

12. Results of Best Value Reviews

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Action Plan Progress of Completed Reviews - Year 1 & 2

Pest Control Service

Aim of Review: The review covered the provision of treatments for rats, mice, fleas, bedbugs, wasps, the prevention of pest-proofing, and public health investigations. Although this is a small service area, it has contact with a large number of customers in delivering important front line services for basic public health provision. This service is carried out in a competitive market with a large number of other competitors.

Chair: L Netherton, Head of Environmental Regulation Service.

**(01752) 304149, Fax: (01752) 226314,
Email: les.Netherton@plymouth.gov.uk**

Actions Completed

The Environmental Protection unit has been restructured and a line manager appointed for Pest Control and the Dog Warden Service.

Charter mark status was achieved in March 2003.

Actions in Progress

The service is now in readiness to secure the continuous improvement and consolidation required by the achievement of Charter mark.

Dog Warden Service

Aim of Review: The review covered the Dog Warden Service and associated animal welfare and health functions. In particular, the review has concentrated on the enforcement of dog fouling legislation and the general control of dogs in the community.

The review has also acted as a corporate pilot to test the Best Value Toolkit and process.

Chair: L Netherton, Head of Environmental Regulation Service (01752) 304149, Fax: (01752) 226314
Email: les.Netherton@plymouth.gov.uk

Actions Completed

The fixed penalty notice system has now been implemented and in excess of 40 fines have been levied during 2002-2003. The application for Charter mark status has been accepted and its award was achieved in March 2003. Bills for homing of dogs can now be paid by streamline electronic payment either at the Civic Centre or at Gables Farm. Revised leaflets have been produced on responsible dog ownership and these will be reviewed and updated on a regular basis.

Actions in Progress

The Service is now in readiness to secure the continuous improvement and consolidation required by the achievement of Charter mark.

Food Safety Service

Aim of Review: The review looked at the Food Safety Service which includes the inspection of premises for food standards and food hygiene, investigation of complaints, sampling of food, legal procedures of local authorities in these areas is monitored by the national Food Standards Agency.

Chair: L Netherton, Head of Environmental Regulation Service (01752) 304149, Fax: (01752) 226314
Email: les.netherton@plymouth.gov.uk

Actions Completed

The Commercial Services Unit was reorganised after the Best Value review to bring together all of the relevant food safety functions of hygiene and food standards. A programme of competency training has taken place to enable the officers to meet minimum specified competency standards. Liaison has been maintained with Plymouth Consumers group and local businesses. Customer satisfaction surveys have now been integrated into the normal business of the Unit. An external peer review has been carried out by another local authority into the service and the food safety service plan as required by the Food Standards Agency has been completed.

Actions in Progress

Further action is required through management review to further increase the performance on the number of premises due for inspection, and to prepare for a full external audit by the Food Standard Authority (FSA). Food hygiene campaigns, at relevant times of the year will be continued and food safety will be the focus of the consumers page in the Evening Herald on regular occasions. Further work is still required to determine Private Sector training of Environmental Health Officers through partnership with local businesses.

Lines and Signs

Aim of Review: To look at the current procedures for implementing the process of ordering work to be done relating to lines & signs. The review investigated how lines & signs were ordered by Transport and how Direct Services Division then processed all aspects of those orders including sign manufacture, post erection and sign fixing. The review sought an economic and efficient system to batch work but still ensure that delivery was timely. It also sought a tracking and communication system that allowed everybody to know where an ordered piece of work was and when implementation was anticipated. The review sought to standardise the procedure for issuing works orders, whether it was new or replacement work and to set time-scales for the completion of works once instructions had been issued.

**For information contact Brian Fossey,
Parking Manager (01752) 306748
E-mail: brian.fossey@plymouth.gov.uk**

Actions Completed

The new system is in place for reporting and checking the replacement or repair of Traffic Order Signs and Markings. The established programme of repair, maintenance replacement and monitoring of car park signs and lines is ongoing. Targets have been established with DSD, performance is being measured and the system is closely monitored.

Actions in Progress (now embedded in the routine operations of Parking & DSD)

While a process is in place for new work associated with Traffic Order Lines and Markings, the process was not active until the Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) Review progressed. Repair and Replacement of Traffic Order Signs and Markings timelines are being met. Work with outside agencies to develop solutions to meet targets is ongoing through DSD. Budget issues remain an open item.

The Best Value Review is complete and procedures in place to meet the standards set. Internal monitoring is in place.

Employment Development

Aim of Review: The aim of the review is to establish the need for the service relative to corporate aims and objectives; to assess the role of the service and views of it among users, partners and stakeholders; to assess the quality and effectiveness of the service; to evaluate the effectiveness of use of City Council resources in delivering the service and to determine the value added to services by direct delivery through the City Council.

