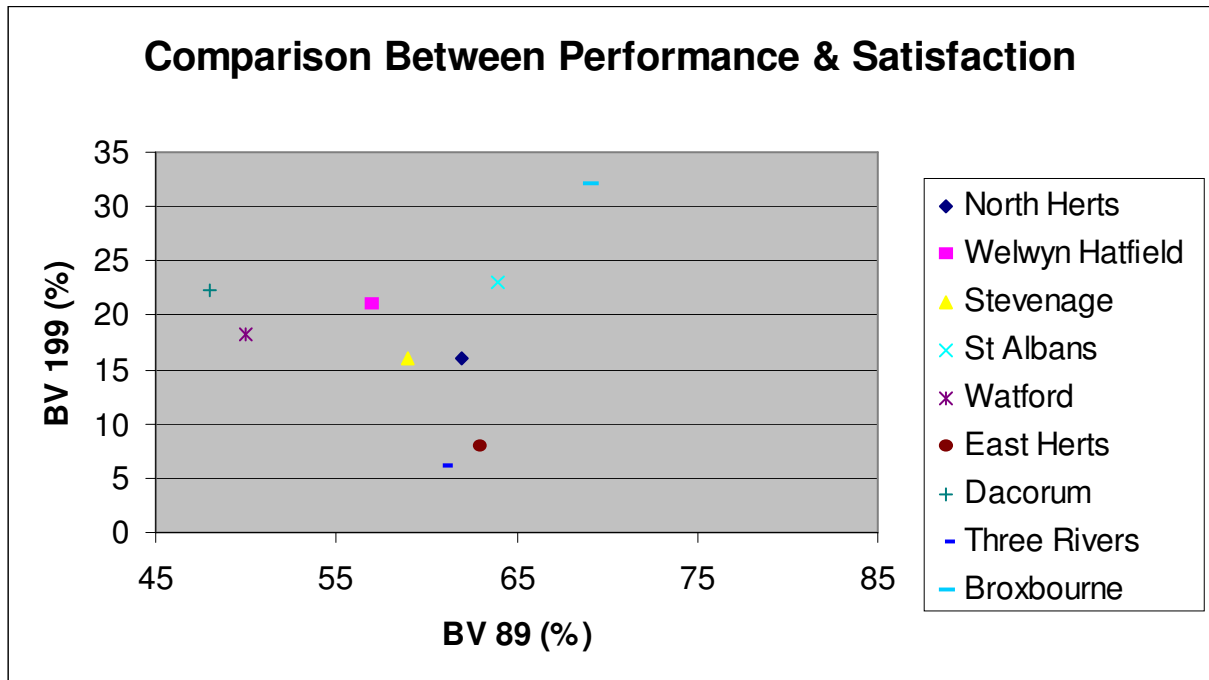
3.1 BVPI 199a

BVPI 199a records the percentage of sites surveyed which fall below Grade B for cleanliness using the grades set out in the Code of Practice for Litter and Refuse (COPL&R) Cleanliness is measured in terms of two indicators, litter and detritus. Their grades are added together to calculate the overall performance indicator. The grading system is designed to reflect the way that a member of the public would perceive the local environment. The figures used in the graph below are for 2003/04

In April 2005 the government reduced the acceptable level of sites below grade B to 25%

3.2 BVPI 89

BVPI 89 records the percentage of people satisfied with the cleanliness standard of their area. The most recent figures for BV 89 are for 2003/04



N.B. In the graph above the BV 199 figures on the y axis are presented in such a way that the lower percentages and therefore better scores are at the bottom of the scale.

N.B. No figures were available for Hertsmere

BVPI 199 and BVPI 89 data 2003/04 from www.bvpi.gov.uk/pages/keyfacts-bvpi

North Herts District Council	BV199	16%
	BV89	62%

The Draft FSR report gives updated and improved performance of 14%

4.0 Comparison with the Local Environmental Quality Survey of England 2004/05

1.1 BVPI 199 Comparative performance

Defra target	25%
National Average	19%
East of England Average	17%
Herts average	18%
Lowest Herts	6%
Highest Herts	32%
North Herts	14%

4.2 This score indicates that the cleanliness levels in North Herts as measured by BV 199 are well within the Government target of 25% well below the national average of 19% and below the East of England average of 17%. The BV 199 results for North Hertfordshire District Council are in the top quartile. Only two Hertfordshire councils achieved better scores for BV199

5.0 Public Perception

5.1 The BV 89 score of 62% of people satisfied with the cleanliness standard of their area seems like a positive result. Only three Hertfordshire councils achieved better scores for BV 89 in 2003/04. However data relating to street scene generated by the citizens panel (District wide survey 2004 shows that there has been a drop in satisfaction when compared with previous surveys for street cleaning, refuse collection, parks and open spaces and public conveniences. The latest findings from the Citizens Panel 2005 shows that levels of satisfaction with street cleaning and public conveniences continues to drop. This is a concern which needs to be addressed.

5.2 The recommendations made in section two of this report might improve the public perception of the street scene, more visible cleansing operatives, uniformed enforcement officers, one point of contact for street scene etc. Furthermore better communication through newsletters, leaflets, public campaigns and support from the local media will raise public awareness and probably public perception.

6.0 North Hertfordshire D.C. Corporate Plan

The North Herts Corporate Plan 2005 – 2015 is a summary document of ten pages in which one side is devoted to each of the Vision, Mission and six Corporate Objectives.

6.1 **Vision**, which was developed by the Local Strategic Partnership, is to make the District a 'vibrant place to live work and prosper.' Dealing with pressures relating to residential growth and airport expansion is a high priority. The plan also mentioned that there are a few pockets where deprivation index scores are relatively high.

There is a brief mention of the LSP Community Strategy and the County strategy known as 'Herts Together' the Local Area Agreement process will offer further opportunities for integration.

