

**Question to be Asked Council  
In Accordance with Council Procedure Rule 14**

**General Subject :**

Best Value Performance Plan

**Question submitted by :** Cllr T.R. Sturgis

**Date submitted to  
Council:** 27/6/06

**Minute No :**

**Text of Question**

Will the appropriate Executive Member supply the following information to enable a proper debate to take place on the Best Value Performance Plan.

- 1) What action has the Member taken to improve the direction of travel since last year for those indicators with worsening performance?
- 2) How much has been invested in each service with worsening performance during the last two years?
- 3) What action will the lead member be taking this year to ensure the targets are met?

**Response by :** Cllr C. O’Gorman

**Date responded:**

**Text of Response :** As with all well managed organisations, when performance levels are first seen as altering, the causes are investigated, analysed and action plans applied with subsequent regular progress reports, in this case fortnightly. The mechanism which allows us to effectively measure the positive tangible impact we are having in delivering the good services to the people of North Wilts is then clearly in place.

For full details and the amount invested I would ask the Members to see the papers appended to this response.



**Additional investment into Service delivery over last 2 years. (NB: not restricted to areas where PI performance has dipped)**

<b>Service Area:</b>	<b>Additional investment:</b>	<b>One-off or Continuing:</b>	<b>Purpose/details:</b>	<b>Agreed by:</b>
Cleansing & Amenities	£28,000	One-off		Executive 02.09.04
Customer Services - Benefits	£79,000	One-off	Extension of project manager contract (migration to SX3).	Executive 04.11.04
Benefits	£48,700	One-off	Set-up costs for new SX3 system.	Executive 03.02.05
Planning Appeals	£79,000	One-off	Additional funding for appeals budget.	Executive 10.03.05
Customer Services - Benefits	£30,000	Continuing	Investment to support migration to new SX3 system.	Budget 2005-06 (Council 22.02.05)
Cleansing & Amenities	£79,000 £50,000 £20,000	Continuing One-off Continuing	General support. Litter-picking. Streetscene improvements.	Budget 2005-06 (Council 22.02.05)
Human Resources	£40,000	For two years	Project support for Pay & Workforce Strategy.	Budget 2005-06 (Council 22.02.05)
Development Control	£50,000	One-off	Resource issues – increased number of planning applications.	Executive 16.06.05
Customer Services - Revenues, Benefits and Customer Contact	Up to £138,355	One-off	Resource issues – funding for agency staff to cover backlog & associated resource problems linked to new SX3 system – Up to £138,355 to be taken from general reserves as required.	Executive 19.07.05
Customer Services - Benefits	Up to £200,000	One-off	Implement action plans from Benefit Fraud Inspectorate and Overview & Scrutiny (including dealing with backlog). £70k for project manager. Total of up to £200,000 to be taken from general reserves as required.	Executive 13.10.05
Customer Services - Revenues, Benefits and Customer Contact	£243,000	Continuing	Restructure and additional posts within revenues, benefits and customer contact sections	Budget 2006-07 (Council 21.02.06)
Cleansing & Amenities	£249,000	Continuing	Restructure – additional/changed posts and Litter picking (£50k)	Budget 2006-07 (Council 21.02.06)
Housing	£133,000	Continuing	Restructure and additional posts to meet new requirements	Budget 2006-07 (Council 21.02.06)
Finance	£56,000	For two years	Support improvement work linked to Use of Resources assessment	Budget 2006-07 (Council 21.02.06)

To Follow – REPORT NO. 15 c)

## **2005/06 BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

This note provides details of all 2005/06 Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs) where the Council's performance has reduced from the previous year, or where targets have not been met. Actions that will address these issues are summarised for information.

### **BVPI 8 Percentage of Invoices Paid on Time**

**Issue:** Not on target. Performance marginally reduced.

**Actions:** Change over to new creditors system and introduction of purchasing cards reduced performance in the last 3 months of the year.