Chair: Nigel Pitt, Head of Economic Development & Urban Regeneration, (01752) 304170, Fax (01752) 304852,

E-MAIL: Nigel.pitt@plymouth.gov.uk

Actions Completed

The Service Review Team set up to undertake the original Best Value Review has continued to meet. This has proved invaluable in providing on going external scrutiny of implementation of the Action Plan. Most elements of the Action Plan have now been completed (at least for the current year – some elements will need to be reviewed on an annual basis). Major achievements include the setting up of new financial systems, which provide greater clarity on how the Council's support for training activities is being used and monitored. Reviews of the Council's support to apprentice training, special training needs and employment initiatives have also been completed.

Actions in Progress

Incomplete actions are confined mainly to those where a wider corporate view needs to be taken – particularly in relation to the procurement of goods and services and to the carrying forward of any accrued surpluses. Progress continues to be made on developing a culture of continuous improvement.

COPTe has been awarded a Charter Mark for a second three-year period and also became the first training provider in the UK to achieve the "Matrix" award for advice and guidance.

Residential Care (Older People)

Aim of Review: To consider In-house residential care in the context of the residential care (for older people) purchased by the Local Authority in Plymouth.

Chair: Lesley Reid

The Best Value Review for Residential Care (Older People) recommended that the Council should consider partnering arrangements.

However at the 1st November 2001 Social Services Committee it was agreed that the Council would continue to provide long stay care within 5 homes.

Customer Contact Services

Aim of Review: To set standards which the public can expect, when requesting, querying or complaining about any of the services which the council provides or may be expected to provide. To examine the operation and service outcomes of the council's central switchboard and how telephones are answered, the First Stop service at the Civic Centre and mail handling.

Chair: Ian Vincent, Head of Resources (DSD), (01752) 304687, Fax: (01752) 304732, E-mail: ian.vincent@plymouth.gov.uk

Actions Completed

Since the completion of the review, external and internal signage to the Civic Centre First Stop areas has been reviewed and replaced. Improved telephone systems have been introduced for some services where call volumes are high. A revised A-Z guide of Council Services has been published and placed on the Council's internet site.

A customer care strategy has been developed for adoption by the council.

Actions in Progress

The Council has identified Customer focused services as a major priority in its current strategy. A group of senior managers has been set up to drive through improvements in the area.

Client Transport

Aim of Review: A year 1 cross cutting study to examine the Client Transport function and the background to the entitlement to free transport provided. Currently the Transport Service arranges transport provision to meet many of the council's passenger transport requirements, principally home to school and day centre transport on behalf of the Lifelong Learning and Social Services Directorates. To also examine whether the use of in house transport with vehicles provided by the Direct Services Department represents Best Value.

Chair: Paul Barnard, Transport & Planning Manager, For information contact Ian Miller, Public Transport Manager (01752 307791), E-MAIL: ian.miller@plymouth.gov.uk

Actions Completed

The review was completed in 2001, finding a high level of user satisfaction with the co-ordination service provided. Invest to Save reviews instigated for Special Needs transport and co-ordination of Families and Children transport for Social Services initiated.

Actions in Progress

Invest to Save reviews of Special Needs transport have so far produced consistent savings on contract prices averaging 17%. A rolling programme of reviews continues.

A Social Services Funded Officer post starts January 2003 to seek similar efficiencies for that service.

Press and Publicity

Aim of Review: to review press and public relations

Chair: Alison Stone, former Chief Executive
Richard Longford (01752 307898)
Email: richard.longford@plymouth.gov.uk

Actions Completed:

A press officer has been recruited to bring the full-time staff in the unit back up to two.

New media protocols for the authority have been produced for consultation and approval. These includes a corporate style guide and guide to media relations.

Media monitoring software is now used to improve responses to the media and to better monitor performance.

Actions in progress

The new media protocols are to be implemented and supported by a programme of training.

The service is aiming to work more closely with services to help develop annual service press and public relations plans.

Community Learning: Family Education

Aim of Review: To review the work of the Family Education Service, including Welcome to Nursery, Carry on Parenting, Get Set, Family Literacy and Family Numeracy.

Chair: James Coulton, Head of Community Leisure and Learning, (01752) 307013, Fax: 255945, E-mail: james.coulton@plymouth.gov.uk

Actions Completed

Progress has been made on quality assurance. The service has developed a Quality Assurance Framework based on the Common Inspection Framework, Guidance Accreditation Board and Basic Skills Agency Q Mark quality standards.

Further additional funding has been secured including additional Basic Skills Agency & LSC development money. The service was successful with an LSC/ESF bid for co-financing for £460,000 which will enable the current infrastructure to be maintained and the further development of family and parent learning provision over the next 2 years (December 2004).

Management Information System in place and relevant staff trained.

Actions in progress

Further work taking place to integrate the service within Departments across the Council.

