



BEST VALUE REVIEWS PROGRESS REPORT
Completed reviews Years 2003/02 and 2001/2000

POLICY & REGENERATION UNIT
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BEST VALUE REVIEWS

We review all of our services on a rolling basis over a number of years to ensure that the council continues to provide best value. These reviews may examine an individual service, or consider a theme or an issue that cuts across a number of services.

Each review must challenge the service or function, consult with service users and other people involved, compare its performance with other councils and examine its competitiveness.

The review findings are accompanied by an action plan explaining how and when specific improvements will be made. This schedule reports on progress made against the action plans for each review undertaken and completed between 2003/02 and 2001/2000.

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<i>ASSET MANAGEMENT PROPERTY SERVICES & FACILITIES MANAGEMENT</i>		
This review should identify the properties, assets and facilities in the council's control and how these are currently managed. This review should then determine if management structures are effective, economic and efficient. The review should consider strategic use of and need for accommodation and options for improving the co-ordination and strategic management of properties used by the council.		
What has been done	What still needs to be done	Progress
Identify council assets and current tenure and management arrangements, both owned and leased.		The review will determine how facilities management can be delivered in the most economic, efficient and effective way across the council's property portfolio and the focus should be principally on maintenance.
Identify the council's current and anticipated accommodation needs.		Assets and properties will only include buildings and specifically excludes open spaces, schools and housing stock.
Identify the most cost effective tenure and management arrangements to meet these needs.		
Identify appropriate means of co-ordinating tenure and management arrangements to meet the council's strategic needs including income generation (long or short term) from council properties.		

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<i>COMMUNICATION AND STUDENT SUPPORT</i>		
Pupils and Student Services [PASS] aim to discharge the council's responsibilities and provide an efficient and effective customer focused and friendly service that represents value for the community they serve. Essentially the service delivered by PASS can be described as Statutory and Non-Statutory service provision.		
What has been done	What still needs to be done	Progress
<p>It would be feasible for the review to focus on the statutory aspects of the PASS team excluding the non-statutory aspects. This would be less time consuming and provide the stakeholders with comparisons of the PASS team with other comparable Units in other local authorities. However, excluding the non-statutory service will limit the amount of less obvious comparison possibilities. In addition, the inclusion of this area of work will not only inform the stakeholders of the added value contribution made by PASS to the council's overall objectives; it will also serve to recognise the unique roles and responsibilities of all the members of the PASS team. This process will also maximise the opportunity of securing the full participation of ownership of the team within the process.</p>		

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<i>EDUCATION, PLANNING, INFORMATION AND RESOURCES</i>		
The Planning, Information and Resources (PIR) Service, within the Education, Arts and Libraries Department, provides an extremely valuable service to the community albeit mainly out of the public eye. It encompasses five distinct teams: Education Finance, Asset Management, Communication & Student Support, Planning & Data Analysis, and Teacher Recruitment.		
ACTION PLAN/What has been done	What still needs to be done	Progress
The PIR Management Team should immediately devise and implement a policy which addresses the broadening of staff training needs and, as soon as a Corporate Succession Policy is developed, this should be adopted and implemented within the service.	Expected Outcome: Adequate staff cover and succession arrangements exist within PIR	
PIR should seek to undertake regular Benchmarking Exercises with other London Boroughs.	Outcome: PIR is able to learn from Best Practice.	
An IT replacement strategy should be devised and implemented for the service.	Outcome: PIR is able to make the most effective use of IT in delivering its services	
The PIR Management Team should provide their staff with regular information concerning new developments, changes within the Council, the external education environment and in relation to the services' Service Operational Plans.	Outcome: PIR Staff are kept informed of notable developments affecting their service.	
It is recommended the Audit Commission's website is highlighted to School representatives at the next Best Value in Education Group meeting	Outcome: Raise awareness of a useful tool.	
The Asset Management 'Benchmarking Exercise' should be expanded to incorporate costs.	Outcome: Asset Management is able to learn from Best Practice.	
The Asset Management Team should appoint a client-side project manager to oversee and manage the delivery of Education, Arts and Libraries Capital contracts.	Outcome: Education Capital Projects are completed on time and at the expected cost	

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<i>EDUCATION, PLANNING, INFORMATION AND RESOURCES</i>		
ACTION PLAN/What has been done	What still needs to be done	Progress
The Education Finance Team should submit a growth bid for a post which monitors schools' in-year expenditure into the 2003/04 Revenue Budget process.	Outcome: The Council is able to monitor schools' in-year expenditure and act more quickly to deal with potential problems.	
PIR to ensure that the detailed financial information presented as appendices in Financial Reports at Council meetings is more legible to all interested parties.	Outcome: All interested parties find PIR reports more user-friendly.	
The Education Finance Team should work closely with schools to identify possible barriers to achieving 'electronic reporting' and develop a strategy to remove them.	Outcome: Improve accuracy/timeliness of current system and allow a re-direction of current staff resources.	
The Council's Best Value Review Programme should include a proper evaluation of the Early Years Plan and the Council's management of Early Years provision at a future date.	Outcome: Early Years function, within PIR, will be reviewed using Best Value principles.	
The Communications and Student Support Best Value Review should specifically consider the PIR Service's approach to maintaining its IT service provision in-house rather than buying in Corporate IT Support.	Outcome: A detailed overview of the current IT arrangements within Chesterfield House will be obtained.	
The Data & Planning Team should seek to obtain details of Best Practice across London in order to maximise the benefits of the data collected through the Pupil Led Annual Schools Census (PLASC).	Outcome: The Data & Planning Team are able to learn from Best Practice regarding the use and collation of PLASC data.	
The Data and Planning Team should seek to put in place a central pupil database to allow the authority to record individual pupil attainment data throughout their time in school.	Outcome: Allows the Council to make best use of data available.	

