

LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE – MONDAY 14th JUNE 2004

REPORT FROM DIRECTOR OF POLICY & REGENERATION

FOR ACTION

ALL WARDS

The Best Value Performance Plan 2004/05

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Each year, the Council is required to publish its Best Value Performance Plan (BVPP) in accordance with government guidance and by the end of June. The first draft of the 2004/05 plan is attached as an appendix to this report for consideration and agreement by the Executive.
- 1.2 The 2004/05 BVPP will be Brent's fifth published plan. It will look back over the last year and forward over the coming three years. It is a statutory requirement to publish the plan each year. This year the government has made further revisions to its guidance on the content of performance plans in line with the CPA process. The guidance is covered in more detail below.
- 1.3 The style and content of the plan has changed this year in response to the new guidance. Performance information is reported by Corporate Strategy Theme and the tables of performance indicators continue to be reported separately in the second part of the plan.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The Executive are recommended to:
 - 2.1.1 agree the format and content of the draft Best Value Performance Plan 2003/04 as presented at Appendix I of this report,
 - 2.1.2 to present the 2004/05 performance plan to full Council for agreement before the end of June 2004.

3 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 Section 6 of the Local Government Act 1999 requires local authorities to publish a Best Value Performance Plan. The content of the Plan and the date by which it must be published may be specified in an Order from the Secretary of State and its content may also be covered by guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- 3.2 The requirements concerning the content of the Plan previously specified by Order have been revoked and are now covered by guidance issued in March 2003 in circular 03/2003 Local Government Act 1999: Part 1, Best Value and Performance Improvement; and, circular 02/2004 ADDENDUM TO ODPM Circular 03/2003 -

Local Government Act 1999: Part 1 Best Value and Performance Improvement (Guidance on Best Value Performance Plans), as set out in the detail of the report.

- 3.3 The date by which the Best Value Performance Plan must be published remains the 30th June in the financial year to which the Plan relates.
- 3.4 Regulations made under the Local Government Act 2000 identify the Best Value Performance Plan as one of the plans which makes up the Council's Policy Framework. This means the Plan must be approved by the Full Council.

4 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

5 **STAFFING IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 There are no staffing implications arising directly from this report.

6 **DETAILED CONSIDERATIONS**

Government Guidance

- 6.1 The key implications for the production of the BVPP from the 2004 addendum to the 2003 circular are:

General

- 6.1.1 Performance Plans are intended to show local authorities proposals for improvement for the coming year, including how weaknesses will be addressed, opportunities exploited and better outcomes delivered for local people. It will include targets for future performance. The Government believes that all authorities should ensure their improvement planning processes should be integrated with corporate planning arrangements.

Deadline for publication

- 6.1.2 The deadline for the publication of the Best Value Performance Plan will continue to be 30th June each year, or any time up to the end of June.

Intended audience

- 6.1.3 The Government has accepted that the full Performance Plan is not necessarily the most appropriate vehicle for providing information on performance to local people. Rather, the Performance Plan's principal audiences should be the staff and elected members of the authority, groups and organisations with an interest in the authority, and central government.

Relaxation of required content of performance plans

- 6.1.4 In accordance with the Government's approach to deregulation it will no longer be necessary to provide any information that can be obtained from

other sources. Hence it will no longer be necessary to provide the following information:

- CPA scores;
- summary financial information;
- progress in implementing improvement measures over the past 3 years;
- outcomes or impacts arising from those measures;
- progress against Local Public Service Agreements.

6.1.5 However, we may *choose* to include any, or all, of this information in the plan if we consider that it helps improve understanding of improvement proposals, or their context.

Impact of CPA

6.1.6 In line with its approach to delivering freedoms and flexibilities for better performing authorities, the Government is replacing the current ‘one size fits all’ approach with a differentiated approach that reflects CPA categorisation. For *fair*, weak and poor authorities the following requirements are issued under Section 6 of the Local Government Act 1999:

“All authorities categorised in CPA as fair, weak or poor and any district council or single purpose fire authority where a CPA has not reported, must include the following items in their Performance Plan published by June 2004, and in subsequent years:

- *A brief summary of the authority’s strategic objectives and priorities for improvement. This should reflect its corporate/ business planning processes and community strategy.*
- *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.*
- *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.*
- *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.”*

Audit arrangements

6.1.7 The Government intends to discuss the statutory requirement for the audit of the Performance Plan with the Audit Commission and other stakeholders. However, it states that the audit provides validation of BVPIs and reassurance about the application of the Code of Practice, and therefore proposes that it continue in its current form.

Summary of performance

- 6.1.8 The Government also intends to consult on the current arrangements for producing and publishing summary performance information, set out in paragraphs 80-83 of ODPM Circular 03/2003. In the meantime, the council will be required to continue to prepare summary performance information by March each year.

Style, layout and content

- 6.2 The proposed structure of the plan is highlighted below. To a large degree, the structure follows the minimum requirements of the government guidance (as set out in para. 6.1.6) but including summary performance information by Corporate Strategy themes. Key changes compared to the 2003/04 plan are highlighted in paragraphs 6.3 to 6.11.
- 6.3 *Objectives and Priorities* – following the revised guidance, more emphasis has been given to the way the authority forward plans and tackles priority issues. This section includes detail on the Corporate Strategy, CPA, LSP, latest survey results and the Improving Brent Action Plan.
- 6.4 *Consultation* – this is no longer ‘required’ under the revised guidance but some feedback on the triennial MORI BVPI survey is provided under ‘objectives and priorities’.
- 6.5 *Performance* – previously the heart of the plan, there is now no requirement to report progress (and outcomes) on implementing improvement measures over the last three years. Consequently, this section has been reduced to a summary of key performance improvements by Corporate Strategy theme.
- 6.10. *Statement of Contracts* – this was a new requirement in March 2003 - to produce a list of contracts for the last financial year which included staff transfers, and for each to state whether they complied with the Code of Practice on Workforce Matters in Local Authority Service Contracts.
- 6.11. *Performance Digest* – there is no longer a requirement to publish previous years’ data or comparative data. It is proposed therefore to revise the tables to show actual performance in 2003/04 against the target for that year. Targets for 2004/05, 2005/06 and 2006/07 will be included as required. A comments box will remain to allow some explanation of the data as appropriate.

Timetable and method for publication

- 6.12. Local authorities are required to publish their performance plans by the end of June each year. They are also required to have their performance plans agreed by full Council. The earliest date that full Council can consider the 2003/04 performance plan is the 28th June.
- 6.13. The Government requires that the plan be made widely available. Consultation with the council’s auditors has indicated that ‘widely available’ can be predominantly by electronic means through the council’s website. It is therefore proposed that this year the plan will be posted on to the council’s website before the end of June and limited paper copies will be produced for reference.

7 **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

7.1 The following documents were used in the preparation of this report:

ODPM Circular 03/2003: Best Value and Performance Improvement.
ODPM Circular 02/2004 ADDENDUM TO ODPM Circular 03/2003 - Local Government Act 1999: Part 1 Best Value and Performance Improvement (Guidance on Best Value Performance Plans)
2004/05 draft Best Value Performance Plan.

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