Service Level Agreement and Formula Funding planned to be in place September 2003.

First cohort of learning programmes planned to be accredited in September 2003.

Community Learning: Outdoor Education and Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme

Aim of Review: The Outdoor Education review examines the Centre delivery programme of Plymouth Outdoor Education, the Safety and Curriculum Management Advice and the Staff Development Programme for Outdoor Education launched in September 2000. The Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme is also included within the scope of this review.

Chair: James Coulton, Head of Community Leisure and Learning, (01752) 307013, Fax: 255945, E-mail: james.coulton@plymouth.gov.uk

Actions Completed

The post 16 Summer Activities Programme (2001) identified in the Service Performance Plan achieved national recognition through the DfES. The project delivered in Plymouth highlighted the value of joint working between Outdoor Education, Youth and Connexions services. An internal management review, informed by customer feedback, has resulted in each key member of the Outdoor Education Centre's Management Team having a personal action plan linked to performance targets and indicators. These targets are re-set each year and a significant guide to the work of the Centre. Targets are generally achieved although not all are totally within our control. Demand for using the service has, itself produced a challenging target for 2003/4.

Actions in progress

The re-formation of the Management Committee is suspended pending proposals for the Community Leisure Trust. The development of the Climbing Wall at the Mountbatten peninsula; which is still subject to final lottery bid approval, is six months behind schedule due to some additional planning requirements.

Catering

Aim of the Review: The review covered the provision of Catering Services within Nursery, Primary, Special and Senior Schools across the City as well as the provision of Community Meals to members of the public via Social & Housing Services. Additional service areas included in the review were staff restaurant facilities, function work and vending services.

Chair: G Edwards, Head of Property Services. (01752) 307186. Fax (01752) 307068. Email geoff.edwards@plymouth.gov.uk.

Actions completed

The discreet functions of Social Services Community Meals and the Meals Direct service have been merged, bringing economies of scale and more flexibility and choice to service users. The seven-day week service within Community Meals has been piloted successfully with a view toward greater coverage on a phased basis.

Actions in progress

Lifelong Learning have now commissioned consultants to review the delivery of catering services within schools. The work commenced in January 2003 with initial findings due to be published in the Spring. The integration of Catering services within DSD and Social & Housing Services is now well underway, with a phased introduction rolling out as from April 2003.

Accommodation Management

Aim of Review: The aim was to review the appropriateness of the existing uses of the Council's office accommodation, specifically the so called central office buildings.

Chair: Ian Vincent, Head of Resources (Direct Services Dept). Tel 01752 303687, Fax 01752 304732 E mail ian.vincent@plymouth.gov.uk

Actions completed

Staff are being consulted on accommodation matters through the Building user group meetings which have restarted. The Council's asset management plan has established protocols whereby responsibilities are clarified, decisions are taken more quickly and on a corporate basis and links are made with other best value reviews. The groups implementing these protocols are the office accommodation working party and the asset management group.

Actions in progress

The collection of baseline data for office accommodation is progressing but budgets have not allowed for full suitability surveys to be carried out.

Licensing

The implementation of the Action Plan has been superseded as a result of the transfer of the Licensing Unit to the Environmental Regulation service and the consequential changes to management structure and service delivery that have subsequently been introduced. In addition, the impending major legislative change to transfer responsibility for liquor licensing to the City Council will necessitate further consideration of the structure of the service. This will inevitably impact on aspects of Taxi licensing; in particular service delivery and enforcement, thereby further emphasising the fact that the Action Plan has been supersede.

Sports & Recreation Facilities

Aim of the Review: The review covered the provision and management of sports facilities (including swimming pools, indoor sports, Brickfields and Manadon), sports development and the strategic direction of the service. This review was carried out in comparison to other similar local authority areas.

Chair: S. Snooks, Community Leisure Manager Tel: 01752-307129 Fax: 01725-307003 E-mail: steve.snooks@plymouth.gov.uk

Actions Completed

- Completion of restructuring of Plymouth Leisure
- Completion of review of Community Recreation Team to Sports Development Team
- Improved signage to leisure facilities
- Customer comment/complaint system in place
- Introduction of customer care training

Actions in Progress

- Delivery of Facility Strategy
- Making facilities more welcoming
- Introduction of Quest, quality management system for all
- Set-up service level agreements for all centres
- Write a marketing plan for all facilities.

Update of Current Reviews - Year 1

Leaving Care Services

Aim of Review: *This review aims to examine those services funded by the local authority that explicitly mention care leavers in their service agreements or statements of purpose and function. The aim of the review is to improve the outcomes for what are nationally recognised to be a very disadvantaged group of young people.*

Chair: *Gerry Cadogan, Primary Care Trust (Independent Chair) appointed February 2002. For information contact Richard Porter, (01752) 706478*

Target date for completion of review: *July 2002*

Progress to date

Milestone 3/4 Report to be submitted to July 2002 Challenge Panel. This was submitted and was accepted with some minor amendments.