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<i>EDUCATION, PLANNING, INFORMATION AND RESOURCES</i>		
ACTION PLAN/What has been done	What still needs to be done	Progress
Teacher Training Agency (TTA) funding for the Council's Senior Recruitment Officer is due to end in 2003/04. The Council should provide sufficient resources to maintain this post after this time.	Outcome: Ensures valuable service for schools is capable of continuing.	
An evaluation of the recruitment of overseas teacher's initiative should be made and a report produced on its level of success.	Outcome: Allows Members to fully evaluate this new initiative.	
PIR should monitor any increased service requirement, arising from the Education Bill 2002, following the legislation's implementation in July 2002. Any significant increase in workload should be costed and reported to Members during the 2003/04 Council's Revenue Budget setting process.	Outcome: Ensures PIR is able to provide a service which meets the Council's statutory obligations.	

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<i>INCLUSIVE EDUCATION SERVICES</i>		
The review will look in detail at the work of the Education Welfare Service and how it supports those pupils at risk of under achievement and educational exclusion. It should examine the effectiveness of the links between the Education Welfare Service and other Inclusive Education Services, specifically the Ethnic Minority and Travellers Achievement Project, Brent Education Support Service, the Inclusive Education Projects Team but also other services offering support to pupils at risk of educational exclusion.		
What has been done	What still needs to be done	Progress
Update and reissue the School Attendance Policy and the Education Welfare Service Staff Handbook	Updating and re-issuing the school attendance policy, and the staff handbook.	
Produce a set of posters covering attendance issues in different appropriate community languages.	The Review Team also noted that arrangements need to be put into place to publish school attendance guidance by way of letters and booklets and other information in community languages. The review team was surprised to discover that guidance letters and booklets distributed by EWS were printed only in English. Also, it was understood that the home-school agreements were printed only in English. Given the ethnic profile of Brent residents, the review team recommended that an exercise be undertaken to translate these documents into appropriate community languages.	
Support Education Welfare Officers to gain professional qualifications	Supporting Officers to gain professional qualifications, possibly from the University of the West of England which whom the EWS has close links, will add considerably to the motivation of staff and increase the effectiveness of the service. The intention is to nominate one officer annually in such a venture.	

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<i>INCLUSIVE EDUCATION SERVICES</i>		
What has been done	What still needs to be done	Progress
<p>Recruit an additional Educational Welfare Officer to increase support for Primary Schools in improving attendance and punctuality</p> <p>Recruit an additional Educational Welfare Officer to improve strategic and partnership working with key agencies</p>	<p>The Review Team strongly considered that the range of services currently expected of the EWS would be more effectively carried out if the service were realistically staffed with the appointment of three additional members of staff.</p>	<p>One EWO would work strategically and in partnership with key agencies. The second would increase support for Primary Schools. The third would develop and implement a regular programme of site visits to employers who hired children for work.</p>
<p>Produce school attendance guidance (letters, booklets) and other information in community languages</p>	<p>A programme of site visits to employers likely to be employing children will be constructed, making sure that legislation in terms of health and safety, child protection and licences is followed and not breached</p>	
<p>Recruit an additional Educational Welfare Officer to develop a regular programme of site visits concerning children on part-time employment and entertainment licences making sure that legislation in terms of health and safety, child protection and licences are adhered to</p>	<p>Guidance will be provided to advise children and employers of the requirements concerning child employment so that employment licences can be issued as and when they required.</p>	

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<i>LIFELONG LEARNING</i>		
<p>Summary</p> <p>The Lifelong Learning review is examining the council's role in the provision of education and training to people over the age of 19. This includes the Brent Adult and Community Education Service (BACES) and some parts of our Library Service.</p> <p>Consultation with users has shown that there is a high level of satisfaction with BACES and the Library Service. However, there is room for improvement in course information and advice, facilities and materials, opening hours, disabled access and facilities, and widening participation. The consultation highlighted the importance of outreach work to meet learning needs and raise awareness. Comparison with other local authorities suggests that we are relatively successful in reaching those residents that do not traditionally participate in learning.</p>		
What has been done	What still needs to be done	Progress
<p>Development of a concordat with the College of North West London</p> <p>Carrying out a practice inspection of BACES in preparation for inspection by the Adult Learning Inspectorate</p> <p>Fully operational website with up to date course information</p> <p>BACES Advisory Board reviewed and discontinued</p> <p>Lifelong Learning Coordinator appointed for Library Service</p> <p>Successful bid to Learning & Skills Council for capital funding to improve facilities at Carlton Centre</p> <p>Library opening hours increased in December 2002 and September 2003</p> <p>Management structure of Lifelong Learning & Cultural Services reviewed</p> <p>Lifelong learning objectives, priorities and targets reviewed</p>	<p>Consultation into learning needs of elderly residents</p> <p>Development of family learning strategy</p> <p>Develop an on online enrolment form</p> <p>Establish benchmarking club</p> <p>Review physical network of adult education centres</p> <p>Programme of work for Lifelong Learning Coordinator in Library Service e.g. study strategy, lifelong learning strategy, staff training etc</p>	<p>Family learning strategy to be reviewed in conjunction with Early Years BVR and changes in response to recent Green Paper Network to be reviewed as part of Council review of configuration of public facing services</p> <p>Lifelong Learning Coordinator in post from November 2003</p>