### **BVPI 9 Percentage of Council Tax Collected**

**Issue:** Not on target. Performance marginally reduced.

**Actions:** Introduction of new system led to backlogs of correspondence and insufficient resources to recover debts. Performance improved in latter part of year and resource levels in the team are being addressed.

### **BVPI 10 Percentage of Non-domestic Rates Collected**

**Issue:** Not on target. Performance marginally increased.

**Actions:** Introduction of new system led to backlogs of correspondence and insufficient resources to recover debts. Performance improved in latter part of year and resource levels in the team are being addressed.

### **BVPI 11a Top 5% of Earners: Women**

**Issue:** Not on target. Performance remained the same.

**Actions:** Only one post in the top 5% salary range has been recruited to and filled during the past 12 months, therefore turnover has been minimal.

### **BVPI 11b Top 5% of Earners: Ethnic Minorities**

**Issue:** Not on target. Performance remained the same.

**Actions:** We have received a low response from applicants from ethnic minorities although we have used a number of media in order to recruit from a wider community base. We will continue to explore other avenues including an ethnic jobsite as part of our commitment to enhance the diversity of our work force.

### **BVPI 12 Working Days Lost Due to Sickness Absence**

**Issue:** Not on target. Performance reduced by 1.36 days.

- Actions:** The number of employees on long term sickness absence has risen compared to the previous year. The 2005/06 performance of 9.44 days is still significantly better than the 10.99 days for 2003/04 and is in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quartile.
- BVPI 14**      **Percentage of Early Retirements**
- Issue:** Not on target. Performance reduced.
- Actions:** Low numbers involved - 4 early retirements (from 1 last year).
- BVPI 16a/b**      **Percentage of Employees with a Disability. The ratio of local authority employees with a disability compared with the local population.**
- Issue:** Not on target. Performance reduced.
- Actions:** 2 employees who declared they met the DDA definition, left the Council's employment. A Disability Equality Scheme and action plan is currently being developed which will assist with recruiting and retaining more employees who meet the DDA definition. The Council continues to support employees who become disabled through making reasonable adjustments or seeking alternative suitable employment and in encouraging them to declare their disability.
- BVPI 17a/b**      **Ethnic Minority Representation in the Workforce – Employees. The ratio of local authority employees from minority ethnic communities compared with the local population.**
- Issue:** Not on target. Performance reduced.
- Actions:** The average number of black and ethnic minority employees within the Council has reduced by one compared to 2004/05. The Council will continue through its recruitment and selection processes to encourage applications from BMEs.
- BVPI 156**      **The percentage of authority buildings open to the public in which all public areas are suitable for, and accessible to, disabled people**
- Issue:** Not on target. Performance reduced.
- Actions:** Main Council office DDA compliant. Athelstan Museum transferred to Malmesbury Town Council April 06. Plans in place for remaining 2 buildings that are not DDA compliant.
- BVPI 157**      **E-Government: E-enabled Interactions**
- Issue:** Not on target, although performance increased. This PI has been deleted from 2006/07.
- Actions:** Good performance compared to other authorities. Narrowly missed 100% target.
- BVPI 64**      **Vacant Dwellings Returned to Occupation or Demolished**

**Issue:** Target was reached, although performance reduced.

**Actions:** Target achieved through, assistance given to homeless families via Rent Deposit Scheme and the Empty Homes Grant. Target raised to 8 homes for 2006/07 and 10 homes for the following years and actions included in new Empty Homes Strategy.

**BVPI 202**      **Number of Rough Sleepers**

**Issue:** Not on target. Performance reduced.

**Actions:** Information provided from the Drop-in Centre. Low numbers – 6 to 7.

**BVPI 76c**      **Housing Benefit Security – Investigations**

**Issue:** Not on target. Performance reduced.

**Actions:** Fewer investigations undertaken as a result of priority assessment. This has resulted in a higher number of sanctions per 1000. Number of cases closed influenced by number of decisions outstanding.