Update on current situation

It was also noted that as this review encompassed both statutory and voluntary services this had meant that some of the work required has been complex and time consuming.

Gerry Cadogan from Plymouth Primary Care Trust agreed to undertake the role from February 2002.

The Best Value Review Team reconvened and identified the areas that require further work, which has been agreed as part of an initial project plan. These cover areas which we feel were not fully addressed in the original report.

The financial difficulties that face the City will also impact on the service and these will require consideration as part of the Best Value process.

Results from consultation exercises

Care leavers and staff in all the services have been consulted via a number of methods (a conference, a group, a questionnaire, etc). Resources were seen to be

patchy and inconsistent and need to be developed into a comprehensive service.

Outcome of review

The review will have to meet the requirements of the new legislation which came into force from 1/10/2001 and to consider the best way of meeting the needs of care leavers in Plymouth in the longer term.

There are a number of nationally set performance indicators.

Plan of action

The action plan will create a more comprehensive leaving care service under one management umbrella. This will have components from a number of agencies. A management board has been set up by the Heads of Services for Children and Families, to oversee the implementation of the Best Value Action Plan, and the ongoing service. This board will be chaired by Gerry Cadogan, and include representation from Social and Housing Leaving Care Services, NCH, Connexions and Health.

Update of Current Reviews - Year 2

Housing Management

Aim of Review: To examine those elements of the Housing Management Services provided by the Plymouth City Council, through its Housing and Residential Services Division, that it is not required by law to provide and that are financed from its Housing Revenue Account.

Chair: Dr John Dixon, University of Plymouth (Independent Chair). Contact Dave Tute, Performance Services Officer. Tel. (01752) 307542. E-Mail: dave.tute @plymouth.gov.uk.

Target date for completion of review: September 2003

Progress to date

A revised scope for the review was approved in 2002, as follows.

Revenue collection

- The collection of rent, current and former tenant arrears owed to the Council.
- The collection of leasehold charges and arrears.
- Given that approximately half of the housing revenue received is from Housing Benefits, the collection of Housing Benefit overpayments is included. (Housing Benefit Assessment is not included in the review as it is a distinct and separate function.)

Tenancy management and landlord role:

- General tenancy (including the council's 1,050 leaseholders)
- 'Right to Buy'
- Tenant Involvement and 'estate management' services including the management of external and communal areas (such as garages and grassed areas).
- Tenancy management including the housing Caretaking function provided by the Council.
- The management of anti-social/nuisance behaviour by tenants.

Tenant requested repairs: This will include all day to day repairs functions carried out to council dwellings,

specifically:

- General tenant requested repairs
- Out of Hours Emergency Response Repairs
- Communal Repairs (for example to communal door entry systems)
- Repairs to Communal Laundry facilities
- Management of Asbestos in council dwellings
- Planned, revenue funded repairs including Gas Servicing, External Decorations, Electrical testing and revenue funded adaptations
- (It will exclude all Capital funded repairs such as Anti-Condensation work, Window and Heating replacements and Major adaptations).

Vacant Properties: This will include preparation and management of Council dwellings remaining vacant from when tenants move out to when a property is ready to let to a new tenant. It excludes the allocations function performed by the Council.

The Milestone 2 report was presented during January 2003.

Results from consultation exercises

The consultation survey commissioned within Milestone 2 indicated broad agreement in the service areas most in need of improvement. These are:

- Repairs and Maintenance
- The management of vacant (void) properties, and
- Communications within the department.

Those consulted considered increase service efficiency in these areas to be necessary whilst expressing loyalty to the Plymouth City Council as their landlord despite some evident inadequacies. These issues will be addressed more fully within Milestone 3.

Outcome of review

The outcome of this Best Value review will be determined by Plymouth's capacity to respond to two threatening social housing challenges that loom before Plymouth City Council.

- A project overall shortfall over the next four years in the supply of social housing in Plymouth to meet priority re-housing needs, associated with which is a projected reduction in the PCC housing stock; and
- A chronic deficit in the Housing Revenue Account for the foreseeable future. (Exacerbating this situation is the fact that most tenants are satisfied with PCC as their landlord).

Plan of action

The action plan associated with Milestone 2 will form the basis of immediate remedial action with completion of the Best Value review anticipated by September 2003.

Domiciliary Care

Aim of Review: To consider the range and nature of Domiciliary Care Services provided by both the in-house team and the independent sector.

Chair: Eileen Means (Independent Chair)

Lead Officer: Paul Francombe (01752) 302344, E-mail paul.francombe@plymouth.gov.uk

Completion date of review: October 2002

Progress to date

The outcome of the Best Value Review was approved in October 2002 and the department is in the process of implementing the recommendations. A steering group has been set-up to oversee the required developments in the domiciliary care service to ensure that the service can move forward and provide a better service to its clients.