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PAYROLL & PENSIONS		
<p>There are approximately 6000 staff working for the council and schools in Brent. The Payroll and Pensions Services are provided by two small teams in partnership with external contractors.</p> <p>A survey of half of our employees found that most thought their pay slip was accurate, liked its format and were generally satisfied with the service. An excellent response was also given for the Pensions Service, but recently retired staff would have welcomed advice and support before leaving. Both the Payroll and Pensions Services regularly compare their costs with other London boroughs, allowing us to recognise where savings can be made.</p>		
What has been done	What still needs to be done	Progress
Identify lead Officer to take forward the Best Value Action Plan Identification of support officers to lead on specified areas of Action Plan Project Plan produced and implemented Accountability for Service Improvement remains with the Director of Finance	Done Done Done Agreed	Adoption of Action Plan Payroll and pensions remains part of Brent Financial Services
Expansion of Service Improvement plan	Ongoing - included in Service Development Plans. To be reviewed and updated Sept/Oct 2003	The existing functions of the Payroll and Pension Service are continuously reviewed building on the existing improvement plans
Reduction in duplication of Management roles Increased Staff capacity and efficiency Performance Management System Implemented	Completed	An investigation is undertaken to review management and staff structure and tasks performed by the service teams to take on board increased efficiencies and Performance Management

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<i>PAYROLL & PENSIONS</i>		
What has been done	What still needs to be done	Progress
Produce a Specification for Bureau Service and Fully Managed Service for Payroll Service Development of new Specification for Pension Service Analysis and conclusion forms part of new specification	Completed Completed Completed - Contracts awarded	Specification is developed for the work currently performed by Itnet and the Payroll and Pension Service A specification is developed over the next 12 months for the work currently performed by LPFA based on a Fully Managed Service to test the cost benefits to the Council
Working Party established with representation from Human Resource	Weekly payroll to cease by December 2003	The Council promotes moving weekly paid staff to monthly to reduce the number of payrolls from 6 to 5 which will increase staff capacity and improve efficiency.
Ascertain customers views, comments and suggestions Assess ability to utilise electronic communication across the Council	Ongoing Progress being made – should gain momentum after implementation of new payroll system Self Service available when new system implemented	The possibility of service units and schools submitting data on-line to reduce the volume of manual processing and checking is explored Investigation is conducted to establish the feasibility of providing pay slips electronically to all employees through the Council's e-mail
Joint Working Party to be established with Lead Officers within HR for Information and for Single Status	Group formed from HR and Payroll staff to deal with related matters	Joint-working arrangements with the Human Resource Unit particularly with regards to the implementation of Single Status to

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<i>PAYROLL & PENSIONS</i>		
What has been done	What still needs to be done	Progress
Continue to monitor levels of customer satisfaction with annual surveys	Pension's survey completed Jan 2003. Further payroll survey to be sent	Various method of effectively communicating with customers is established and utilised
Develop Staff Seminar for pre retirement and post retired staff	Developed - First seminar to take place 1/10/03	
Translations of written communication into community languages	We intend to use resources of the Employers Organisation as and when required.	
Project Management for Marketing Implemented	Still outstanding – to be reviewed once new payroll system up and running.	A Marketing Plan is produced and implemented with the aim of attracting new business by winning back contracts with some of the schools and/or bidding for contracts to manage services from neighbouring authorities

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TRANSPORTATION & PARKING (INCORPORATING HIGHWAYS MAINTENANCE REVIEW)		
<p>The council's Transportation Service is responsible for transportation strategy, the design and construction of roads, traffic management, controlled parking schemes and contributions to major regeneration projects. The Parking Service manages car parks and enforces parking restrictions within the borough. This review also incorporates the previous review of Highways Maintenance. The parking priorities for the council are to enforce parking restrictions effectively and to introduce new controlled parking zones to limit commuter parking and reserve space for local residents.</p> <p>Consultation undertaken as part of this review revealed that both Transportation and Parking Services need to communicate more effectively with staff and with residents. Many residents are critical of the Transportation Service, an outcome by no means unique to Brent. Residents have emphasized the need to improve public transport, although this is not something within the council's direct control</p>		
What has been done	What still needs to be done	Progress
TRANSPORTATION AND PARKING ENFORCEMENT JOINT ACTIONS		
Examine the current working relationship between Transportation and StreetCare, with a view to improving cross service links.	Audit Commission Report published in July 03 Project Plan being prepared.	
Explore the opportunities for Parking Enforcement to work more closely with the other street scene functions of the StreetCare Service Unit.	Audit Commission Report published in July 03 Project Plan being prepared.	
Establish the Consultation process for CPZ and non-CPZ schemes involving continuous improvement.	Completed.	
Produce and distribute information leaflets detailing the Council's position on transportation issues, and incorporate processes for reviewing the effectiveness of these.	Project Plan being prepared. Others to leaflets to follow at a later date.	Interim Local Implementation Plan information leaflet in preparation.
Publish details of approved parking schemes using the most appropriate methods, including web sites.	Audit Commission Report published in July 03 Project Plan being prepared.	
Increase the use of the Council's web site for the dissemination of information, concerning transportation issues and parking enforcement.	Audit Commission Report published in July 03 Project Plan being prepared.	