6.2 **Mission** notes that it is necessary to work collaboratively with partners to address the multi –faceted, cross cutting issues which affect the quality of life of its residents. This mirrors the approach taken in the current FSR of Street Scene. The Mission emphasises the importance of partnerships such as the Crime and Disorder Partnership and the Local Strategic Partnership.

6.3 Strategic Objective 1; Sustainable Communities

This objective makes a second reference to quality of life being under threat from regional development pressures and implies that the pressure is on development in rural areas. Amidst references to waste minimisation and more affordable housing there is a specific short term action for 2005/6 which requires the 'implementation of measures to address fly tipping and the misuse of the environment.' This is a timely reminder that the review must consider villages in rural areas and minor roads where the impact of envirocrime is much higher and the cost of remedial measures much higher.

6.4 Strategic Objective 2: Safer Communities

This objective encourages responsible citizenship and seeks to address fear of crime. Specific mention is made using the CDRP's Community Safety Strategy to eradicate anti-social behaviour. Whilst links between CDRP and street scene are evident they probably need to be strengthened.

6.5 Strategic Objective 3; Healthier Communities

Investment in parks, playgrounds and open spaces is seen as an important contribution to building healthier communities. The consultation process indicates that this is an area of concern for some people. The service plan notes that nationally parks are in decline. Lack of maintenance leads to an air of neglect which often results in a rise in anti social behaviour and fear of crime. The Liveability Pilots are an excellent source of good practice.

6.6 Strategic Objective 4; Equal Communities

Resources should be targeted at areas of disadvantage in order to reduce social exclusion and improve the quality of life for everyone. There are well documented examples of situations where areas of multiple deprivation have poor local environmental quality. Community engagement and partnership working can address these issues and again the Liveability Pilots are a source of good practice.

6.7 Strategic Objective 5; Prosperous Communities

Promotes sustainable local economic development. The Business Improvement District (BID) process underlines the notion that businesses, especially shops thrive better in quality local environments and whilst none of the town centres in North Hertfordshire have opted to become BIDS they are more likely to prosper if the quality of the street scene is high.

6.8 Strategic Objective 6; Listening to you

The Council's consultation process will be ongoing and must reach all sectors of the community, sometimes the views of hard to reach groups such as young people, ethnic minorities and people with disabilities are not heard unless special measures are in place to reach them. Whilst the NHDC Citizens Panel will represent all these groups it is possible that some of the surveys related to the FSR may not have included them.

In addition to consultation the council will strive to improve on Best Value performance indicators as appropriate, will improve its CPA rating and increase efficiency.

7.0 North Hertfordshire D. C. Anti Social Behaviour Guidance and Procedure Protocol

7.1 This short document describes the introduction of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 and defines what is meant by the term. It offers a list of examples of ASB which it says is not exhaustive. The list includes fly tipping, graffiti and litter but not fly posting, abandoned vehicles or dog fouling (these may have been omitted because they are not deemed an issue in North Hertfordshire. The document goes on to describe the 'multi agency approach' taken by the North Hertfordshire ASB task group and the role of the ASB officer. Whilst other agencies such as the police and the probationary service are specifically mentioned there doesn't seem to be any reference to the CDRP

7.2 Comparison to other local authority ASB Policies

In the absence of any more detailed North Herts ASB policy document there is a wealth of good practice elsewhere. Some examples include involving the prevention of ASB through Mediation, Warden Patrols, Diversionary Activities, Acceptable Behaviour Contracts(ABCs) Designing out crime and some of it about the actions that follow ASB - injunctions, ASBOs ABCs voluntary agreements, demoted tenancies, possession orders, exclusion from waiting lists (housing) noise abatement orders and of course Environment and street scene issues such as litter, dog fouling, flyposting, abandoned vehicles, graffiti and fly tipping.

There should also be a reference to the role of the council and RSLs as landlord and the powers which are available to them some of which are referred to above.

7.3 ENCAMS can supply examples of good practice if required.

8.0 North Hertfordshire Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership Strategy

8.1 The North Herts Community Safety Strategy lists Anti Social Behaviour as its number one priority. The Audit showed North Herts to be a low crime area where most of the crime is perpetrated by males aged between 18 and 24. In terms of perception residents didn't think that North Herts had worse crime levels than other parts of Hertfordshire but there were higher levels of fear of crime. Graffiti, Litter and rubbish left lying around, vandalism and groups of youths were thought to be a problem.

8.2 An ASB task Group has been set up. Partnership working included Registered Social Landlords and the methods used were CCTV Anti Social Behaviour Orders, Acceptable Behaviour contracts and Parental Guidance Agreements. Tables indicate clearly the wards where Arson, graffiti and Flytipping are a problem but they are not broken down to super output area. It may well be that officers consider this level of detail in other for a. Many councils have found that by mapping the incidence of these activities hotspots can be identified and resources targeted in a more sophisticated way.

8.3 The Community Safety section of the Community Plan indicates that consultation with residents showed ASB to be a high priority and accordingly the ASB task group has been established and CCTV installed. In the Planning context the Council is specifically addressing Flytipping, graffiti and abandoned cars.

8.4 The North Herts CDRP Strategy refers to some of the national priorities and strategies that influence at the local level, although there are a number of omissions of key national policy relating to low-level antisocial behaviour issues. The strategy makes reference to the Antisocial Behaviour Act (2003) and at some point the CDRP needs to consider envirocrime issues in the context of the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act (CN&E Act) (2005).

The strategy should make reference to the full range of PSA Targets relevant to Envirocrime and Anti Social Behaviour which are given below;

8.5 Home Office Targets

PSA 1 Reduce crime by 15%, and further in high crime areas, by 2007/08.

PSA 2 Reassure the public, reduce the fear of crime and antisocial behaviour, and building confidence in the Criminal Justice System without compromising fairness.

PSA 3 Improve the delivery of justice by increasing the number of crimes for which an offender is brought to justice to 1.25 million by 2007-98

PSA 4 Reduce the harm caused by illegal drugs, including substantially the number of drug misuse offenders entering treatment through the Criminal Justice System.

