

## Summary of recommendations contained in the Audit Letter

Para	Recommendation	Management response
79	E-Government programme – issues still to be addressed including Data Protection, Resources (funding gaps) and taking advantage of the outcome of national projects	<p>Data protection issues in E-Government are a collective problem for all local authorities. The Government recognises this and is itself working towards resolving some of the obstacles. Brent is proceeding on a case-by-case basis and working with its partners in information sharing arrangements.</p> <p>Resource issues are being addressed by the allocation of £1m growth revenue funding for e-government projects and the utilisation of external sources of funding (such as the ODPM funding for IEGs, Partnership funding for BRAIN, CRM National Project etc).</p> <p>The outcomes of the National Projects are being monitored to identify their potential opportunities for the Council. The results of the e-Procurement project are likely to be of particular interest. Brent is already participating in the CRM and Knowledge Management National Projects and working on website developments with the LAWs project.</p>
84	Best Value – the PRU and PwC to liaise to identify the appropriate route for taking the 2004/05 Best Value Performance Plan to members, given the constraints of the Municipal Year. This is necessary in order to achieve the 30 June deadline and hence avoid a partial qualification in the audit report.	Arrangements have been made with Committee Services to ensure a suitable full Council meeting is scheduled to comply with the date for publication.

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84	<p>Best Value – six of our nine Performance Indicator reservations were due to the lack of HR information relating to schools. This weakness has been identified in our previous BVPI audits for a number of years. We recommend that the Council should seek to develop and negotiate a protocol with schools setting out and agreeing information requirements in advance. This should explain the purpose and requirements for the information.</p>	<p>Actions are being taken by EAL and HR to ensure a suitable method for collecting the necessary HR data from schools.</p>
93	<p>Social Services – Our report on systems and procedures for forecasting identified the following areas for review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Private &amp; Residential Placements</li> <li>• In House Foster Placements</li> <li>• External Foster Care</li> <li>• Joint Funding NHS Arrangements</li> <li>• Employee Costs – payroll</li> <li>• Elimination of predicted underspends</li> <li>• Learning disabilities service</li> </ul>	<p>Forecasting of placement costs will improve in 2004-2005 following wider use of the Abacus system.</p> <p>Improving the payroll interface to directorate financial systems is a corporate issue.</p> <p>A number of prior year debt issues are being actively discussed with the PCT.</p>
96	<p>Social Services PCT invoicing – in physical disabilities and older people’s services we identified poor audit trails in relation to the approval of inflationary uplifts imposed by providers and the documenting of continuing care assessment panel decisions. These audit trails should be reviewed.</p>	<p>These difficulties should be largely removed by the use of the Abacus system in 2004-2005</p>
97	<p>Social Services – the Council has been served well by almost all of the temporary finance officers that it has engaged in social services throughout the year. Their contracts have largely ceased and they have been replaced by permanent accountants. Steps must be taken to minimise the risk of the procedures that the interim staff introduced being lost during the changeover.</p>	<p>4 permanent management accountants have been in post since September 2003. A new Assistant Director starts May 2004. Financial monitoring quality is being watched closely, particularly in Children’s services and Adults.</p>