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<i>TRANSPORTATION & PARKING (INCORPORATING HIGHWAYS MAINTENANCE REVIEW)</i>		
What has been done	What still needs to be done	Progress
TRANSPORTATION AND PARKING ENFORCEMENT JOINT ACTIONS		
Assess the use of call monitoring data, using appropriate technology, to improve the telephone response rates.	Transportation - Initial Telephone data being examined and Project Plan being prepared.	StreetCare - Work has been undertaken on Pyramid House telephone system. Parking Enforcement has been segregated from StreetCare and performance indicators are now published separately.
Develop a computerised asset register of existing signs and lines, which could be shared between Parking Enforcement, Transportation and Highways & Emergency Operations.	Dependant upon outcome of bid for additional revenue.	A bid is being made for additional revenue of £150k for 04/05 and £50 for 05/06.
Review and challenge the way signs are procured.	To be discussed by Environmental Services Management Team.	
Investigate the opportunity for standardising CPZ operational times.	Committee report to be prepared for presentation to Highways Committee.	
Devise processes and policy for training of agency and temporary staff, to include corporate wide initiative such as disability and equalities awareness.	Audit Commission Report published in July 03 Project Plan being prepared.	Staff have received disability and equality awareness training.
TRANSPORTATION ACTIONS		
Review of Parking Strategy.	Project Plan to be prepared at appropriate time.	Transportation is aiming to complete this Strategy document by the target date i.e. December 2005.
Comprehensive Consultation on forthcoming Local Implementation Plan (LIP).	Project Plan to be prepared at appropriate time.	When advised by Transport for London, expected 2005.
Publicise the results of the consultations of the parking Strategy and the LIP.	Project Plan to be prepared at appropriate time.	Subject to TfL giving guidance on the issuing of the LIP document.

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<i>TRANSPORTATION & PARKING (INCORPORATING HIGHWAYS MAINTENANCE REVIEW)</i>		
What has been done	What still needs to be done	Progress
TRANSPORTATION ACTIONS		
Prioritise the employment of two accident prevention officers.	It is hoped that the employment of these two posts will be completed by January 2004.	Posts advertised on 15 th October 2003.
Investigate the feasibility of delivering road safety education to year 7 children in secondary schools or summer schools.	Pending successful appointment of accident prevention officers. Project Plan to be prepared at appropriate time.	
Investigate the links between accidents and ethnicity, and the personal injury accident targets.	More data analysis required. Project Plan being prepared.	Initial work carried out for Road Safety Scrutiny Committee.
Set up a public transport user's forum, independent from the Council.	Initial discussions with Brent Public Transport Operators taking place. Publicise details of process to identify membership. First meeting by march 2004.	Visits to neighbouring boroughs completed. Stakeholders identified.
Improved Customer Information – Transportation Service booklet.	Audit Commission Report published in July 03 Project Plan being prepared.	
Formalise procedures for correspondence monitoring systems throughout the unit.	Audit Commission Report published in July 03 Project Plan being prepared.	
Develop Career Grading schemes for other teams in the Transportation Unit.	Develop scheme and consult staff.	Being developed as part of Unit reorganisation.
Ensure that all managers receive appropriate management training.	Remaining managers to attend training.	Seven staff have passes level one management course and 3 are on level two course.
Improved Internal Communication.	Audit Commission Report published in July 03 Project Plan being prepared.	
Develop continuous improvement loop through the systematic review of performance indicators.	New PIs to be incorporated into Environmental Services performance monitoring reports. Procedure for the systematic review of Pis needs to be developed.	New performance indicators have been identified.
Establish benchmarking activities with other boroughs.	Audit Commission Report published in July 03 Project Plan being prepared.	

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<i>TRANSPORTATION & PARKING (INCORPORATING HIGHWAYS MAINTENANCE REVIEW)</i>		
What has been done	What still needs to be done	Progress
TRANSPORTATION ACTIONS		
Establish a rigorous system where the quality of the consultants work is evaluated against set criteria.	Audit Commission Report published in July 03 Project Plan being prepared.	
Devise processes for regular financial management reports that enable better management of the budget.	Audit Commission Report published in July 03 Project Plan being prepared.	
Provide financial analysis for the purposes of comparison.	Audit Commission Report published in July 03 Project Plan being prepared.	
That mapping out a forward programme of CPZ's with a financial analysis be investigated.	Audit Commission Report published in July 03 Project Plan being prepared.	
That a programme of post scheme CPZ reviews is undertaken within 6 months of CPZ schemes being completed.	Identification of funding for improvements suggested by reviews.	Programme of reviews has been agreed and is underway.
That a review of the scheme delivery process be undertaken to improve scheme planning, financial control and programming.	Audit Commission Report published in July 03 Project Plan being prepared.	
PARKING ENFORCEMENT ACTIONS		
Improve monitoring of parking contractors on street staff to ensure that Parking Attendants are deployed in accordance with contract specifications.	Monitoring role to be established in new structure.	Structure being reviewed.
Work in partnership with contractors to devise training programmes that ensure Parking Attendants are clearly aware of their responsibilities.	Review Training Programme.	Training Programme now in place.
Alter the carrier in which the penalty charge notice is placed on the vehicle, or handed to the driver, to encourage prompter payments.	Next print order will be for new carrier design.	New carrier designed and agreed.