PSA 6 Increase voluntary and community engagement, especially amongst those at risk of social exclusion.

8.6 Office of the Deputy Prime Minister

PSA 1 Tackle social exclusion and deliver neighbourhood renewal working with departments to help them meet their PSA floor targets, in particular narrowing the gap in health, education, crime, worklessness, housing and liveability outcomes between the most deprived areas and the rest of England, with measurable improvements by 2010

PSA 8 Lead the delivery of cleaner, safer and greener public space and improvement of the quality of the built environment in deprived areas and across the country, with measurable improvements by 2008

Furthermore there are also a number of **liveability best value performance indicators** that are not mentioned in the CDRP's strategy that ENCAMS would have expected to have seen referred to in view of the changes of legislation. These are:

BV199 (a) – litter & detritus

BV199 (b) – graffiti

BV199 (c) – flyposting

BV199 (d) – fly tipping (measured through Fly-Capture database)

BV206 (ii) – deliberate fires: primary (in vehicles)

BV218 (a) – abandoned vehicles (number of reports investigated within 24 hours)

BV218 (b) – abandoned vehicles (number legally removed within 24 hours of report)

9.0 Leisure and Environmental Services – Service Plan 2005/06

9.1 This draft document gives a background to the department, reports on the successes and lessons learned in 2004/5 and sets out the Performance Targets for 2005/6. The service plan is currently being redrafted following the amalgamation of leisure and Environmental Services Departments in November 2005.

The new department is responsible for the following services;

- Swimming Pools and Indoor Sports Facilities
- Markets
- Capital Projects
- Grounds Maintenance
- Engineering and Parking Services
- Waste Management and Street Cleansing

9.2 A table describes the services provided under Waste Management and Street Cleansing and notes that these activities are high profile and deliver a service to every household in the district. The service is contracted out to Service Team Limited. The contract is monitored by an in-house team. Operational details are not given in the service plan but will be found in the contract itself.

9.3 The Service Plan reviews performance against targets and all those listed that relate to street scene are on target or have been met. The document emphasises the need for partnership working, being customer focussed, adopting a performance culture and demonstrating continuous improvement.

9.4 The plan is clearly linked to the Vision, Mission and Strategic Objectives of the NHDC Corporate Plan 2005 – 2015. There are also references to the Fundamental Streetscene Review and the Review of the Waste Management, Recycling and Street Cleansing Contract prior to developing a strategy for 2006 – 2012.

9.5 Key Milestones are related back to the strategic objectives in the Corporate Strategy and in this way the service Plan is well integrated into other NHDC strategic documents.

10.0 Draft Review Document

10.1 The draft internal report on the Fundamental Service Review of NHDC's Street Scene services states that the main purpose of the review was to establish whether the Street Scene Services will achieve the strategic objectives as set out in the NHDC Corporate Plan. It goes on to say that because street scene services cut across several departments this review is thematic and strategic as opposed to detailed and operational. This reflects the approach which is encouraged in the Audit Commission guidance notes (ACKnowledge; Learning from audit, inspection and research). The methodology used to conduct the review followed that suggested in the Best Value handbook.

After listing the service areas which were included in the review the report describes the membership of the Review Team which is broad and appears to include all the departments which are involved in the delivery of street scene services. The review Team met eight times. An officer group was also convened and this met six times.

- 10.2 ENCAMS is named as 'critical friend' whose duty is to robustly challenge the scope of the review, provide good practice and make further recommendations.
- 10.3 The report on the FSR then gives information regarding current performance in Waste and Recycling, Street Cleanliness (Using BV 199) and Community Safety (BV 127 and 128) In each case current performance was compared with other Hertfordshire councils and with 'near neighbours'.
- 10.4 The cost of providing these services had not yet been included in the draft document.
- 10.5 In conducting the review the review team had addressed the four c's; Challenge, Compare, Compete and Consult. The Challenge element is embodied in this ENCAMS report. The team chose to compare with Broxbourne Borough Council and Braintree District Council both of which seemed like eminently sensible choices and from whom, it appears, valuable good practice has been picked up. The consultation process included a number of different channels. Regular individual surveys are carried out by different service areas. There is regular feedback from the Council's Comments, Compliments and Complaints process. Stakeholder meetings were undertaken and a stakeholder survey undertaken. The Compete element assessed the current method of procurement and looked for opportunities to market test the provision of services.

The findings in the draft report follow the same format;

10.5.1 CHALLENGE - This is provided in this ENCAMS report

10.5.2 COMPARE - The main finding was that an integrated enforcement regime which covered the whole range of Street Scene issues was seen as preferable to the current NHDC situation where each service area offers individual enforcement.

10.5.3 CONSULT - The consultation process threw up a long list of suggestions some of which were very detailed. The main trends to have emerged were around the following issues;

- Community involvement
- Teenagers and young people
- Design issues
- Coordinated enforcement
- Customer services
- Duplication of functions

10.5.4 COMPETE - This was seen to be the most difficult to assess because street scene services cut across many Council functions. Some services (grounds maintenance, waste, street cleansing, abandoned vehicle collection) are already market tested through external contracts, others are not.

10.6 CONCLUSION

The report concludes that Street Scene services in NHDC are well run, and meet customer expectations. The review team felt that the district would benefit from a more comprehensive approach to street scene enforcement and contract monitoring. It also felt that simplified system reporting procedures might be desirable.