Results from the consultation exercises

Consultation was undertaken with a wide range of people with an interest in the Domiciliary Care Service including, service users, their carers, staff, independent sector providers and the general public. The overall satisfaction levels of service users was very high with 93% saying they were either satisfied or very satisfied with the service they receive.

The service users were keen to emphasise the value they placed on the service in supporting them in their own home.

It was recognised that the service was experiencing difficulties in meeting the demand for services within the current resources. The domiciliary care services in Plymouth and around the country have shown a trend towards increasing personal care often at the expense of domestic tasks like cleaning. However, assistance with domestic tasks is still considered very important by the service users.

Service users valued the relationship they had with their care assistants which was even more important to them if they lived alone or felt isolated.

Outcome of the review

It was found that the domiciliary care service was smaller in Plymouth compared to the rest of the country. It was recommended that there should be shift in resources away from residential and nursing care into domiciliary care so that people can be helped to live in their own homes for as long as possible. This shifting of resources should occur over time by reducing the level of new admissions to residential and nursing care.

The additional resources for domiciliary care should enable more people to be supported, as well as ensuring that the level of service provided can be better matched to the needs of the clients.

The service needs to better develop its partnership arrangements with the Health Service, which is currently being done through the development of an intermediate care service using resources from the Performance Fund. This development together with a restructuring of the in-house service should aid hospital discharge arrangements, which is one of the most common ways people are admitted to long stay residential care. The service will focus on ensuring that people can regain the maximum level of independence possible through working with people rather than doing for them.

Plan of action

The development of the intermediate care service is due to be piloted in April 2003 and the effects evaluated. A new IT system is being implemented to ensure that the service developments can be measured. A system is also

being put in place to ensure that service levels can be adjusted to best meet the needs of the clients.

Libraries

Aim of Review: *The review covered the Library Service and the Schools Library Service. The scope of the review was to examine how the Library service is active in supporting Education and Lifelong Learning; promoting reading and literacy; providing access to Plymouth's heritage and environment; contributing to the cultural life of the city; providing opportunities for leisure and recreation; supporting businesses in the city. The review also considered the adequacy of the buildings, including access, the staff and resources, both material and electronic.*

Chair: *John Priestley, Head of Student Liaison, University of Plymouth, (01752) 233456, E-MAIL: j.priestley@plymouth.ac.uk*

Completion of Review: *May 2002*

Progress

The Challenge Panel approved Milestone 4 in May 2002 and the Executive adopted the whole report in November 2002.

Results from consultation exercises

A customer survey of 1000 residents was carried out by the Corporate Consultation Officer in September 2001. Although three out of five people surveyed use a library not all were aware of the services available. Non users were asked to suggest services that would entice them to use libraries. The most common suggestion was for the facility to return library items outside normal opening hours. Some interest was shown in Sunday opening in line with retail opening hours. The most common reasons for non-use were: lack of need, unsuitable opening hours and difficulties in parking nearby.

Outcome of review

The review has identified the following key issues that need to be addressed: buildings, consultation and marketing. Three library buildings do not meet with the Disability Discrimination Act requirements for access. Other libraries need refurbishment or relocation. The service needs to identify and implement consultation methods. This will feed into a marketing strategy, which will in turn inform the standards, targets and levels of the collection development policy.

Plan of action

Buildings:

The requirements to meet the Disability Discrimination Act in all buildings have been identified including the proposed relocation of Woodland Fort. Discussions are current with the University, the Museum and the College of Art to consider joint development of future library and information services in the context of establishing a cultural quarter for the city.

Consultation:

Three focus group sessions were held in January 2002 which feed into the Milestone 3 report. Staff focus groups have and will provide critical feedback on services. For the future feedback on the service will be obtained through the Residents forum. Annual statistical returns will continue to assess achievement against national library standards.

Marketing:

The whole approach to marketing is being reviewed with the Professional Support Librarian leading the production of a marketing strategy. This will place the onus on individual planning teams to promote any developments or events in which they are engaged. Support and training in the introduction of the strategy will be given high priority.

Tourism & Marketing

Chair: Andrew Huckerby, Chairman, Plymouth Premier Hotels

Lead Officer and contact: Nigel Pitt, Acting Director of Development Tel: 01752 304170, Email: nigel.pitt@plymouth.gov.uk

Target date for completion of review: March 2003

Progress to date:

Milestones 1-4 have been completed. A key recommendation of the review was to move the Plymouth Marketing Bureau to a more arms-length relationship with the City Council, possibly under the umbrella of a proposed Leisure Services Trust. The Challenge Panel asked for this analysis to be re-visited and to consider alternatives should the Leisure Trust not proceed. The Best Value Review Team also considered that the review had become too focussed on PMB as the prime delivery agency and that a broader perspective was required, especially to take on board key messages emerging from Government during the course of the review as to how tourism services should be funded. An addendum report addressing these issues has been prepared and it is anticipated that the review will be completed in the near future.