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<i>TRANSPORTATION & PARKING (INCORPORATING HIGHWAYS MAINTENANCE REVIEW)</i>		
What has been done	What still needs to be done	Progress
PARKING ENFORCEMENT ACTIONS		
Alterations to the layout and wording of the official notifications to keepers / owners of vehicles to persuade them to respond by either payment or appeal, thereby preventing subsequent unnecessary work.	Completed – now in use.	
Establish a robust procedure and monitoring system to ensure that the signs and lines required for parking enforcement are replaced as soon as practical.	Computerised monitoring system to be introduced.	New procedure agreed to be introduced on 1/11/03.
Establish a new on line payment link to enable penalty charge notices to be paid over the internet.	Completed.	
Prioritise the appointment of appeals staff.	Currently being re-advertised.	Initial advertisements filled one post out of three.
A full analysis of parking income to be presented, to demonstrate how the parking regime addresses the causes of the collection rate problem.	Audit Commission Report published in July 03 Project Plan being prepared.	
Continue discussions with the Parking and Traffic Appeals Service regarding the electronic data transfer for appeals.	Pending negotiations between PATAS and the London Boroughs with respect to set up costs.	
Establish target response times to customer representations and appeals, accompanied by an Improvement Plan for moving from the present position to the newly established targets.	Further progress dependant upon filling Parking Appeals Officer posts.	Target set at 4 weeks. Backlog slowly reducing.
Establish a regular and systematic approach to surveying customer opinion on the service that they have received.	Audit Commission Report published in July 03 Project Plan being prepared.	

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<i>TRANSPORTATION & PARKING (INCORPORATING HIGHWAYS MAINTENANCE REVIEW)</i>		
What has been done	What still needs to be done	Progress
PARKING ENFORCEMENT ACTIONS		
Review the operation of the Parking Shops, with particular consideration to customer accessibility, opening times, location and speed of service.	Analyse results and address concerns.	Survey being carried out.
Identify the issues that need to be addressed, to raise the standard of the remaining off street car parks so that the Secured Car Parks Award can be achieved.	Other locations being assessed to form priority plan.	First award received May 03 (St Johns Road).
Establish a means of assessing the income and expenditure for off street car parking provision.	Audit Commission Report published in July 03 Project Plan being prepared.	
That the scope of the local performance indicators for Parking Enforcement be reviewed.	Audit Commission Report published in July 03 Project Plan being prepared.	
Introduce more explicit monitoring of parking contractor performance into current contracts, and develop this further when specifying the new contracts to be let in two years time.	Audit Commission Report published in July 03 Project Plan being prepared.	
Establish formal PI's for enforcement activity, for use in monitoring the contract.	Audit Commission Report published in July 03 Project Plan being prepared.	
Establish means of formally publicising the parking contractor's performance against agreed targets.	Audit Commission Report published in July 03 Project Plan being prepared.	

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<i>VOLUNTARY SECTOR SUPPORT</i>		
To consider the economy, effectiveness and efficiency of the council's support for the voluntary sector. This will include the processes and procedures of grant allocation and monitoring and also the contribution by voluntary organisations to the council's overall corporate objectives. The review will exclude examination of specific voluntary organisations.		
What has been done	What still needs to be done	Progress
The review looked at the need to: Identify and assess the purpose of support to the voluntary sector in terms of the overall corporate objectives of the council.	<p>Improve resource allocation and grant aid Strengthening liaison and joint working arrangements</p> <p>Establishing a Voluntary Sector Unit (now the Voluntary Sector Support Team)</p> <p>Promoting the development of the voluntary sector</p> <p>Improving member-voluntary sector links</p>	
Determine the effectiveness of mechanisms and processes of support to the voluntary sector.		
Identify and assess the purpose of the grant allocation programmes.		
Identify whether the programmes meet the corporate aims and objectives of the council.		
Assess the impact of the programme in terms of the council's corporate aims.		

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<i>VOLUNTARY SECTOR SUPPORT</i>		
What has been done	What still needs to be done	Progress
Assess the effectiveness of grant application and allocation procedures, including comparison between various methods of formal and informal application to the council.		
Assess the arrangements for monitoring value for money of grants allocated and other support provided to the voluntary sector.		
The review will also seek to identify any gaps in provision and / or support to the voluntary sector, not only within the grants programmes but also in other support provided to organisations.		