- 10.7 RECOMMENDATIONS** - a number of recommendations are listed in an Improvement Plan. In many cases they are very similar to the ENCAMS recommendations at the end of this document where they are I have made a cross reference.
- 10.7.1 Improve our negotiation and delivery of streetscene improvements that are funded from Planning Obligations (S106).
This will be a good mechanism for funding improvements and could potentially have a big impact on town centres.
- 10.7.2 Produce a programme agreed between partners of public realm streetscene improvements in our towns and villages in partnership with HCC, LGCHF and Town/Parish Councils.
This is a logical next step and should achieve the same objectives as ENCAMS recommendations 12.1.5 and 12.2.7
- 10.7.3 Promote policies that require improvements and minimum standards to the physical appearance of our towns, villages and rural areas when development/redevelopment occurs.
The development of a set of guidelines or minimum standards for physical improvements could apply to all parts of the district not just those where development is occurring.
- 10.7.4 Produce a strategy including policy objectives (to supporting our community safety strategy) increase the efficiency of CCTV to NHDC, whilst maintaining/enhancing effectiveness. Strategy to encompass the next 10 years operation.
This will be a good way to strengthen the links between anti social behaviour, local environmental quality and fear of crime. See 12.3.4 and 12.3.5
- 10.7.5 Undertake effective communication with our stakeholders about the services we provide.
This will potentially have a positive impact on public perception see 12.1.1 and 12.1.2
- 10.7.6 Provide a more comprehensive streetscene based enforcement service.
This step is a positive response to the good practice observed elsewhere and a good way to make the most of new opportunities presented by the CN&E Act see 12.3.1
- 10.7.8 Improve community engagement to assist in caring for the streetscene and reporting issues to the Council.
This is a measure which has been adopted successfully by other Councils see 12.2.2
- 10.7.9 Simplify our customer contact arrangements
Many Councils have adopted this model as an efficiency measure there is a fair chance that public satisfaction will be improved too. See 12.1.3
- 10.7.10 Improve the quality and quantity (where needed) of our Parks and Open Spaces
The proposed Open Spaces Strategy will provide an opportunity to work with local people to identify needs, to consult with young people specifically and perhaps to involve local people in the management of facilities as 'Friends Groups'. See 12.1.1 and 12.2.1

10.7.11 Define operational objectives (in line with agreed restructuring policy) of the engineering service and review organisation thereafter.

10.7.12 Improve the quality of public convenience provision through the District whilst achieving efficiency savings.

11. Conclusions

11.1 The Fundamental Service Review of Street Scene carried out by North Hertfordshire District Council between September 2005 and March 2006 has taken a strategic look at the delivery of street scene services which are delivered by a number of different council departments. The review has tried to view the street scene from the point of view of a member of the public and accordingly has included a range of consultation methods from surveys through to stakeholder meetings. The second Stakeholder meeting held on thursday 23rd March 2006 was well attended, the audience were well informed and the debate was positive yet probing. The FSR consultation process may have missed some hard to reach groups such as young people and people with disabilities.

11.2 The preparation and methodology of the review is sound being based on the guidance issued by the Audit Commission. The membership of the Review team was broad and included all the relevant departments. Members were involved in the process from the start in a set of parallel meetings.

11.3 The use of Best Value Performance Indicators in assessing performance was sound and the use of similar data from other Hertfordshire Councils and 'Near Neighbours' was good.

11.4 The relationship between local environmental quality and fear of crime is now better understood but this relationship has not been fully explored in either the service plan or the CDRP strategy. The Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act requires that the CDRP considers the effect of Envirocrime in the production of its strategy. The link between fear of crime and local environmental quality and quality of life issues need to be explored further.

11.5 There needs to be a specific strategy for rural areas and villages involving parish councils. The environmental impact of such things as abandoned cars and flytipping is much greater. Fast food litter dropped from moving vehicles has increased rapidly in recent years. This has affected rural roads especially and is thought to be related to the rise of drive through restaurants.

11.6 The review acknowledges that a range of other agencies impact on the street scene in addition to the Council and if sustainable improvements are to be made then these other agencies need to be involved more closely perhaps through multi agency partnership working.

11.7 There were several references to the quality of parks and public open spaces and some to references facilities for young people. The production of an open spaces strategy will provide an opportunity to look more closely at these areas which the public probably regard as part of the street scene.

12.0 Recommendations

12.1 Consultation and Communication

- 12.1.1 Develop consultation protocols which will ensure that the voice hard to reach groups such as young people is heard.
- 12.1.2 Improve public participation through higher profile campaigning, education and public awareness initiatives.
- 12.1.3 Consider the creation of a single point of contact for all streetscene issues
- 12.1.4 Ensure that the proposed public open spaces strategy includes the street scene.
- 12.1.5 Develop a similar strategy for villages and rural areas

12.2 Public Involvement

- 12.2.1 Encourage public involvement in the management of parks through Friends groups
- 12.2.2 Consider the creation of street leaders/representatives who monitor streets on behalf of the Council

12.3 Enforcement

- 12.3.1 Review and integrate Street Scene enforcement measures in the context of the CN&E Act
- 12.3.2 NHDC might consider issuing and publicising Fixed Penalty Notices for Street Scene offences
- 12.3.3 Consider the role of Street Wardens and CPSOs in the issuing of Fixed Penalty Notices.
- 12.3.4 Integrate Envirocrime and Liveability issues into the CDRP Strategy
- 12.3.5 Give ASB and Fear of Crime a higher profile in the CDRP Strategy.

12.4 Street Scene operations

- 12.4.1 NHDC might consider the advantages of a more integrated approach to the management of street scene operations
- 12.4.2 Make street cleansing more visible and consider bringing back the operative and barrow.
- 12.4.3 Review the training of all street scene staff
- 12.4.4 Consider the creation of a multi skilled hit squad if one does not already exist.
- 12.4.5 Consider area working
- 12.4.6 Devise a strategy for reducing impediments to cleansing such as A boards and parked cars
- 12.4.7 Establish a street scene stakeholder partnership involving agencies outside the Council.

Contact Details

Nigel Tansley Thomas

Regional Director
ENCAMS
PO Box 3019 Norwich NR3 1WZ

T: 01603 615760
M: 07918 616907
E: Nigel.tansley.thomas@encams.org
W: www.encams.org

TITLE OF REPORT: AUDIT COMMISSION REPORT ON PLANNING AND BUILDING CONTROL SERVICE

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING & BUILDING CONTROL

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 To inform Members of the Audit Commission Inspection of Planning and Building Control that was carried out in 2005 with the publication of the inspection report on the 23rd February 2006.
- 1.2 To seek PARC's approval to the Action Plan arising from the Audit Commission Inspection and recommend the Action Plan to Cabinet and Council.