Results from consultations.

Results from customer and stakeholder consultations are detailed in the Milestone 3 report. Results indicate a generally high level of satisfaction with services provided by PMB. Stakeholder consultations also gave a clear indication of aspirations for the future delivery of tourism services and these have been incorporated into the recommendations of Milestones 3 and 4.

Outcome of review

See " plan of action".

Plan of action

The key recommendations of the review are to:

- Establish a new Plymouth Tourism Forum to lead the

strategic development of the sub-regional tourism economy. This work will be supported by a small core of non-commercial tourism services to be retained in-house.

- Encourage the Bureau to move to a more arms-length relationship with the Council, thereby becoming a more commercially focussed and genuinely business led organisation.
- Future Council support for the Bureau will be based on making a contribution towards the cost of providing specific tourism services where sufficient added value can be demonstrated.

Coastal Management

Chair: Commander Shaun Turner, Queen's Harbour Master, Plymouth. **Lead Officer and contact:** Peter Ford Tel: (01752) 304561, EMAIL: peter.ford@plymouth.gov.uk

Target date for completion of review: July 2002.

Progress to date:

Milestones 1-4 have been completed for the Tamar Estuaries Consultative Forum (TECF) element of the review. The Plymouth City Council (PCC) element of the review has reached Milestone 2. A decision in December 2002 is to take the PCC element forward as an internal management review with peer review by the Best Value Review Team (BVRT) when the review has been completed.

Results from consultation

Results from customer and stakeholder consultations for the TECF element are included in the appendices to the Milestone 2 report. Consultations of PCC customers have been analysed and reported though they have yet to be integrated into the review process.

Outcome of review

See 'Plan of Action'

Plan of Action

A series of recommendations for strengthening and supporting the weaknesses and identity of the partnership are detailed in the TECF Milestone 4 report. Draft recommendations have been drawn up but the BVRT for the PCC review and it is anticipated that these will be fed into the internal management review.

Building Cleaning and Caretaking

Aim of Review: The review will be investigating whether or not the Council receives cost effective and high quality Caretaking and cleaning services via current arrangements. The scope of the exercise will include all Council administered buildings, including libraries, museums, offices and schools. Particular attention will be given to the diverse nature of existing service provision.

Chair: Geoff Edwards, Head of Property Services, (01752) 307385, Fax (01752) 307068, E-mail: geoff.edwards@plymouth.gov.uk

Target date for completion of review: March 2001

Progress to date

The review reported to the Milestone Two (baseline analysis) findings in January 2002.

Results from consultation exercises

There has been extensive consultation with end-users of services, which prove high levels of satisfaction with

existing arrangements in the majority of cases.

It is clear that some users of the service do not clearly understand the level of provision which they should be receiving, as the specifications are overly complex and not user friendly. This is an area which will need to be addressed as the review progresses towards its service outcomes and resultant Action Plans.

Outcome of review

The formal Best Value Review has been suspended and will be continued as a full Management Review during the remainder of 2003/04

Plan of action

Not Applicable.

Update of Current Reviews - Year 3

Waste Management

Aim of Review: To review the Waste Management function to cover all aspects from collection to recycling and disposal. The review will also identify and analyse proposals for changes in Waste Management legislation and explore private sector involvement.

Chair: Les Netherton, Head of Environmental Regulation (01752) 304149, Fax: (01752) 226314, E-MAIL: les.netherton@plymouth.gov.uk

Target date for completion of review: January 2003

Progress to date

Milestone 2 report completed and ready for submission to Challenge Panel. Mini review of bring recycling centres carried out and service being adapted on its recommendations. An area based street cleansing regime has been developed which has been introduced following consultation through Area Committees. The impact will be monitored through a quality system. Task groups are reviewing the cleansing of all land within the City Council's ownership to improve services. A review of the operation of the Civic Amenity sites has brought in tight controls over vans and as a result has significantly reduced the amount of trade waste illegally entering the sites. The team are considering ways of improving rates further to meet statutory targets. An analysis has been carried out of the brown and green bin waste streams and further analysis is planned on the bulky household waste collection.

The Best Value service review team have been identifying service improvements and where possible implementing them as set out above. The service review team have also had to take into account the development of the Plymouth Partnership Programme and its impact upon the future strategic direction for service delivery of waste

management. The inspection by the district audit under the comprehensive performance assessment also diverted scarce resources during the review.