REVIEWS 2000/01

CUSTOMER SERVICE		
<p>Summary</p> <p>This review looked at how efficiently, economically and effectively we deal with customer queries in person, by phone, by letter or e-mail. The review covered all possible customer contact points including One Stop Shops, the Contact Centre, libraries, area housing offices and sports and leisure facilities.</p> <p>We consulted with customers, councillors and staff, the majority of whom held the One Stop Shops and Contact Centre in high regard. They indicated that customer services staff were helpful, polite and efficient, although they could not always deal with the problem. Residents expressed a preference for longer opening hours. It was also clear that the quality of customer service was inconsistent across the council and a lack of management information prevented effective future planning</p> <p>The Audit Commission inspected the service and found that it was a good (two star) service, but with uncertain prospects of improvement. Their main concerns were lack of available resources and variable levels of management commitment in some Service Areas.</p> <p>In the light of this Members and the Corporate Management Team agreed an updated Customer Services Strategy (Customer Service Standards for Service Delivery) that considered end-to-end customer service across the Council</p>		
What has been done	What still needs to be done	Progress
Updated policies and standards agreed by CMT. Guidance on customer service added to Service Development Plan guidelines	Dissemination of customer service standards and policies and increasing awareness of e-government in order to gain further commitment to customer service from managers and staff	Funding available for printing updated customer care leaflets
Performance indicators agreed as part of the strategy	Procedures for collecting performance information to be established. Benchmark club to be set-up	Letter drafted to potential members of a Customer Services benchmarking club.
Five pilot customer care courses have been run by an external trainer (with funds provided corporately) for managers and staff.	Service Areas to fund customer care courses for their staff.	The pilot courses were well received
An initial survey of Service Area awareness of Customer Care standards and policies has been completed.	Improved consultation and monitoring processes to track trends in customer service	Next survey scheduled for May 2004.
Contact Centre hours have been extended to run from 8am until 8pm on weekdays.	Assess the possibility of extending the Contact Centre hours to Saturday Mornings	Recently started

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<i>CUSTOMER SERVICE</i>		
What has been done	What still needs to be done	Progress
Procedures for ensuring the accuracy and completeness of web-based information have been agreed by CMT	This is a continuing task.	Service Area Communications Officers are playing a key role.
Systems implemented so that on-line payments can now be accepted for Council Tax and Parking fines	Extending the information availability and service accessibility by providing improved on-line facilities	The on-line payments facility is now generally available for Service Areas to adopt as they need
Implemented a CRM (Customer Relationship Management System) that is used by all staff in the OSS and Contact Centre.	Rollout of the CRM (Customer Relationship Management) system to and integration with back office systems to provide better service and improved management information	This has been held up by technical problems with the new version of the software (e-Shop) which has not yet been implemented. However, integration is beginning as part of the corporate complaints project
A programme for making better use of reception points has been completed. This has included the use of themed displays and free phone access to the Contact Centre.	Optimising the use of front-line resources to provide better and more cost-effective services (This has been partially superseded by the new customer services strategy)	Initial plans are being developed to enable first stop access in Libraries and other buildings
A corporate complaints system has been developed as part of the CRM system and is currently being tested	Implementing the corporate complaints system.	This has been delayed as a result of the technical problems with the upgraded version of e-Shop, but should be piloted by the end of 2003.
A pilot business process review has been completed in Private Housing Services A major business process review has been completed as part of the project to bring Benefits processing back in-house.	Reviewing business processes across the Council from a customer service perspective and improving the collection of performance data.	Work is about to start on developing proposals for the help that could be provided to Service Areas on reviewing their business processes.
Brought the EDS Call Centre and Service Desk in house	Further improvements in R&B processing and co-location of the ex EDS and Brent Contact Centre staff.	
Standards implemented and monitored for out of hours telephone answering services and regular monitoring being undertaken.	Implementing improvements in telephone call handling across the Council.	Work has started on identifying the training that will be needed.
	Consider competition	To be considered in 2004/5

REVIEWS 2000/01

ELDERS ASSESSMENT & CARE MANAGEMENT		
We looked at the assessment, care planning, care management and review of care services to older people living in the community. Customers are women over 60 and men over 65, a group totaling over 30,000.		
<p>What has been done</p> <p>Consultation showed that the Elders Assessment and Care Management Service is generally well regarded by staff in Social Services and in the Health Service, although communication with GPs could be improved. Clients are generally satisfied with the level of service received but concerns were expressed about assessments and the written care plans following assessment.</p> <p>An independent audit was carried out on assessment, review, care management and hospital discharge services. The main findings showed an 'average' to 'very good' standard of achievement. Comparisons were made with other boroughs which showed that although there were more assessments per care manager in Brent, other boroughs have occupational therapist input into their care management teams and this provides much needed professional guidance on rehabilitation and the speedier provision of aids and equipment</p>	<p>What still needs to be done</p> <p>There is a need to develop joint care assessment and to improve communication and working relationships with GPs.</p> <p>We also need to review working arrangements with the Occupational Therapy Service to improve access to rehabilitation skills and home adaptation resources.</p>	<p>Progress</p> <p>The review found that the unit is achieving a considerable amount with limited resources. However, staffing levels need to be increased to improve the service for both clients and staff.</p>
A new joint referral format has been developed which will improve communication and discharge assessment for clients awaiting discharge from hospital.	Continue with involvement in the development of the Single Assessment Process and supportive IT systems	Ongoing. Government keeps changing goalposts. Implementation target date now April 2004
Participating fully in Joint Health and Social Care Meetings taking place both locally and regionally (N.W. London) to agree and implement a new 'Continuing Care Criteria' to meet new legal requirements.	Continue with developing working arrangements with the new Brent PCT particularly in relation to Capacity Planning and Intermediate Care	Ongoing. However lack of Intermediate Care Funding and Independent Nursing Home beds create difficulties.