2. FORWARD PLAN

- 2.1 The report does not contain any key decisions and is thus not included within the Forward Plan.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Audit Commission contacted the Authority early in 2005 to advise that a service inspection would be undertaken on the Planning and Building Control Service. The service inspection was one of the first to be carried out for an environment service area which embraced the corporate Value For Money (VFM) principles. The service inspection formally commenced in July 2005 with a request for background information, although Audit Commission Inspectors had been attending Area Committee meetings since the early part of the year.
- 3.2 The formal notification of the service inspection was received on the 7th July and a document store of evidence was required (over 500 documents) by the 22nd July. The Council produced a self-assessment in accordance with the Audit Commission's newly published Key Line Of Enquiry (KLOE) by the 5th August in accordance with their timetable. In late August a round table meeting was organised with key Officers, the Portfolio Holder and the Leader of the Council. A tour of the District was undertaken.
- 3.3 The Audit Commission team were on site in the week commencing the 5th September 2005 and the on-site week constituted a series of meetings with Officers and Members, sitting-in on technical meetings and team meetings and a number of staff focus groups.
- 3.4 In essence, the process that the Audit Commission followed was that of a mini CPA Inspection rather than a traditional audit.

- 3.5 A number of draft reports were received in the period of late October to the middle of January and a further round table meeting was held with the Inspection Team in mid-December to discuss the draft Report. The Council made comments on the draft Report at each stage of the process.

4. ISSUES

- 4.1 The Audit Commission looked at a number of key areas in the inspection of the Service:-

- Speed of determining applications
- Customer satisfaction
- Policy preparation and implementation
- Value of money

4.2 Speed of determining applications

As Members of PARC will be aware the performance of the Planning Control function of the Council in relation to BVPI 109 has been an area of concern in 2002/03 and (to a lesser extent in 2003/04) following acute staff recruitment and retention problems within the Service. This may have been one of the reasons that the Audit Commission decided that a service inspection was undertaken. There have been significant improvements to the performance of the Planning Control Service in the period since 2002/03 and the service now meets and exceeds all the requirements of BVPI 109. The requirement to meet BVPI 109 comes into place on the 1st April 2007. The Council had in any event agreed a series of performance improvement measures, both for the speed of determining applications i.e. BVPI 109 and other matters and this had been submitted to and approved by the Government Office on behalf of ODPM. This series of improvements included a “trajectory” for profiling the improvements to the speed of determining applications and again, these have all been either met or exceeded.

4.3 Customer satisfaction

In relation to customer satisfaction the Audit Commission looked at the BVPI survey (BVPI 111) where the Council achieves customer satisfaction levels within the top quartile of Authorities nationally. This comprehensive survey was set against a limited and unspecified series of interviews with Stakeholders where the Audit Commission concluded that there were a number of areas that were not significantly “sharp”. This was a significant area of debate with the Inspection Team throughout the process and whilst one can always improve customer satisfaction and it is indeed appropriate to seek to do so, the Audit Commission’s view was based on a very limited number of anecdotal comments.

- 4.4 In looking at policy preparation and implementation, the Audit Commission sought to focus on the age of the North Hertfordshire District Local Plan with alterations rather than the effectiveness of this statutory part of the Development Plan. The Inspectors were reminded that the Local Plan was saved under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act and thus has as much weight in law as any more recently approved plan. The policies within the North Hertfordshire District Local Plan are supportive of more recently published national guidance and it is rare for there to be conflict between the

two. The Commission asserts that the Local Plan age is leading to inefficient decision making. It is unclear how they reached this conclusion. The Council's appeal record, which is generally far better than the national average, supports the position that until such time as the Local Development Framework is in place, there are sound planning policies to guide development within the District. The Commission acknowledges that work on the Local Development Framework is progressing well and compliments the clarity of documents produced for LDF. The Audit Commission also considered the Council's position in relation to the development of west A1(M) Stevenage and acknowledged that the Council was robustly defending its policy position. The Commission did not however accept that this was an extraordinary expense forced upon the Council and should feature as such in the assessment of VFM (see paragraph below).

4.5 **Value For Money**

An assessment was made of value for money using both cost and performance data. The Commission concluded that the Service was not offering particularly good value for money as the cost per head of population was £16.87 (2003/04) compared with a District Council average of £14.29. Following from the comments about the cost of dealing with the west A1(M) applications for 2003/04, this amounts to £3.64 per head of population. If this were discounted from the total cost of service provision, the Council would be offering a Planning Service at below the average cost for Districts in England.

4.6 **The Audit Commission's Recommendations**

The extract from the Audit Commission Report setting out the recommendations is attached as Appendix A to this report. A Member workshop was held on the 29th March 2006 to consider the recommendations, particularly those relating to the speed of decision making and the role of the Area Committees. The overwhelming conclusion of that workshop was that Members found it difficult to reconcile the comments in the Audit Commission Report and recommendations with the operation in practice of the Area Committees. Members supported the continuation of Planning as a key function of the Area Committees. It was felt that there may be opportunities to reduce the number of applications that would need to be considered by Committee by reviewing the Scheme of Delegation, particularly where matters are referred to the Area Committees solely as a result of representation being received from external organisations. In some instances these representations are not on material planning considerations and in such circumstances. Members considered that it may not be appropriate for applications to automatically go to Committee.

4.7 An Action Plan has been devised to respond to the recommendations and this is set out as Appendix B to the Report. It can be noted that the Action Plan deals with virtually all matters contained within the recommendations by the Audit Commission within the time frame that the Audit Commission sets out. However, in relation to the VFM issues, the time scale that the Audit Commission identifies does not relate to the Council's Corporate Service and Financial Planning process and hence the time scales here differ. Whilst the Council is not under a statutory obligation to deal with the matters set out in the Audit Commission Report, as a matter of good practice, this is advisable and the Action Plan accords with this principle.