Results from consultation exercises

Questions regarding recycling were included in the corporate consultation exercise. Results indicated that 90% of people had received either a green recycling box or bin. 93% of people who have them use their green bin/box. Issues identified regarding lack of information stickers and misunderstandings by customers on which items to be recycled. In November 2000, a survey of 4,100 tenants took place which indicated that 83% of tenants rating rubbish disposal as good or fair and 77% rating litter removal as good or fair. Customer focus groups have been held indicating user concerns over recycling boxes. From the consultation the review Panel have identified issues relating to the Bring systems, the Civic Amenity sites and education on recycling. Earlier consultation exercises for performance indicate a high level of satisfaction with refuse collection, street sweeping and recycling facilities.

Outcome of review

In consultation with Director of Development Portfolio

lead and Head of Service it has been agreed that this review will convert to a management Review due to ongoing revised Government guidelines.

Plan of action

The Management Review will be completed by November 2003 and a report will be available for the Democratic process after that date.

Procurement

Aim of Review: This review will examine how all goods and services are procured, ranging from high value strategic procurement which is often complex or specialist in nature, to the routine procurement of items of a more generic and day to day nature. It will review how the procurement function is carried out across all Council departments, services and activities. For the purposes of this review the term procurement will cover how the needs of the council are identified, specifications, tendering, supplier management, ordering and payment methods and stores. The review will be undertaken in two phases, Phase 1 dealing with procurement of goods and construction works and Phase 2 dealing with services.

Lead Officer: Chris Sane, Engineering Services Manager, Direct Services Department, Tel. (01752) 304240, Fax: (01752) 304922

Chair: Gavin Lowe. Tel: (01752) 790746, E-Mail: gavinlowe722@aol.com

Target date for completion of review: Phase 1 September 2003; Phase 2 September 2004.

Progress to date

The first of the four milestone reports has been completed and approved. The Milestone 2 report for Phase 1 will be submitted in March 2003.

Results from consultation exercises:

No consultation has to date been carried out.

Outcome of review

Not applicable.

Plan of action

Not applicable.

Financial Services

Aim of Review: This review has replaced the Budget, Accounting, Financial & Advisory Services Best Value Review. The scope of the review was changed in light of the following papers: The White Paper - "Strong Local Leadership – Quality Public Services" and the Audit Commissions report – Changing Gear. These papers identified the need for bigger cross cutting reviews rather than service specific, hence a recommendation was made and accepted by the panel to re-scope the review. The service areas now included by this review are: Financial Accounting, Treasury Management, Internal Audit, Payroll, Pensions, Creditors and Debtors.

Chair: Dr CM Gillett c/o Mrs S Godbeer, Departmental Support Manager, (01752) 304940, Fax (01752) 304923 E-mail: sally.godbeer@plymouth.gov.uk

Target date for completion of review: 30th September 2003

Progress to date

The review has had Milestone 2 approved by the challenge panel. Work on Milestone 3 is in progress.

Results from consultation exercises

Consultation questionnaires on all services now covered

by the review were issued in December 2002. The results of this will be taken into account in the Best Value Review Process.

Outcome of review

The review has not yet reached the stage where outcomes have been identified.

Plan of action

The review has not reached the stage where a plan of action has been drawn up. It should be noted that this review will be dependent on and closely involved with any changes to the mainframe strategy.

Legal Practice

Aim of Review: The Review was intended to cover all areas of activity within the Legal Practice, taking into account 'traditional' solicitor services (e.g. conveyancing, litigation), corporate activity (e.g. advice to Members and Committees), quasi-judicial work, community legal services partnership and statutory monitoring officer services.

Chair: Head of Legal Practice, Plymouth City Council, (01752) 305575

Target date for completion: March 2002 (with noted possibility of extension into a 2 year review).

Progress to date

The Challenge Panel has approved milestone 1. An external health check was commissioned as part of the milestone 2 report.

The delayed second draft of the report from Eversheds Solicitors who were carrying out the health check was received in July 2002, by which time the council had undergone significant change - namely, a report from IDeA, early preparation for a comprehensive performance assessment, the deletion of the vacant post of head of Legal Practice and the appointment of a City Solicitor. The impact of these and the indication that the councils 'corporate middle' requires fundamental strengthening, changed the contextual scope for any best Value Review of the Legal Practice. Accordingly the Best Value review has been terminated and a management review will be carried out.

Results from consultation exercises

A survey of internal clients has been undertaken as part of the external health check, carried out by Eversheds Solicitors. Results indicate a general satisfaction with the service, subject to concerns about resource availability.

Outcome of review

The final outcome of the review will take account of changes in the practice that have occurred in the latter half of 2002, including the appointment of a City Solicitor and a significant demand for legal services currently being met by private firms. The Practice will seek to deliver

economic, efficient and effective legal services with a refocused and appropriately strengthened in house team, but with clearly defined and supportive arrangements with external suppliers for services best obtained from specialist, or organisations which can deliver with enhanced economies of scale.