REVIEWS 2000/01

<i>ELDERS ASSESSMENT & CARE MANAGEMENT</i>		
What has been done	What still needs to be done	Progress
Fully involved in a London Older Peoples Development Programme, which involves joint working with 2 G.P. centres and the alignment of 2 Care Managers. Also the secondment of a further Care Manager to work on a pilot Case Finding scheme to enable preventative work and maintaining client's independence.	Explore further bringing the Housing Department and Housing agencies more into strategic and operational planning within Older People Services.	
<p>The re-organisation of Care Management teams, as a result of the Best Value Review and 3 consultation meetings with staff that enabled their views and suggestions to be taken into account. This will improve the Duty System, discharges from Hospitals; more reviews of service provision, and provide a better response to our clients.</p> <p>Obtained additional car parking space for staff to reduce pressure and as part of strategy of improving staff morale.</p> <p>Recent meeting with Brent branch of British Association of Deaf People to develop closer working relationships, training, advice and consultation.</p> <p>Major review of Day Care Service involving voluntary providers in the development of a strategic and operational plan for the provision of integrated day care across the borough for the benefit of Brent residents.</p>	<p>Best Value review identified that staffing levels needed to be increased. This still needs to be done to improve the service for both clients and staff.</p> <p>Some reviews being undertaken by a Home Care Provider but this needs developing further.</p>	<p>Service Unit Manager to continue to encourage participation.</p> <p>When funding available</p> <p>Discussions with all providers ongoing.</p>

REVIEWS 2000/01

<i>EXCLUDED PUPILS</i>		
Summary		
There has been a dramatic decrease in the number of permanent exclusions from schools in recent years. In 1995/6 there were 165 pupils excluded but by 2000/01 this reduced to 75.		
What has been done	What still needs to be done	Progress
Improve systems of data collection.	Link up to IRT mechanisms for children at risk. Ensure participation in development of corporate data sharing.	All schools now providing data on fixed-term exclusions. Improved format for annual summary of exclusions Participating in preparations for IRT requirements.
Raise profile of exclusions team.	Programme of information visits for new Head teachers (September 2003).	Information leaflets for parents and schools updated and on Brent website. Exclusions Officers attending more SENIE annual strategy meetings. All schools informed of revised exclusions procedures (January 2003).
Improve co-ordination of services.	Further development of joint approaches with EPS & SENAS to providing full-time education for excluded pupils with no appropriate placement within existing options.	Monthly information exchange with EPS. Ongoing discussions with Head of Inclusion and Head of SEN on related Issues Links established with Excellence in Cities, Behaviour Improvement Project.
Improve quality of appeals process.	Ensuring consistency of approaches at disciplinary and appeals hearings.	Further reduction in number of Appeals. Exclusion team providing ongoing training to Governors etc.
.Develop links with neighbouring LEAs	Establish agreed reciprocal arrangements for supporting out-borough pupils.	Continuing meetings with neighbouring LEAs.

REVIEWS 2000/01

<i>FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT</i>		
Summary		
This review sought to identify the most effective, efficient and economic system for the financial management of Brent Council. In particular, it examined the performance of our corporate finance section, Brent Financial Services (BFS), and the links it has with finance officers in our service areas.		
<p>What has been done</p> <p>The review found that BFS is run in an effective and economical fashion with users of the service expressing high levels of satisfaction.</p> <p>An independent benchmarking exercise with other London boroughs also points to a service that is performing well and is clear on its direction.</p>	<p>What still needs to be done</p> <p>The service was inspected by the Audit Commission in March 2002 It was assessed as a One-Stop Services with promising prospects for improvement.</p> <p>The Inspection Report recommended: Service Area Teams follow BFS by setting targets for Financial Management. Monitoring of expenditure needs to be better integrated with activity data and other information. Invoices should be paid on time. Benchmarks should be used to set targets. The improvement plan should include indicators, targets and costs.</p>	<p>Progress</p> <p>Significant progress has been made in integrating the Council's financial systems:</p> <p>By the end of 2002/3 there will be just 3 main systems in place.</p> <p>Work has begun on planning the next phase of the improvement plan.</p> <p>Bids have been made against the e-Government budget for necessary funds.</p>

REVIEWS 2000/01

<i>FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT</i>		
<p>What has been done</p>	<p>What still needs to be done</p> <p>The BVR report's main recommendations were: Integration of the Council's financial systems as set out in the Director of Finance's Improvement Plan.</p> <p>Identify and fill skill gaps in financial management across Council.</p> <p>Have a formal settlement of the devolution issue.</p>	<p>Progress</p> <p>HB Consulting have devised 3 financial skill courses to meet the gaps in financial management.</p> <p>These training courses are now being delivered.</p> <p>BFS is working on a Financial Management Information Manual, which will be ready before the end of the financial year.</p> <p>Plans are in hand to re-run the financial skills Audit.</p> <p>The Chief Executive has released "The Next Four Years" which deals with the devolution issue.</p> <p>BFS' SDP for 2003/4 will include Service Plans for the Service based Management Teams</p>