- 4.8 Since the receipt of the Audit Commission Report and as a sharp contrast to the negative approach that the Audit Commission took with this inspection, a letter has recently been received from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister congratulating the Authority on its performance improvements and the removal of the Standards designation. This letter is attached as Appendix C to this report.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no legal implications directly arising from this report. However, the implementation of the Action Plan will certainly have a number of legal implications. Any revisions to the Council's Scheme of Delegation will need to be approved by Council and it is anticipated that this will be presented to Council at its first meeting in May.

6. FINANCIAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 As part of the Council's Service and Financial Planning process for 2006/07 it was identified that there would be savings of £50,000 relating to the cost of democracy. Any decision to retain Planning within the remit of the Area Committees may have financial implications relating to achieving this saving. For planning decisions to be made in a timely fashion and in accordance to BVPI 109, it may be necessary for Area Committees to meet on a more frequent basis with increased costs. A report on Area Governance will be presented to Cabinet in May as identified in the Action Plan and it is at this time that decisions will need to be made as to how to achieve the identified savings.

7. HUMAN RESOURCE AND EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no human resource or equalities implications arising from the contents of this report, except the additional work that will be required to implement the Action Plan.

8. CONSULTATION WITH EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS AND WARD MEMBERS

- 8.1 Councillor Thake is being kept fully informed and involved through the Audit Commission Inspection process and in the preparation of the draft Action Plan. All Members were invited to the Member workshop on the 29th March 2006 where their views have contributed to the Action Plan attached as Appendix B.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 That the contents of this report are noted and that the Action Plan attached as Appendix B is endorsed by PARC and recommended to Council.

- 9.2 Given the current positive response from ODPM commending the Authority on its service improvements Officers request a further meeting with the Audit Commission to put forward these views in relation to the approach taken to the Inspection.

10. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 10.1 To seek endorsement to the Action Plan arising from the Inspection and seek PARC's endorsement to Officers' concerns regarding the outcome of the Audit process.

11. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 11.1 The Council needs to consider the Audit Commission Inspection and to determine how to respond to this. An appeal against the outcome of the Inspection was considered by Officers, however, when this was evaluated, the very limited grounds for appeal would have meant that an appeal was unlikely to change the overall outcome.

12. CONTACT OFFICERS

- 12.1 David Scholes
Head of Planning and Building Control
david.scholes@north-herts.gov.uk telephone: 01462 474836
- 12.2 Norma Atlay
Strategic Director of Financial and Regulatory Services
norma.atlay@north-herts.gov.uk telephone: 01462 474297
- 12.3 Frances Bogie
Head of Legal and Democratic Services
frances.bogie@north-herts.gov.uk telephone: 01462 474460
- 12.4 Kerry Shorrocks
Head of Human Resources
kerry.shorrocks@north-herts.gov.uk telephone: 01462 474224

13. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 13.1 Audit Commission Inspection Report (available in Members' room).

14. APPENDICES

- 14.1 Appendix A - Recommendations in Audit Commission Report
- 14.2 Appendix B - Draft Action Plan
- 14.3 Appendix C - Letter from ODPM

APPENDIX B - DRAFT ACTION PLAN

Improvement	Action	Outcome	By When	Responsible Officer
Planning Applications are determined in a timely and appropriate manner:				
Streamlining planning control procedures	Review of planning control procedures with report to DMT identifying actions	Streamlined procedures improving performance and VFM	30th June 2006	Mary Caldwell
actions to ensure that committee arrangements do not cause delay	Member workshop	Member input into priorities and review process	30th March 2006	David Scholes
	Report to PARC with Action Plan identifying options for recommendation to Cabinet and Council	Opportunity for all Members to consider outcomes of Audit Commission Report and contribute to future options	30th April 2006	David Scholes
	Review scheme of delegation in relation to a)representations contrary to Head of Planning view, b)enforcement authorisation for prosecutions	Reduce unnecessary applications/cases going to committee	30th May 2006	David Scholes
	Undertake further training with Parish Councils on material planning considerations	Improve understanding of planning process to reduce unnecessary applications/cases going to committee	31st July 2006	Mary Caldwell
	Revise Member call in period to 21 days	Reduce lead in time to committee	30th May 2006	David Scholes
	Area Governance Report to Cabinet with review of Area Governance arrangements	Conclusion to Area Governance issues in relation to Planning	30th June 2006	Patrick Candler
Councillors involved in planning decisions receive appropriate further training to develop and update knowledge	Develop a member training programme which covers(a)new members; (b)thematic issues; (c)updates on legislation/best practice; (d)working across committees to share best practice and ensure consistency	Improved member training leading to more efficient decision making at committee and a reduction in successful appeals	30th May 2006	Mary Caldwell

APPENDIX B - DRAFT ACTION PLAN

Clear service, team and individual targets are set and progress against these is monitored, reported on and acted upon:				
Clear linkage from individuals to service, local and national priorities	Service Plan for 2006/7 will use revised corporate template and will relate to national priorities. Team and individual plans will relate to service plan and corporate plan.	Clear 'Golden Thread' from corporate objectives to individual work plans so that individuals know how they contribute to corporate and national aims.	30th May 2006	David Scholes
targets should be specific, measurable realistic and timely with responsibility for attainment	Targets in service, team and individual plans will be SMART with responsibility for each action.	Actions are clear, monitored and delivered in a timely way	30th May 2006	David Scholes
	Monitoring of service plans quarterly at DMT where targets are likely to be revised	Actions are monitored and delivered in a timely way	On-going	Norma Atlay
	Monitoring of team plans quarterly at Service Management Team	Actions are monitored and delivered in a timely way	On-going	David Scholes
That the service sharpens its customer focus to ensure that the service is tailored to the needs of residents:				
Engage a full range of stakeholders in the formulation of clear and measurable service aims and monitoring and reporting performance against these	Review of Planning Service Charter in consultation with stakeholders through a newly formed Planning & Building Control Customer Panel	Service Charter developed in consultation with Stakeholders	31st July 2006	David Scholes
	Review and monitoring of service aims achievements on an annual basis involving the customer panel and Portfolio Holder	Monitoring and review of service delivery in consultation with stakeholders to sharpen customer focus	Annual	David Scholes