**BVPI 78a**      **Speed of Processing: New HB/CTB Claims**

**Issue:** Not on target. No previous year data available for comparison of performance.

**Actions:** New benefit software implemented in March 2005 and restructure of team delayed. Quarterly performance improved in year from 88.12 to 61.22 days.

There are a number of actions underway to improve performance including:

1. Two new benefit assessors being trained
2. A direct link from benefit assessors desktops to DWP customer information introduced in May 2006 (this will help speed up the information gathering process for dealing with benefit claims)
3. Implemented a trusted email link between the Council and HM Customs and Revenues in order to access information speedily in respect of tax credits
4. Benefit Fraud Inspectorate consultancy team to review current measures we have in place and offer advice/guidance on improving performance July 2007.
5. All benefit processing staff have been set performance targets, which are regularly monitored and reviewed.
6. Increased homeworking
7. Visiting Officers will be undertaking a pilot of wireless working from July, currently in the process of developing an electronic claim form.
8. Training and development programme in place for all staff

**BVPI 78b**      **Speed of Processing: Change in Circumstances for HB/CTB Claims**

**Issue:** Not on target. No previous year data available for comparison of performance.

**Actions:** New benefit software implemented in March 2005 and restructure of team delayed. Quarterly performance improved in year from 58.35 to 39.37 days.

For actions underway to improve performance see BVPI 78a (above).

**BVPI 82b(i) Household Waste Management (Composting)**

**Issue:** Target reached, although performance marginally reduced.

**Actions:** The DEFRA target of 18% is a combined target of a+b, there are no separate targets for the individual components. This year we will be reviewing our waste management strategy, to plan how to increase our recycling rates. We have a new target for 2007/08, which is 20%. The 2005/06 rate only reflected 1/2 a year with kerbside recycling rolled out to 98% of households, as the service was only completed in September 2005. Obviously a full year with service in place will show a higher performance rate.

**BVPI 84a Household Waste Collection (kilograms per head)**

**Issue:** Not on target, although performance improved and again in top quartile.

**Actions:** This year we will be reviewing our waste management strategy, which will target waste minimisation.

**BVPI 199a Local Street and Environmental Cleanliness - Litter & Detritus**

**Issue:** Not on target, although performance improved.

**Actions:** BVPP target of 20% not achieved, although performance improved from previous year. The targets for the coming years will be more onerous as there are LPSA stretch targets to reach. This has been recognised in the C&A Services restructure with creation of additional supervisory staff within the street scene area of the department

**BVPI 199b&c Local Street and Environmental Cleanliness – Graffiti & Fly-Posting**

**Issue:** No figures provided for draft BVPP.

**Actions:** Final figures for 2005/06 now provided:  
BVPI199b (graffiti) = 1%  
BVPI199c (flyposting) = 0%

**BVPI 106 New Homes on Previously Developed Land**

**Issue:** Target was reached, although figure reduced from previous year.

**Actions:** Limited control of this PI.

**BVPI 109a Planning Applications: Major Applications**

**Issue:** Not on target. Performance reduced.

**Actions:** The complexity of “Major” applications received is difficult to predict. This, together with a lack of available resources at certain periods throughout the year, have contributed to a slight decline in the percentage of applications determined in the statutory period.

It must be noted that NWDC are still complying with the National target.

However, in order to sustain a consistently high performance in the long term, the management team have been investigating other initiatives.

It has initiated a major applications team, predominantly made up of the Principal Administration Officer, Head of Development Control and the 2 Principal Planning Officers, to study local authorities with a much greater performance in dealing with major applications.

A visit has been made to Fareham DC, who determine a similar number of major applications as NWDC per year. Fareham consistently determines 100% of Major applications. We are looking to adopt some of their procedures, such as using “Grampian” conditions (conditions stating that development must not commence until the S106 agreement has been signed) and speeding up the process of dealing with Section 106 Legal agreements. Templates and standard letters to be sent to developers are in the process of being devised.