REVIEWS 2000/01

HIGHWAYS MAINTENANCE		
Summary This review examined our Highways Maintenance Service which is responsible for repairing and inspecting highways and footways, and for implementing traffic management schemes.		
What has been done Our consultation revealed that residents are more likely to be satisfied with the condition of the roads than the footways. The council recognises that the footway and carriageway network, with the exception of the principal road carriageways, is in poor condition.	What still needs to be done	Progress As a result, we are planning to increase our spending. We will undertake a survey of the network, increase the frequency of inspections and outline a programme of future work

REVIEWS 2000/01

<i>JOINT EQUIPMENT STORES</i>		
To improve the overall performance of the Joint Equipment Store in relation to processing orders and delivery of equipment and minor adaptations.		
What has been done	What still needs to be done	Progress
Develop IT systems.	Implement tailored stock and performance management system as required by the national agenda for joint equipment stores (Integrating Community Equipment Services).	1) Temporary IT solution in place where orders can be emailed to stores. 2) Improvement in quality of available data.
Improve ordering system	As above	As in 1 above
Improve recycling of equipment	Again this is a requirement of the ICES agenda and improvements to the IT system will enable us to prepare more accurate reports on recycling levels.	
Improve operational efficiency and working conditions at Bryan Avenue Store.	Implement new IT system. Provide new office furniture that meets standards to work with PCs	1) New mezzanine floor installed to increase storage space. 2) Office accommodation extended 3) Redundant stock being removed on regular basis
Formalise arrangement between Brent SSD and Brent PCT ensuring fair allocation of costs.	Working towards pooled fund arrangement in March 2004	1) Regular meeting with stakeholders. 2) Progress in identifying costs and risks
Ensure the views of clients and other stakeholders are regularly obtained	Institute regular user surveys	Improved working relationships between staff at stores and OT staff through out the health and social care community.

REVIEWS 2000/01

<i>JOINT EQUIPMENT STORES</i>		
What has been done	What still needs to be done	Progress
Ensure relevant benchmarking data is obtained and utilised to improve service.	Implementation of new IT system will assist in providing data to inform service improvement	
Secure other service improvements		ICES agenda is driving change at a national and local level. The Stores Service is compelled to modernise as a result.
Ensure a strategic overview is maintained to allow appropriate opportunities for the delivery of the service to be considered.		Strategic and Operational groups have been established to monitor and improve service delivery in line with ICES requirements

REVIEWS 2000/01

<i>LOCAL TAXATION & BENEFITS</i>		
<p>Summary</p> <p>Council tax and business rates are property taxes that affect every household and business in the borough. There are approximately 100,000 liable council taxpayers and 6,000 business ratepayers in Brent. Housing and council tax benefits also affect a large number of households - there are approximately 28,000 households in the borough that qualify for either housing or council tax benefit.</p>		
What has been done	What still needs to be done	Progress
<p>Overall user satisfaction rates were reasonably high, although there was less satisfaction with the letter service than with contact by telephone or personal visit.</p> <p>These visits received a high satisfaction rating but nearly a third of respondents said they would like to see improvements.</p> <p>Ninety per cent thought the council tax bill and accompanying information were easy to understand.</p> <p>The review findings relate to how the services are to be delivered after April 2003 when the current contract expires</p>	<p>The service was inspected by the Audit Commission in March 2002.</p> <p>The service was awarded a 'fair' rating, with uncertain prospects for improvement</p>	<p>On 1st October 2002 Customer Services transferred from EDS to the Council's Local Taxation & Benefits team.</p> <p>It is planned to transfer this to the One Stop Shop in January 2003.</p> <p>The Cashier and Benefit Service transferred back to the Council on 1st October 2002.</p> <p>A tender for a contract for Council Tax & NNDR from 1 May 2003 is currently being undertaken</p> <p>A Benefits Customer Charter has now been produced containing performance information</p>

REVIEWS 2000/01

PARKS SERVICE

The Parks Service review took a critical look at parks management, grounds maintenance, children's play facilities, allotments, sport facilities, lettings and events. Consultation was extensive and gave a clear steer on future priorities. Those consulted were most pleased with grass cutting, flowers and cleanliness. Priorities identified for improvement included toilets, disabled facilities, security, graffiti, park seats and car parking. The review produced a Best Value Improvement Plan which the Parks Service has been implementing and targets have been met to date.

What has been done

The Service introduced a new Customer Charter and was accredited with Chartermark in April 2003.
 The Service successfully transferred from ISO9002 accreditation to ISO 9001:2000 in May 2003.
 The Service retained ISO 14001 accreditation in September in September 2003
 New signage installed at major parks
 Access improvements to major parks i.e. safer, more welcoming entrances
 New public toilet provision at Roundwood Park Café
 New Service policy for the provision of public toilets when leasing existing parks buildings

What still needs to be done

Completion of an Urban Green Space Strategy
 Grant applications for sports pavilions at Gibbons Recreation Ground and Gladstone Park
 Secure funding for the River Brent project
 Further improvements to identified allotment sites
 Completion of an Allotment Strategy

Progress

Sport facility improvements through NOF grant began at Gibbons Recreation Ground
 Restoration of Gladstone Park through HLF grant has commenced.
 New golfing facility at Northwick Park is under construction.