APPENDIX B - DRAFT ACTION PLAN

Investigating reasons for dissatisfaction and reporting these back to the public so they know what changes have been made in response to comments and complaints	Corporate 3Cs process fully embedded. 3Cs reported to and monitored by DMT on a monthly basis.	DMT aware of 3Cs and Ombudsman issues to enable any patterns or problem areas to be identified early. Challenge at DMT relating to complaints and action taken.	On going	Norma Atlay
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APPENDIX B - DRAFT ACTION PLAN

	Implement action log at DMT	DMT monitoring implementation of actions	28th Feb 2006	Debbie Duxbury
	Develop corporate definition of "Justified Complaint" and incorporate it into the 3C's system.	To clarify which complaints are classed as justified.	31st July 2006	Neil Sloper
Ensuring the service is fully accessible with particular attention to website organisation, arrangements for reception and attending committees	Implementation of new web site	Clear and useable website which meets Government targets for e-enabled planning services	30th May 2006	Gary Bell/David Scholes
	Implementation of new reception facilities and customer service centre	Improve accessibility to service information	30th September 2006	Gary Bell/David Scholes/Barrie Jones
	Committee information regarding planning applications on web site	Improved information about applications which will be determined at Committee	30th March 2006	David Scholes
That a systematic approach be taken to improving value for money:				
Using comparative data to identify areas where performance is low compared with other councils	Analyse cost and performance data for Herts Authorities, CIPFA near neighbours and ODPM Planning Improvement group	Clear understanding of cost/performance relationship and identification of areas where performance is low.	30th September 2006	Norma Atlay/David Scholes
Identifying and implementing actions to improve VFM	Development and implementation of action plan including SMART objectives for consideration through the Challenge Board process	Improved VFM	31st October 2006	Norma Atlay/David Scholes
Managers and Councillors using cost and performance information to drive up performance	Reporting Action Plan to PARC	Improved VFM	31st October 2006	Norma Atlay/David Scholes

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 details the draft outline of the Best Value Performance Plan 2006/07 (see Appendix A).

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 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.

- 3.13.2 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.

3.1

- 3.13.3 It is important therefore that the BVPP is not developed in isolation from the Authority's overall business planning, and will therefore contain references to the Corporate Plan and Service and Financial Planning processes.

3.4. BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE PLAN

- 3.14.1 The BVPP will be in the A4 format used in previous years. The front and rear covers of this report will follow the format of the BVPP summary recently published.

3.1

- 3.14.2 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.

- 3.14.3 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:

3.1

- '(a) A brief summary of the authority's strategic objectives and priorities for improvement. This should reflect its corporate/business planning processes and 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.'

3.14.4 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.

3.1

3.14.5 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 strategic objectives. This will also align 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.

3.5. PROCEDURAL NOTE

3.15.1 Due to the timing of various Committee meetings, and in order to meet the statutory deadline of 30 June for publication and distribution of the document, it has been agreed with the Leader of the Council that the report is drafted, awaiting importation of the Performance Information for the year end, and submitted to PARC members well in advance of their 26th April meeting in order to gain their approval of the document. This will enable the paper, plus PARC comments, to be submitted in time for 25th April Cabinet and onward to Council on 16th May, which whilst it is the Annual Council meeting, will give final approval in time to proceed with the publication by the deadline. The Council will be audited on its ability to meet the deadline of 30th June: this is measured externally so inability to deliver by the due date could potentially harm the reputation of the Council.

3.6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.16.1 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.

3.7. FINANCIAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 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.
- 7.2 The resources in terms of overall performance and service delivery will be considered within the service and financial planning/budget setting framework.

8. HUMAN RESOURCE AND EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

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

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

- 3.19.1 Not applicable.

3.10. RECOMMENDATION

- 3.110.1 PARC is asked to:

Agree that the draft outline proposed for the Best Value Performance Plan 2006/07 will be used as a basis for the final version.

3.11. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

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

3.12. APPENDICES

Appendix A: Outline Best Value Performance Plan 2006/07

3.13. CONTACT OFFICERS

Liz Green
Head of PPP
liz.green@north-herts.gov.uk
01462 474230

Sarah White
Performance Manager
sarah.white@north-herts.gov.uk
01462 474659

TITLE OF REPORT: UPDATE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NHDC WEBSITE

REPORT OF THE STRATEGIC DIRECTOR OF CUSTOMER SERVICES

1. SUMMARY

1.1 To present an update on the implementation of the Council's website.

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 As part of the service@north-herts programme, the new website was planned to be implemented on 27th March 2006. This was a very challenging deadline and was set to ensure new functionality was available in order to demonstrate the Council was making progress on its score for BVPI 157 (number of transactions available electronically).

3.2 Unfortunately, it was necessary to delay the go-live date to mid May owing to a number of technical issues which compromised the effectiveness of the new website.

4. ISSUES

4.1 Planning Functionality

4.1.1 The most significant issue was the loss of functionality around the planning process. During the migration of content from the old site to the new site, it was established that the process used by the Planning Service to allow customers to track applications on-line could not be easily transferred to the new web site. This was because it was held on a separate database within the hosted web site and used technology that was not supported in the new web site.

4.1.2 This process used by the Planning Service was not ideal, as it involved a considerable amount of manual work each day by a specified officer to download the relevant data onto the database within the hosted system. This was however, the best solution with the technology available.