Member agreement will be sought shortly, to make comprehensive changes to the way in which S106 agreements will be dealt with in future.

**BVPI 109b Planning Applications: Minor Applications**

**Issue:** Target was reached, although performance marginally reduced.

**Actions:** Performance in determining Minor applications is consistently higher than the national target. This year’s NWDC target was also met.

Performance declined very slightly from the previous year but not significantly enough to raise concerns.

Performance will continue to be monitored to ensure the national target and NWDC’s higher target continues to be met.

**BVPI 109c Planning Applications: ‘Other’ Applications**

**Issue:** Target was reached, although performance marginally reduced.

**Actions:** Performance in determining ‘Other’ applications is consistently higher than the national target. This year’s NWDC target was also met.

Performance declined very slightly from the previous year but not significantly enough to raise concerns.

Performance will continue to be monitored to ensure the national target and NWDC's higher target continues to be met.

**BVPI 179**      **Standard Searches within 10 Days**

**Issue:**            Not on target. Performance marginally reduced.

**Actions:**        This PI has been deleted from 2006/07.

**BVPI 204**      **Planning Appeals**

**Issue:**            Not on target. Performance significantly reduced.

**Actions:**        This target fluctuates, both locally and nationally, depending on the number and complexity of the developments. 65% of appeals allowed in year were overturned decisions by Members from the Planning Officer's recommendation.

*The appeal decisions will be reviewed and monitored over the next 6 months, following additional member training.*

**BVPI 205**      **Quality of Planning Services Checklist**

**Issue:**            Not on target. Performance remained the same.

**Actions:**        We achieved 16 points out of 18, giving a percentage of 88.9%. We missed out on 1 Pendleton point, which we expect to achieve next year to give us a percentage of 94.4%. We also dropped a point based for not having a project management approach to dealing with Major planning applications, which we expect to rectify soon.

**BVPI 170a**     **Visits to and use of Museums and Galleries: all visits**

**Issue:**            Not on target. Performance remained the same.

**Actions:**        Althelstan Museum transferred to Malmesbury Town Council April 2006. Will no longer be reported, therefore, this 4<sup>th</sup> quartile indicator will not be included next year.

**BVPI 170b**     **Visits to and use of Museums and Galleries: visits in person**

**Issue:**            Not on target. Performance remained the same.

**Actions:**        Althelstan Museum transferred to Malmesbury Town Council April 2006. Will no longer be reported, therefore, this 4<sup>th</sup> quartile indicator will not be included next year.

**BVPI 170c Visits to and use of Museums and Galleries: School groups**

**Issue:** Not on target, although performance increased.

**Actions:** Althelstan Museum transferred to Malmesbury Town Council April 2006. Will no longer be reported, therefore, this 4<sup>th</sup> quartile indicator will not be included next year.

**BVPI 128 Vehicle Crime per 1,000 Population**

**Issue:** Not on target. Performance reduced.

**Actions:** Limited control of this PI.

***KEY IMPROVEMENTS***

• **Homelessness BVPIs**

- BVPIs 183a & b (Length of stay in temporary accommodation (B&B and hostel)) have both seen marked improvements from previous year.
- This is reinforced by BVPI 203 (change in no. of families in temporary accommodation) which have reduced by 25%

• **Benefits**

- Benefit Fraud BVPIs 76a-d. The number of prosecutions and sanctions has increased from previous year, now in 2<sup>nd</sup> quartile. Number of visits has also increased.

• **Environment**

- BVPI 91a & b (Kerbside collection of recyclables) has increased to 98% due to increased recycling provision being rolled out to the remainder of the District in 2005/06.
- Waste minimisation BVPI 84a (Kg Household waste collected per head) improved from previous year and again in top quartile.

• **Environmental Health Checklist** (BVPI 166a) improved and in top quartile.