Plan of action

Target for completion of Review: April 2003.

Best Value Inspections

Dog Warden Service

A full inspection of the Dog Warden Service review was carried out which found it was a good service but unlikely to improve.

The Audit team recommended that further work was required, in particular to develop aims and objectives for the service through involvement of the customers, recommendations were also made regarding analysis of complaints on a quarterly basis to prevent dog fouling. In order to ensure continuous improvement it was decided to apply Charter mark principles to the service and it has resulted in the achievement of Charter mark status in 2003. This has resulted in a number of commitments to customer satisfaction and accessibility which are now part of the departmental procedures.

Customer Contact Services

The Inspectors' report was published on 21st November 2001, they concluded that the service was a fair service, which was unlikely to improve. The inspectors endorsed the recommendations of the review and proposed some additional ones. These covered four main areas.

Making it easier for customers to make contact with the Council and connect to the right person or department first time. Ensure that customer contact services are competitive.

Identify the steps necessary to match the performance of the top quartile of authorities.

These recommendations have been accepted.

Sport and Recreation Facilities

An inspection of the Sport and Recreation Facilities review was carried out in November 2001. The Best Value Inspection Service assessed the Council as providing "a poor service that has uncertain prospects for improvement."

Areas of concern included:

- Poor range of facilities
- Lack of investment in facilities
- Need for customer care training

Positive areas included:

- Partnership working
- The provision of a strategic framework for moving forward
- Staff commitment

The recommendations have been accepted and the agreed Action Plan is currently being delivered.

Waste Management

The Waste Management function is currently subject to an ongoing Best Value Review however a gap inspection was carried out by the audit commission in August 2002 as part of the comprehensive performance assessment for the Council.

This review found that Waste Management was a good service that has uncertain prospects for improvement. The review found that service plans are linked to the corporate strategy, there is a waste management strategy, a draft waste local plan, there are educational links to schools, businesses and communities, the Doorstep recycling system is in place with fortnightly collections of recyclables, and new materials recycling facility has been built with external funding, recycling partnerships were in place, streets were generally found to be clean and that Chelson Meadow landfill was well managed.

In addition the audit found that Plymouth was among the best performing councils for recycling and composting percentages, time taken for fly tips and user satisfaction with the Civic Amenity sites. However the review also identified some issues which need to be addressed: a lack of clear and consistent aims and targets across the service with problems of consistency between service areas, little enforcement activity, high waste arisings, the impact of task and finish refuse collection methods, cleanliness and signs at neighbourhood recycling centres and some litter hot spots in the city.

The report also made comment regarding prospects for improvement and found that there was considerable evidence regarding improvement and change within the service area however there were issues of lack of shared aims coordination and consistency between the service areas, there had not been vigorous challenge of future provision of waste management and issues of waste minimisation had not been fully addressed.

The inspection report has been considered by the Best Value service review team and is being built into the improvement programme and issues which are being addressed.

Housing Repairs and Maintenance

An inspection without review was undertaken by the Audit Commission in August 2002. Housing Repairs & Maintenance was deemed to be 'a fair service that has uncertain prospects for improvement'.

The audit team found that performance had improved in several areas, notably repairs and the Council's success in completing its planned repair and improvement contracts. However, it was also identified that there was dissatisfaction with the service, tenants were not kept well informed and had limited opportunities for involvement in the Service.

It was found that in 2001/02 the Council completed 93 per cent of repairs in target and kept over 90 per cent of appointments. However, the commission's survey identified that over a third of jobs were not completed in the first visit, two thirds of orders had to be reassessed and the quality of repair orders was seen as an issue by customers and staff.

Over £12 million was spent on improving the stock in 2001/02 with more than a third of homes benefiting from works. It was found that contracts were successfully managed to ensure timely completion within budget.

The audit commission recommendations covered the need to: -

- Prepare and implement procedures to gain access to those properties where access has been persistently refused e.g. for gas servicing.
- Improve access and facilities in Housing Offices.
- Improve the quantity and quality of information available to tenants.
- Reinstate the tenant consultative and decision making structures.
- Produce and consult on a detailed project plan for the integration of the repairs service with DSD.
- Produce an action plan to reduce the number of

emergency and urgent repair orders and the level of variations.

- Evaluate the value for money provided by annual contracts compared to term contracts and partnering. Establish and report on a range of key construction performance indicators to manage these contracts.

Accommodation Management

The Audit Commission's review findings were published in April 2002. They rated the service as being poor with uncertain prospects for improvement. A number of recommendations were made with a view to improving the service and these have been accepted by the council. They recommended that responsibilities needed to be defined better; that the approach to accommodation management should be more integrated both between departments and with other activities, better and faster decision making processes be developed and a performance management framework be established.