- 4.1.3 The most efficient way of working is to use a specific module from the supplier of the Council's planning system – Plantech. This module has now been ordered. However, it cannot be implemented until the beginning of May.
- 4.1.4 The Council did consider the option of re-creating the existing solution within the new website. It also considered linking the new website to the relevant part of the hosted site. Both these options had cost and resource implications and were discounted in favour of the purchase of the relevant planning module.
- 4.1.5 The Council also considered moving forward without the planning functionality. However, this was discounted as it would have resulted in a reduction in our Pendleton points (criteria used to assess on-line planning) which in turn would have jeopardised funding from the planning delivery grant and the Council's BVPI 157 score.

4.2 BVPI 157

- 4.2.1 The Council has achieved a BVPI 157 score of 80.04% which meets the agreement we made with the ODPM when it became apparent we would not meet the required 100% by 31st December. This alleviated the pressure to go live with the new website on 27th March 2006.

4.3 Other technical issues

There are a number of other technical issues to resolve before the website can be transferred to a live environment.

- 4.3.1 The Council requires the new website to meet a range of accessibility standards. The present website meets the baseline requirements. However, it is a pre-requisite of the new site to achieve higher standards. Work is progressing in this area.
- 4.3.2 The Council has jointly procured (with several other Councils in Hertfordshire) speech enablement software for the website. This effectively talks through the website and attached documents for people with sight impairment or other disabilities. It is intended to go live with this feature available rather than adding it at a later date.
- 4.3.3 The website still needs a level of volume and stress testing to ensure its resilience. A testing plan is being drawn up and will be executed once the key features and functionality are available.
- 4.3.4 The search function is not complete.
- 4.3.5 The A to Z of services is still being constructed. This will include the addition of all relevant key words to optimise the search capability.
- 4.3.6 There remain several design issues that need to be addressed. Whilst relatively minor, these may compromise the user experience and may cause negative opinions to be formed.
- 4.3.7 It is intended to add a number of electronic forms to the website in order to improve the Council's BVPI 157 score and to provide greater customer choice when using the website. Work is underway in this area and the services requiring electronic forms have been prioritised.

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INFORMATION NOTE: PERFORMANCE INDICATOR PE34 – BUS PERMITS UPDATE

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING AND BUILDING SERVICE

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Please find below information provided previously to PARC concerning Performance Indicator PE34.

Justification for the deletion of local performance indicator PE34 in 2006/07

This local indicator was introduced in 2004/05 to measure the percentage of all valid bus permit applications received for renewal by 31st March, which are renewed and issued by 15th April, including the issue of new photo-cards. The target date of the 15th of April was set, as the issue of bus permits is time sensitive, as often, more vulnerable members of the public rely on the use of permits for essential travel.

For 2006/07 onwards the Government requires the district council to offer at least free-fare concessions within the district on bus services to over 60s and disabled people (i.e. at no cost to acquire permit). Currently, concessions permit half-fare travel (i.e. also at no cost to acquire permit) within Hertfordshire. Negotiations with the bus operators have been ongoing on the likely costs of a variety of different schemes, from district wide free-fare as a minimum through various options to countywide free-fare. Negotiations have now gone past the date in previous years when scheme and costs have been agreed and permit printing ordered.

The Hertfordshire districts have recently decided to offer a county wide free-fare concession to eligible people. This is a significant enhancement to the current countywide half-fare scheme meaning the take up this coming financial year is likely to be much greater than is currently the case. The implications in terms of administering the scheme and issuing permits are as follows:

- The ongoing discussion process means that the order to print permits and photo-cards is later than usual, so it will be unlikely that re-issuing existing permits will be complete by the 15th April.
- The volume of people taking up the free concession is likely to increase significantly (currently around 35% of eligible population, c8500) reflecting the increased benefit of free-fare travel (estimates suggest take up may reach 85% of eligible population c19,000, we estimate c15,000 for NHDC). It is likely that a significant amount of these new applications will be received at the same time we are seeking to issue renewals.
- In terms of customer service, it is likely that bus operators will accept existing permits for free-fare travel for an overlap period until new permits are issued.

The combined effect of the above factors alone (late printing + sheer volume) means that a 15th April deadline is unlikely to be met. As the scheme is subject to significant change in 2006/07, as is the number of renewal applications in future years, the performance indicator is no longer realistic and needs to be amended to reflect the new situation.

Accordingly, I wish to delete this indicator from 2006/07 and introduce a revised local performance indicator in 2007/08 based on the data from the 2006/07 renewals/applications. Next year we are likely to be re-issuing a far larger number of permits and it will be helpful to anticipate what that workload will be from this year's total issue. This will enable a more meaningful target to be set in 2007/08 and will ensure we are sufficiently resourced to achieve this target.

The re-issuing of permits will continue to be monitored in 2006/07 as per the usual arrangements and the outcomes and baseline data will be available for reporting accordingly.

Signed: David Scholes (Responsible Officer)	Date:
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Indicator: The percentage of annual bus permit renewals issued by the 15th of April.

Target: 98.00%

2004/05: 100%

- 1.2 Please find additional commentary provided by the Transport Policy officer on the issue of bus permits.

UPDATE **13TH April 2006**

Despite late conclusion of the details of the concessionary fare scheme and therefore late printing and posting of renewal forms to 2005/06 permit holders, 100% of all renewal requests received were issued by 15th April 2006.

In terms of quantifying the renewal process, c8300 renewal letters were sent out and we received c7200 renewal requests by the indicator trigger date of 31st March 2006. In actual fact due to prioritising renewals as the bulk of the work, 100% of the 7200 renewals requested were issued by 4th April 2006, 8 working days ahead of schedule.

We are now working to process the new applications of which we have received c500 applications which is equivalent to 5-6 months worth of new applications in past years. In addition, as the scheme is new, we have dealt with a significant increase in telephone calls to explain the limits of the scheme and have had c100 calls from Royston residents alone (re: the loss of the Royston-Cambridge concession).

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That PARC note the information provided.
- 2.2 That PARC consider any further action required to meet performance targets.